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1 SAMUEL 25:29-31

1 Samuel Series

[PRAYER] I ask today, Lord, that you would open the eyes of our hearts more so that we can experience your greatness in the midst of our personal challenges that we experience. We need you, we want you. That's why we became Christians because there was something we don't have without you. So Lord, we're asking you to infuse our hearts with your love and your grace. Teach us what it means to be your servants and to live a life that you've called us to live. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

Would you stand with me in honor of God's word and let's read this passage of scripture. We're dealing with some issues about controlling emotions, negative controlling emotions. This is a passage about a negative controlling emotion. The New Testament verse that we're going to draw from in the midst of our study in the Old Testament comes from Matthew 8:23-27.

It says this – *Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. I want you to see this is a real problem, not an imaginary problem. It is real that there are waves coming over the sides of the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"*

He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

You may be seated.

We are looking at negative controlling emotions from 1 Samuel 25. The goal is for us to understand what God is teaching in the passage there and then apply it to our own lives. So we're going right through this passage in 1 Samuel 25 in slow motion right now because this is one of the key passages in the Bible that deals with anger in particular. So we are going to learn from that experience.

Let me bring you up to date in this story in case you haven't been with us. In this story David is furious, livid, enraged, and he is out to go kill Nabal and his men because he's been mistreated. A real offense in his life. Not imaginary. It's real. So he gathers his men and he goes and he's going to kill Nabal and all of his men. On the way he meets Abigail who is the hero in the story.

I suppose God is the hero, but He uses Abigail to be this heroine. Abigail says several key things, several strategic things to David that have an affect on his heart. So David, who is livid, going to take some action based on his intense anger, is able to pull back, turn around and go back home and not do that. Something happened in David's heart. That something that happened in his heart is something we want to happen in our hearts and we want to practice when we get upset.

Mainly we're looking at three controlling emotions. They might be anxiety, anger, or sadness. When those three emotions start to take over us, whether it's thirty seconds or whether it's ten years of controlling, then it becomes a problem in our lives and we need help. Abigail is offering that wisdom to David. It has an affect on his heart and good things happen.

So this is our third week looking at this passage. The first week we looked at how she said to him, "Pay no attention to Nabal." In other words, shift your attention. We learned that we are all attention managers. So when we become intensely upset we can shift our attention to something else.

Now how can we do that? We learned a theological truth then to help us understand this and the truth was this: We tend to believe our emotions are caused by some people or situations. We realized last week that is not the case. We realize the anger is not caused, we cannot blame our anger on someone else or situations, but there is something in the middle. The things that happen are triggers that will trigger something inside of our hearts. Strategic. They trigger something inside of our hearts so now we're no longer victims of our anger and someone else. Now we're in control. We're empowered because now we're working on something inside of our hearts.

The beautiful thing is when you and I accept Jesus Christ into our lives He comes to live inside of our hearts. So He wants to do some deeper work in there. He wants to help us address some of those issues so in the middle we're able to manage the triggers that are outside so that we're not easily thrown into these negative controlling emotions.

This week I was talking to a father on the phone. I was working with him with his son who is a very challenging boy. He's got the waves coming in the boat. I mean it's a real, very difficult situation. I said to the dad, "I really like all the things you said, you reported to me that you did. But the problem is you have this anger inside that's unnecessary."

"But he's doing the wrong thing!" he said.

I said, "Remember, your son does not control your anger. It's the stuff in the middle. In fact the anger is an indication of something in the middle that needs to be addressed." It was quiet and he starts crying because he knew what the thing in the middle was. We started talking about that and some wrestling that's going on in his own heart. He realized his anger isn't coming because of his son, his son is just a trigger for something that's going on.

That's going to be the case. I'm not saying all negative emotions are bad, but it's the ones that are controlling us that need to be addressed in a specific way. We're attention managers. We need to shift our attention.

In the next week we looked at another truth out of this passage. As we looked at this one verse in verse 28 Abigail is saying to David, "You have a dynasty that God has prepared for you. You

just need to fight and do your part. Fight the battle and don't do any wrongdoing." In other words, this doesn't fit your calling, David. So we looked at that and we realized that God has a calling for us. That's very important.

In order to understand that, we go back to another theological truth. In the middle we have beliefs. We have an old self and a new self. As we looked at Ephesians 4 last week, we have this old self and new self that wrestle. If you want to know what the old self is, follow the emotion because the emotion will take you right there and be able to reveal some challenges or some beliefs that are out of place. So we have a belief grid inside of our hearts. That belief grid is very important because it determines our actions. It determines how we're going to act in our behavior and how we're going to feel many times. So we must deal with the belief grid that's inside of our hearts so we can follow the path of emotions to often get to a very significant area of our hearts that needs some adjusting to be brought in line with where we are.

Now this week we're going to take that a next step further and we're going to look at what do we do with this belief grid and how do we make the changes. Because you might find a belief and not know what to do with it. We're going to look at it this week and we're going to see a little bit more.

In order to do that, we're going to go to our third principle. This is the principle for this week. That is to choose our perspective. I want to show you the principle first before I show you the passage because I want you to see in the passage how God is revealing more about what this perspective should look like. If we can gain perspective it will often help us deal with the negative controlling emotions that we experience.

Let me read the passage out of 1 Samuel 25 (our passage for today) that will guide you in your thinking about perspective. Abigail is speaking to David and says this: *Even though someone is pursuing you to take your life* (I just want to point out again this is a real problem. Not an imaginary problem, a real problem. Someone is pursuing him to take his life), *the life of my lord* (that's David) *will be bound securely in the bundle of the living by the Lord your God* (she's trying to get him to think bigger), *but the lives of your enemies he will hurl away as from the pocket of a sling.*

Perspective. She says, "I want you to think about this from a different perspective." In this case a bigger perspective. Keep that word in mind. Bigger perspective. That's one kind of a perspective we could have.

But she goes on in verse 30. Now we're looking forward, so this is a future perspective. A very important way that we can be thinking. Not just about the present and bigger, but the future perspective. *When the Lord has fulfilled for my lord every good thing he promised concerning him and has appointed him ruler over Israel, my lord will not have on his conscience the staggering burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself.*

So in the future when you're in that place that God has for you, you'll be able to think about the future and not be worried about some foolish thing that you did now. Think future perspective. We look bigger, now we look future, now we look at others. The perspective of others.

And when the Lord your God has brought my lord success, remember your servant. So what she's saying is think about me. Don't just think about yourself when all of this takes place. Think about others. Now when we have a perspective that's bigger, when we have a perspective that's in the future and when we have a perspective that's of others, something happens inside of us to our own emotions and something happened inside of David and he was able to turn around and go back.

Perspective is the ability to step outside of my belief a little bit, my negative beliefs, step out and look at them from some other distance so I can evaluate them and they make more sense that they're not as important as they should be. We call that point of view. So if I can step out of my locked in circle of beliefs into another point of view, I can understand a little bit more about this situation.

When I'm working with children who have intense anger issues and you say, "No, you're not having a snack right now." "I can't believe it. I'm going to starve!" is what they say. So that intensity they experience. So mom says, "You will not starve." She's saying, "You want to know what starving is? Let me show you what starving is."

But I often like to say to moms and dads: Why don't you ask your son later, "If you were to put that on a scale between one and ten, what is it? You're acting like it's a ten, when really if you look at it a little bit later maybe it's only a two or a three. Maybe your reaction to it, your emotional reaction in the moment, isn't matching what it really is." That's perspective. We're trying to give a child some perspective in the midst of those kinds of challenges.

Imagine that you are at home in the evening relaxing, however you like to relax in the evening, and all of a sudden you get a call from someone at work. You're a little irritated that they're calling you because you're trying to relax and they shouldn't be calling you at home. So you're already starting to feel upset a little bit. Then you find out as the conversation goes on they're calling from the hospital. All of a sudden it changes your perspective. So you relax a little bit. You're not so frustrated at the moment. Perspective is a very important way that we can deal with negative controlling emotions in our lives.

Let's imagine that you have to wait in line at a grocery store with eight people in front of you. You might say something like, "Wow. It's really only ten minutes of my life. Do I really want to give up my peace of mind and get mad at everybody in this whole place in this grocery store?" It's perspective being able to step out a little bit and be able to address that.

When someone is dealing with some rather challenging anxiety issues, one of the things that sometimes those people will do when they're asked that question when they're wrestling with anxiety is they'll ask themselves this question: What is the worst that can happen here? If the worst that can happen is the things I'm afraid might happen here, that actually happened, how might God work with me in the midst of that help me? Thus seeing the bigger picture and allowing God to work in that situation. What's the worst that could happen? I'm going to be late to this meeting. Is that really going to be that bad? Do I really have to be so upset that I'm

pestering people around here and turning relationships into an uncomfortable experience because I'm going to be late? So what we're talking about here is gaining a little bit more perspective.

I suppose one of the greatest ways that we get perspective is by going to a funeral. When you go to a funeral you get some perspective and you start seeing things that are important in life. You start evaluating yourself, I would suggest.

Two or three weeks ago I talked to a good friend of mine who wanted to talk to me about end of life issues because she is really suffering and has to make some decisions about whether to keep fighting and go through that pain of all of that or not fight and just have as much as the joy she can in the remaining days of her life. It was a very difficult conversation, as you might imagine, but she wanted to talk to somebody about life and death issues. She's a believer and she's joyful about this. She is a very hopeful person. So it was a great conversation, but she needed to bounce some ideas off of someone.

So we talked together for a while and cried together. We shared some experiences and enjoyed some of the memories that we've had together. When we got off the phone, some of things I'm doing right now are really not all that important to worry about. When you have a conversation like that, perspective changes.

I would suggest that perspective is a key way that we as Christians think differently than other people. As soon as you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, God gives you different glasses to see differently. So embedded in the very fact that you've chosen to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, if you've made that decision, then you have a different way at looking at life than other people have. You have built in a different perspective or a point of view. It's just so beautiful to think about that. You think about people differently than other people do. Your point of view is different.

In fact let me show you a verse that describes this point of view and what it looks like in the New Testament so we can understand this a little bit better in 2 Corinthians 5:16-17. By the way, I've told you, but that's the passage we're going to next is the whole book of 2 Corinthians. When we're done with 1 Samuel we're going to go to 2 Corinthians. But it says in this passage – *So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view.* Do you see that? A worldly perspective to a worldly point of view.

We are different. We don't look at people like everybody else looks at them now. We look at every person that someone is created by God. God has designed a plan to redeem them. Whether they are saved or not, God has value in people. We don't look at people as irritants. We don't look at people as obstacles. We don't look at people as resources. We look at people a different way now because we don't think from a worldly point of view. Not just people, but Christ.

Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Now we don't view Him just as a great teacher or a leader of a movement or some distant person. We view Him as someone who is a personal Savior who lives within my heart that I have a personal relationship with because I have a different point of view now. I understand this Christianity differently now and I

embrace it and accept it. *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new has come!*

God has done something different in us. We have a different point of view. In our story David is a God-fearing man. He's a man after God's own heart, but he forgot and he needed an Abigail to step in and say, "Remember, look at a different perspective here." When she explains it to him that way – think bigger, think future, think of others – David is able to adjust and get back to the point of view that God would have for him and he is able to turn around and go back.

In a similar way Philippians 3:13-15 says – *But one thing I do (this is a future perspective): Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things.*

There's this perspective that we have as Christians when we're mature. As David is growing in his maturity, I'm growing in my maturity, you're growing in your maturity, and we have a perspective. That is a future perspective that I'm going somewhere. For David it means this: David, when you get to be king someday, you don't want to be thinking and have on your mind, on your conscience the weight of unjust bloodshed. You don't want to have done that. You don't want to carry that with you.

So I think there are sometimes when we say to ourselves in the midst of a situation that's provoking us to anger and is starting to control us that we say, "Right now, today, I'm building the yesterday for tomorrow. Today I'm building the yesterday for tomorrow." That's exactly what David is doing and Abigail is telling him, "Be careful because in the future you're going to be looking back at this day as yesterday and you don't want this to be something that is going to control you or is going to damage you or you're going to have to live with."

So one of the ways we can deal with negative controlling emotions is to allow God to give us a bigger perspective, a bigger understanding of what all of this looks like. Very strategic, I think, because if we change our perspective then it allows us to look at the situation differently and remember our belief system is embedded in our hearts.

That belief system is guiding these different things. So I want to give you another theological idea behind this idea of choosing your perspective that will allow you to do this. It's the theological idea that has to do with faith. I want to explain to you what faith is. Because you have some. You have a reserve of faith or trust and you're going to do something with it. You're going to take that faith or you're going to take that trust and you're going to embed it in some beliefs that you have. We all do that.

If you had a bad experience when you were a child and as a result of that you were hurt and then you say, "Nobody is going to protect me but me, and so I have to be in control of my world and I'm going to do everything I can and I'm going to work hard to control and set up things so that I don't get hurt," and so on, that's great. If you're being conscientious, that will help you. But there's a point in which you are not in control of your world and you can't do anymore than you're already doing. Then you start moving into anxiety. I'm anxious because of things I can't

control. Because you've embedded your faith into a belief system that is incomplete. A belief system that is tied to some event from the past or a belief system that's inadequate. We embed faith into belief system and beliefs then get energy from faith.

So think about your belief system. If you've identified a belief and you're starting to embed your faith in that, then it will grow and it will cause negative controlling emotions in your life in one point or another. However, here's what God has done for us. He's given us His word and an understanding of Himself that gives us new beliefs that we can embed our faith in. To believe that God is in control, that God is good, to believe that sin exists in our world. The reality is God doesn't prevent sin's effect from having an impact on us all the time. God has redeemed us and offers a special way for us to experience His joy and grace.

Those are five different things. Okay? God is in control; God is good; sin is rampant in our world and God doesn't always protect us from every effective sin; He's provided redemption for us and a beautiful place to redeem us from all those things; and that provides for us the ability to experience joy, hope, and so on in the process. You take those five things and you embed them over the existing belief system that you have that might be causing some negative controlling emotions.

You have to make a choice now. Where are you going to invest your faith? This is really hard, I think. To divest your faith from your "I'm in control" to saying "God is in control" is I think a real challenge for many people. But it's when we invest the energy of our faith into these new beliefs that God has given to us, then we're able to enjoy the emotionally balanced life. We're trying to get rid of all emotions. No, we're not. We're just trying to make people feel as God would be able to have us feel a very broad range of emotions.

The person who doesn't have emotional balance is like a robot just zinging right into anger. Everything that happens is going to turn into anxiety. Or everything is going to be disappointment and sadness. Those negative experiences when they take place could be difficult. They could be a challenge. They could be an opportunity. How are we going to perceive life situations? How are we going to do that? Based on the grid that's inside of our hearts. So we need to be able to look at that grid and when we feed the belief with our faith good things happen. How are we going to do that? How are we going to feed those beliefs?

I think we're going to go to the story here about Jesus and look at it just for a moment. Jesus has a message that He wants to communicate to His disciples and He often uses these words *you of little faith* to them. He wants them to take their faith and strengthen that faith in a powerful way.

So in this particular story we have a contrast in the midst of a storm in our lives. You have a storm in your life. We all have storms that are going on. But we have Jesus who is sleeping in this storm and we have the disciples who are anxious (negative controlling emotions) in the midst of the storm. And so they're saying, "*Lord, save us! We're going to drown.* Oh man, this is terrible. Bad things are happening." And really there are bad things happening, but Jesus is sleeping.

You just have to ask the question, how could He sleep? Physically I don't know how He could sleep when waves are coming over the boats. I don't understand that. But there's a point being made there that He is not upset about this. That's what's going on for Him. Why? Because Jesus had this ability to tie His emotions. He's a human person. He had emotions. He tied His emotions into beliefs and the knowledge of who God the Father is. So He's able to trust Himself to the Father in this regard. But the disciples didn't know that yet. They hadn't grown in their faith enough. So He says to them, "*You of little faith, why are you so afraid?*" I love that question. Why are you so afraid?

Like this man this week for example. He's telling me about all the good things he did with his son because his son needed to be disciplined. He put him in a break five times because his son needed to break five times. But he's angry while he's doing the whole thing. So I said to him, "Your son really has some challenges. He's got a problem. I think you did a lot of the things right, but I'm concerned about your anger. Why are you angry?"

He said, "Because my son is doing the wrong thing."

I said, "Your son is doing the wrong thing, but I'm going to ask the question again. Why are you angry? The point is you're doing good things. You do not have to be angry to accomplish this task."

I think that's what Jesus is saying here. Why are you afraid? Let's ask the question because if you follow the path of your fear you are going to find out you have a problem and that is you're not having enough faith into the beliefs that are existing for you. After all, I'm the one who raises the dead, I feed the five thousands. You've been with me all this time. Is this storm going to be a problem for me? No. God wants us to be able to trust Him and so He says, "*You of little faith, why are you so afraid?*"

Then He got up and did this very powerful thing. *He got up and He rebuked the wind and the waves, and it was completely calm.* I believe Jesus, because He lives in your heart, wants to do that in your heart. That doesn't mean that all the outside things are calm like in the story. But He wants to bring that calmness inside of your hearts so that you have this emotional balance, or peace, or what have you. Once you're emotionally balanced you can experience all these other positive emotions. You're not just driven to your favorite negative emotion. You can experience compassion. You can experience gratitude. You can experience peace, joy, and love. Those things can be experienced by you in new ways once you've been able to address this very important area of your life. Growing in faith I think is very important for all of us.

Let me just show you one more verse that talks about this in Colossians 2. It says – *So then, just as you received Christ Jesus...* So it's for Christians, like you and me, who've asked Jesus Christ to come into their lives. *So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him* (in other words, work this out), *rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.*

It's just interesting to me that thankfulness keeps showing up when we start talking about negative emotions. We talked about it in the beginning with gratefulness as she gave him a gift and David was able to shift his attention and partly to gratitude I think in the midst of that passage. Here we have thankfulness. Next we're going to talk about it and I think it's all going to

come together for you next week because we're going to look at what I think is the key to being able to unlock these controlling negative emotions in our lives.

Next week we're going to look at that a little bit more. But here I just want you to see that you can take your faith that God has given you. You have faith as a person and you have to choose where you're going to invest it. If you invest it in the negative, the belief system that you're going to end up with negative controlling emotions. But if you invest it in the belief system that God has given to us then good things can happen in your life.

That's why we come to church like this and we dig into God's word. That's why we have small groups that you can get involved in. That's why you want to be doing Bible study at home. Maybe you'll read scripture, that's great. But what if you did a Bible study on how God is in control or how God is good. When you do the study and you go deeper in your own walk with the Lord. Those beliefs you're investing in will walk you through the difficult passage of time that we experience in our lives.

God wants to do good things in our lives. It's just a beautiful thing to understand perspective and understand faith and what it is altogether.

I love this story of a five-year-old boy who's playing with toys on the floor. While grandma is doing a needlepoint quilt that she's making, as the little boy is sitting on the floor and looking at grandma. It just looks like a big mess of knots and strings hanging out and colors that don't make any sense. He says, "Grandma, what are you doing? It looks so messy what you're working on." And she says, "Come over here and sit on my lap." So the little boy comes and sits on her lap and looks at it from her point of view. What does he see? He sees a beautiful quilt that she's making.

Yes, it might look messy from down here, but God is in the midst of doing something beautiful in our lives. If we get caught up in our own point of view and sucked into these negative emotions, we're missing something God would have for us. He wants us to enlarge our perspective and see it from His point of view. When we do, faith can be embedded in beliefs in a new and powerful way that brings hope into our lives and much more ability to choose emotions that are more positive and enjoyable in our lives. Wow. It's just such a great passage. I'm enjoying the study of it.

I want to ask you a question just for my own edification and my own growth and development. If you're in a negative emotional state and you're able to move out of it like David did, he was able to move out of it with Abigail's help, I want to know what it was that enabled you to settle down besides just time. Time can kind of help us settle down. That doesn't often resolve that. But what did you do, or what did God do in you, or what did you think of, or what happened to you that allowed you to move in that direction? Do you understand the question? Okay. Let's ponder that this week. Write it down somewhere. Send it to me and let's see what God does.

Would you stand with me?

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we're coming before you now and asking for your grace because this is one of those things that's pretty embedded in our lives that we often don't even see. Often it's a mystery to find these beliefs that are challenging. So I ask, Lord, that you would give us insight that you'd help us to recognize the things that are preventing us from enjoying the life that you've called us to. Lord, we thank you again for your word and the power that it has and I pray that you would change us and conform us to your word. In Jesus' name, amen.