

# “You Fool!”

Rick Railston

Recorded on August 17, 2019

I think if we're honest with ourselves, over the years as we read God's word, there are some scriptures that bring up questions for us. These scriptures don't seem to fit, or don't sound quite right, or at the time we read them they don't make sense. One of those for me has been Matthew 5:22. Let's turn there, and you may want to put a marker there because we'll keep coming back to it. It's from Christ's first recorded sermon, the Sermon on the Mount. Let's read this verse and let me explain what I mean, why it has brought up a question for me. I'll read it out of the King James unless otherwise noted.

**Matthew 5:22** [Christ says] *But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, [that's an Aramaic word] shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.* (KJV)

In English the word *fool* means a person who acts unwisely or somebody who is silly. If we're honest with ourselves, at one time or another, all of us have either verbally called somebody a fool or thought to ourselves that somebody is a fool. It seems in this scripture that the punishment for saying or thinking that is somewhat harsh. To go to the lake of fire because you've called somebody a fool, at least on the surface, seems rather extreme. I thought possibly there was a problem with the translation—something we were missing. So I looked into that possibility just by studying about God's word. I found out some interesting facts.

There is much evidence today that the book of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew, not Greek. Papias, an early Christian writer, wrote in 120 A.D. that the book of Matthew was written “in the Hebrew tongue”. Then Irenaeus wrote a well-known book called Against Heresies, written approximately 180 A.D., in which he was combatting Gnosticism. He wrote, “Matthew also issued a written gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect.” Then according to Jerome, the church historian, there existed in his day an original copy of the Hebrew-language text of Matthew in the library of Caesarea. Jerome lived in the mid-300s to the early 400s.

I subscribe to Biblical Archaeology Review, which stated in the winter of 1986: *New evidence indicates that the gospel of Matthew was an original Hebrew composition. Indeed it is now possible to recover much of this original composition from an extant manuscript. Until now, the four canonical gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—have come down to us only in Greek. The gospels we use today in English or in other languages are translations from old Greek manuscripts. By contrast, what Christians call the Old Testament—the Hebrew Bible—is written in Hebrew with a few short sections in a sister language called Aramaic.*

Finally, there's a website called Catholic Answers. Sometimes I go there just to see what the Catholic response to a doctrine might be. They say this: *Throughout church history the accepted opinion has been that Matthew wrote his gospel in Hebrew. Some have suggested that Mark and Luke were also written in Hebrew or Aramaic.*

So what does this have to do with Matthew 5:22? If Matthew were originally written in Greek, then the translations we have today would only have to go from Greek to English, which is not a simple process but it's not as complicated as if Matthew had been written in Hebrew, then translated into Greek, and then translated for us today into English. That means it's more complicated and there is more room for error—just something to think about. With this possibility in mind, let's look at this verse to see what we can discover about the meaning of Matthew 5:22. The title of the sermon, if we want to put a humorous slant on it, is:

### "You Fool!"

We'll examine this epithet and the ramifications its use might have for us today. The first point:

#### **1. Let's examine the context.**

This is one of the chief rules of Bible study: Don't pull a scripture out of its context. You have to look at the context around it. Remember this is the Sermon on the Mount, and Christ is adding a spiritual dimension to God's law, which hadn't been fully understood until His time. In addition to that, the Jews and Pharisees, with their oral law—the Talmud—had perverted God's law by the time Christ was saying this. So the Messiah had to straighten them out and correct their errors. All of this was going on while He was giving this very first Sermon on the Mount. Let's go to Matthew 5:21 just to pick up the thread of what Christ was saying.

**Matthew 5:21** *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time ... (KJV)*

He's not saying this is accurate or inaccurate, He's saying this is what you heard, what you've been told.

21 continued) *... Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: (KJV)*

Yes, and here He was quoting the sixth commandment. In the first part of verse 22, He says,

22) *But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: (KJV)*

Here Christ is tying murder to anger. That's obvious because anger is often an emotional component of murder. It's interesting that the King James says, *whosoever is*

*angry with his brother without a cause*—, and in every interlinear version of the Bible I looked into, those words are not there. The King James is the only translation that adds the words *without a cause*. Most of the modern translations do not include those words, just as an observation.

The Greek word for judgment, which He uses in the statement, if you're angry with your brother you're in danger of the judgment, is Strong's #2920, and it means *a decision*, which is its main meaning. It can mean, subjectively or objectively, a decision for or a decision against—it has broad use. So it means a decision, and by implication, justice, especially divine-laws justice. It can also mean *condemnation*. The Contemporary English Version of the Bible translates it this way: *... if you are angry with someone, you will have to stand trial*. The New Living Translation says, *But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment*. These translations are perfectly understandable. Let's go to Ecclesiastes 7:9; this is wisdom from God through Solomon. The subject is anger and the judgment that follows as a result of that anger. We are told this truism,

**Ecclesiastes 7:9** *Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.* (KJV)

Here, the Hebrew word for *fool* means one who is silly or stupid. If you've allowed your anger—as we all have—to get control of you, you can do some stupid things, and that's what this is telling us. In Matthew 5:22, at the beginning of verse 22, Christ says we are going to have to answer for our anger, and ultimately, we'll have to answer to God. Let's go back to Matthew 5:22, to the middle of the verse, leading up to the part in question.

**Matthew 5:22** *... and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca ...* (KJV)

As I said, *raca* is an Aramaic word, and Spiros Zodhiates, in his Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament, notes that this is “a word of contempt, meaning empty, worthless, foolish.” So Christ is saying that if you call your brother empty, worthless, or foolish, in a contemptuous way, then you will be in danger and will have to answer to the council. The Aramaic Bible In Plain English translates it, *everyone who will say to his brother, “I spit on you”, is condemned before the assembly*. The New Living Translation says, *if you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court*. So Christ is warning us about what comes out of our mouths.

The problem is, it seems on the surface—with the word *raca* especially—when you're calling somebody empty or worthless, it implies you believe that person has no value as a human being, and is worse than calling someone a fool. So with *raca* you have to go before a council, but if you call someone a fool you're in danger of hellfire?

That's what got me questioning the scripture because the logic doesn't follow. If you call somebody worthless you just have to go before a council, but calling someone a fool puts you in danger of the lake of fire? There's something going on here that maybe we've missed.

Now that we've considered the context, let's go to the next point.

## 2. Let's look specifically at the third part of Matthew 5:22.

**Matthew 5:22** ... *but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.* (KJV)

Okay, we want to know what *fool* means in the Greek; it's Strong's #3474, the Greek word *moros*, and we get the English word "moron" from that word. It means, in the Greek, "dull or stupid", that is, "heedless". Strong's says of it, *morally, a blockhead*. (I don't know where they came up with that but that's what Strong's says.) Zodiates, in his Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament, gives us a hint, when he says, *It's used of a person, meaning, morally worthless*. That's a little hint there. Remember, there's ample evidence that Matthew was most likely written in Hebrew. I obviously don't have access to the original Hebrew translation—I don't know if it still exists—but the point is that it might be helpful, if Matthew were originally written in Hebrew, to look into some Hebrew words in the Old Testament that are translated "fool". Maybe we could learn something from them, and they might shed some light on the subject. If you look into the Old Testament, there are four Hebrew words that are translated "fool". Three of the four mean "silly". The fourth word is a little different and we will examine it shortly.

The first of the words translated "fool" occurs sixty-nine times, and we won't go into the original Hebrew word or its Strong's number, because it just means silly or stupid. We read about that earlier in Ecclesiastes 7:9, where it says, *anger rests in the bosom of fools*, in other words, those who are silly or stupid. Twenty-six times, the second Hebrew word for fool is translated as silly or perverse. Six times, the third Hebrew word is translated silly but can also be used to describe a drunkard. The fourth Hebrew word has a different meaning and we find it in a very meaningful scripture that could possibly apply to Matthew 5:22. Let's go to Psalm 14:1. David is writing, and for emphasis, this verse is repeated in Psalm 53:1, so it appears twice. Any time that happens you have to believe that God wants us to pay particular attention to it.

**Psalm 14:1** [David speaks; notice what he says] *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.* (KJV)

We know that scripture; we've heard it before.

1 continued) *They* [meaning those who think there is no God] *are corrupt,*

They aren't just silly, they're corrupt.

1 continued) ... *they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.* (KJV)

So does this particular Hebrew word refer to somebody who is just a silly fool or is there more to it? Let's see. Here the word for *fool* is Strong's #5036, it occurs eighteen times, and it's the Hebrew word *nabal*, which means *a villain, a vile person, a wicked person; especially an impious person*. *Impious* means to not show respect or reverence to God. So this word has a greater meaning and a different meaning than the other three that we just mentioned. Let me read now from an interesting website, with an interesting title, [hebrew.jerusalemprayerteam.org](http://hebrew.jerusalemprayerteam.org), dedicated to the knowledge of Hebrew. I've read some interesting things there. Let me quote from this website relative to this word *nabal*:

*Because of this kind of ill-translation [meaning, using the word nabal and translating it as "fool"] you'll find that the word nabal is translated many times as "fool". This distortion is severe because a fool has no choice. His foolishness is given, whereas being a villain requires malice, an evil motivation. Here is an example where the translator had softened "villain" and "wickedness" into "fool".*

So that was a choice made by a translator. From that same website, one Hebrew commentator says this:

*The English translation of the Bible is also at times disloyal to the true meanings of some Hebrew words, and tends to soften some words that sound too harsh to the translators. This was sort of an attempt to be "politically correct" in their time [in the day of the translator].*

Let's take an aside and look at an example of how the meaning of a verse has been softened over time. Let's turn to Isaiah 32:6 (we'll come back to Psalm 14 in just a second). I know out there and in the room we use all different kinds of translations. I stay in the King James unless otherwise noted, but let me give you what it says in the King James—you may not have a King James.

**Isaiah 32:6** *For the vile person will speak villainy ... (KJV)*

That's what the King James says. If you have a New King James or a King James 2000 Bible, much later—four hundred years later—they translate it, *For the foolish person will speak foolishness*. So we go from the vile person will speak villainy, to the foolish person will speak foolishness. Same words in Hebrew but a different choice by the translator, and it's quite a change in meaning. It seems obvious the word fool is not the proper word. Let's go back to Psalm 14:1, and I'll read it from the Aramaic Bible in Plain English: *The evil one has said in his heart, "There is no God". They are corrupted and they are defiled in their schemes and there is none who does good*. So you see the Hebrew word *nabal* is more severe than the other Hebrew words translated fool, and that word means vile, rather than just silly or stupid. Here's the point, going back to Matthew 5:22 (remembering that Matthew may have been originally written in Hebrew),

**Matthew 5:22** *... but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. (KJV)*

The word *fool* here is obviously not descriptive of what Christ meant, because how could simply calling someone a fool lead one to the lake of fire? But the words “wicked” and “vile” would be far more appropriate in translating that verse. Given the fact that a person who says such things—calling someone a vile, evil, wicked person—could send that person to the lake of fire makes far more sense. Christ stated that if you call somebody a vile, wicked person, you’re getting close to the lake of fire. So if wicked or vile are substituted in Matthew 5:22, then it makes perfect sense. Whosoever shall say (remember people are saying this) you wicked, vile person, Christ says that person is going to be in danger of hellfire—the lake of fire. What He is saying is that when someone says that to another person, what are they doing is condemning the person. They’re judging the person’s heart and condemning that person.

Now look at chapter 7; this is still the same sermon, the same timeframe, the same day, and the same audience. He’s continuing the sermon begun in Matthew 5. Christ says,

**Matthew 7:1** *Judge not ... (KJV)*

That Greek word for judge is *krinó*, and it means *to condemn or to damn*. He says don’t condemn, don’t damn, don’t judge somebody’s heart.

1 continued) ... *that ye be not judged.*

2) *For with what [krinó] judgment ye judge [what judgment you make, what condemnation you give], ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. (KJV)*

So it fits with Matthew 5. Now let’s go to Romans 2:1. We are not to condemn others. Christ is telling those in His audience and His disciples that we need to be careful about what we say, and we need to be careful that we don’t go into an area that’s not our responsibility, as we’re going to see.

**Romans 2:1** *Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: [again, the word *krinó*—condemn or damn] for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. (KJV)*

How many times are the words coming out of our mouth and we’re either thinking it or saying it, and in the backs of our minds—I’ve done the same thing—we know we’re stepping on thin ice, so to speak.

Finally let’s go to James 4:11, talking about condemning others by our speech or even by our thoughts, because God knows our thoughts. He knows our intent—something we need to be mindful of.

**James 4:11** *Speak not evil one of another, brethren. [That’s very clear.] He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth [there’s the Greek word *krinó* again—*

condemns or damns] *his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.*

12) *There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judges [or condemns or damns] another? (KJV)*

We see that with the Hebrew word, *nabal*, relative to Matthew 5:22 (granted, we have it here in Greek), if you were to take this word, *nabal*, and put it into Matthew 5:22 (which could well have been done originally) then it makes more sense.

Another thing to note is that Nabal is also the name of an individual in the Bible. That may be why it sounds familiar to us, and any one of us may have thought, I've heard that before—because we have. Let me quote from this same website, dedicated to the knowledge of Hebrew, where it says: *Nabal, a villain, is also a name in the Bible. As the story concerning each character unfolds, we learn how closely connected is the Hebrew name to the narrative. It often demonstrates how the biblical name foreshadows the life events of each personality. The derogatory name Nabal is actually a name of a person in the Bible.*

So let's look at this individual and see what lessons we can learn from this man's life, relative to Matthew 5:22.

### **3. Lessons we can learn from the life of the man named Nabal.**

Let's go to 1 Samuel 25; notice as we get into this it will be a very familiar story. The context is David is on the run from Saul. He is running out into the wilderness with a group of men who are loyal to him, but he's in trouble. He's being chased and his life is in danger.

**1 Samuel 25:1** *And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran.*

2) *And there was a man in Maon, [about twenty miles south of Jerusalem] whose [great] possessions were in Carmel [that's about a mile from Maon]; and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel.*

3) *Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man [Nabal] was churlish [I'm reading out of the King James] and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb. (KJV)*

I'm sure Caleb, had he been alive at the time, would have shaken his head in disapproval and gotten after Nabal. The Hebrew word *nabal*, having the fourth meaning we referred to earlier, is Strong's #05037, and it has the same meaning as #05036, which we read in Psalm 14:1 (*A fool [nabal] has said in his heart, there is no God.*). These are one number away from each other and have exactly the same meaning: *wicked; especially impious; a vile person.* So that's this man's name. The Hebrew

word implies that he was churlish—we don't use that word very often today, so it could be translated from the Hebrew as severe, hard-hearted, or cruel. This was not a good man. The New King James says *harsh* rather than *churlish*. The NIV says *surlly and mean*. An older version of the NLT says *mean and dishonest*, and a newer version says *crude and mean*. We would say today, he was a bad man—not a good man. *Nabal* means far more than somebody who is just silly or somebody who is just foolish. It means this guy is evil, wicked, and cruel. You have to ask yourself why a beautiful woman with good understanding would marry a repulsive man like this. It was probably an arranged marriage, which was common at that time. She had no control over the matter, and in those days, women just made the best of it and dealt with it. That was her lot in life. Going on in verse 4.

4) *And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep.*

5) *And David sent out ten young men [as emissaries to this man] and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name: (KJV)*

Remember, David is soon to be king, so he's saying, you young men go to him as my representatives, in my name.

6) *And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast.*

7) *And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. (KJV)*

David is saying, I'm reminding you that we treated your men well—we watched your back and didn't hurt you in any way.

8) *Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: [David then says] give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David. (KJV)*

David is, in a way, pulling himself down a bit by likening himself to a son; he's being humble and making an appeal.

9) *And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased. (KJV)*

When you think about it, the man who will soon be King of Israel is humbly asking for a handout. That is a most unusual thing to happen, but here these emissaries have come to Nabal, and David is very humbly representing himself through these men, and saying, I need some help. We're hungry, we're tired, we could use any help you could give us. What would a smart man do in a situation like that? But Nabal is not very smart and he's not very righteous.



10) *And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? [that's not very bright] and who is the son of Jesse? (KJV)*

He knew enough to know that David was the son of Jesse, nobody told him that but he knew it. Then notice what he says.

10 continued) *... there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master. (KJV)*

The point is, everybody in Israel knew David. It was an insult to David to imply that he was some servant that broke away from his master. What Nabal is doing is elevating himself above David, who at that time was in a weakened state. He was on the run and people wanted his life. Abraham Lincoln once said, "A man may conduct himself well in both adversity and good fortune, but if you want to test his character, give him power." At that moment, Nabal had a degree of power over David and he failed this test miserably. In verse 11, notice his arrogant attitude.

11) *Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be? (KJV)*

He did know, and David knew he knew, and David's servants knew he knew, but he's elevating himself, saying, look what I have, at a time when David had none of it. He's saying, I'm above you, David, so you're going to do what I want. This was a test of his character.

12) *So David's young men turned their way, [and, I'm sure they were thinking, wait until David hears of this] and went again, and came and told him all those sayings.*

13) *And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: (KJV)*

So what is David's first instinct?—pull out a sword. If you remember the name Shimei in 2 Samuel 6, Shimei was throwing rocks and dust on David as he was walking by, and he said to David, twice, *you are a bloody man*, and truth be known there was probably some merit in that accusation. Sometimes, like David, our first instincts aren't godly ones—something we all have to be careful about. Something happens, somebody says something, some condition occurs and we react. I've learned over the years, don't trust your first reaction because in many cases it's a carnal reaction, it is not a godly reaction. David fastened on his sword, saying, I want you all to secure your swords and we're going to go straighten this man out. Going on in the latter part of verse 13,

13 continued) *... and there went up after David about four hundred men; [I doubt Nabal had four hundred men, much less four hundred armed men] and two hundred abode by the stuff. (KJV)*

They guarded what they had.

14) *But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them.*

15) *But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them [as long as they were nearby], when we were in the fields:*

16) *They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. (KJV)*

What they're saying is, they didn't allow any bad things to come our way. They were like our armed guards while they were with us.

17) *Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him. (KJV)*

Wow—it's interesting the Hebrew word for "Belial" is Strong's #1100, and it means (listen to this definition because it sounds so familiar), *without profit, worthless; by extension, wickedness, evil, ungodly*. Very similar definition to *nabal*. It's interesting also that by Christ's day, Belial was a name that was used to refer to Satan. There's evidence of that in the New Testament, as we know. When his own servant described him as a son of Belial, that tells you what a horrible example Nabal set and what horrible character he had.

18) *Then Abigail [being a woman of good understanding, intelligence, and knowledge of human nature] made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses.*

19) *And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal. (KJV)*

She was taking her time loading up the donkeys and getting everything packed up, but she was afraid what David might do before she could get there, so she sent the servants ahead to tell David, our lady is coming, please don't be angry, wait until she gets here and don't do anything rash. The other thing that's important is Abigail is not thinking of herself. She's thinking (as we're going to see in just a second) of all the male servants who could lose their lives were David not restrained.

20) *And it was so, as she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them. (KJV)*

This is the man who will soon be king, who has four hundred armed men with him, and she doesn't know for certain what's going to happen—she is trying to prevent a disaster.

21) *Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good.* (KJV)

Just the opposite of what Christ tells us to do and what God tells us to do.

22) *So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall [meaning any man].* (KJV)

He's saying, you mark my words, by sundown there's not going to be a man of Nabal's left—they're all going to die and I'm going to make sure of it. This is what Abigail was worried about.

23) *And when Abigail saw David, [can you imagine?—put yourself in her position] she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face [her face was down in the dirt], and bowed herself to the ground,*  
24) *And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid.* (KJV)

She is appearing before a renowned warrior who will soon be her king. Subjects of a king don't just walk into his presence and start talking—that just doesn't happen; they are invited (of course she wasn't invited in this critical situation), and they don't start yammering in front of the king unless the king gives them permission to speak. So here's what she is asking: Let me speak—before you do anything rash, let me speak. Talk about a soft word and soft actions turning away wrath—she is the poster child for that. Remember Proverbs 15:1: A soft answer turns away wrath, and soft actions do also. She is practicing that—face in the dirt, calling him *my lord* and saying, please listen to what I have to say. She would stay there until he either said something or did something. Some kings would have taken her head off or put a sword in her back.

25) *Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal [Belial and Nabal having virtually the same meaning]: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him:* (KJV)

It's interesting when you look up the Hebrew word *folly*; it's Strong's #5039, and it goes right back to what we read in Psalms 14:1; it is *nebalah* instead of *nabal*, and it's the feminine of *nabal*, and it means *wicked; vile; villainy; evil*. She is saying he is just like his name, and folly, evil, wickedness, vileness, follow him wherever he goes. She is pointing out something David already knew. This is coming from Nabal's wife. Jumping to verse 28.

28) *I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: (KJV)*

Here again, she is taking the blame, even though she is faultless in this. She is taking the blame, and part of her reason is to help David calm down a little bit. Notice what she says.

28 continued) *... for the LORD [Yehovah] will certainly make my lord [referring to David] a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days.*

29) *Yet a man is risen to pursue thee ...*

She's referring to Saul, meaning, we know Saul is chasing you and we know your life is in danger.

29 continued) *... and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he [referring to Yehovah] sling out, as out of the middle of a sling. (KJV)*

You wonder if she is harkening back to David and Goliath and knew that story, and is saying, God Almighty can take the lives of any human being, wrap them up in a sling, twirl them around and let them go.

30) *And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; (KJV)*

She is saying, someday you are going to become king—it's obvious God is inspiring her words—

31) *That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offense of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless [without a cause], or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid. (KJV)*

Let's just stop here. Isn't it interesting that Abigail knew all about David and his character, but Nabal didn't? How is that possible? It just shows the arrogant and deceitful nature of Nabal. We see that Abigail, by her humble demeanor, by her soft words, was successful in taking the air out of David's sails, so to speak. He was intent on destroying these men, and by her intervention—kneeling on the ground, invoking God's name, calling David her lord, saying please don't do this, with her head on the ground—what an example this was of how to handle conflict. We should learn from this—how to handle conflict—because this woman set a perfect example.

32) [Notice David's reaction, not like Nabal] *And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: (KJV)*

I think David is getting the idea that God is behind this and that God inspired this woman of good understanding to take these actions.

33) *And blessed be thy advice ...* (KJV)

David wasn't above taking advice from a woman. Men need to learn that, too. He wasn't above that.

33 continued) *... and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.*

34) *For in very deed, as the LORD God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hasted and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning light any [man] that pisseth against the wall.* (KJV)

He's saying, God has inspired you to do this and I am hearing what God is saying through you.

35) *So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.* (KJV)

In other words, I have accepted who you are and what you have to say, and God is behind it; I'm going to take your advice and do what you say. At this point, all concerned (except Nabal, who wasn't there) could take a deep breath and relax. David's men could enjoy some food, Abigail could go back to her house (or the tent, if they were in shearing time) and probably collapse in a heap, thinking about what had been avoided and what could have happened. I'm sure Nabal's servants, his wife, and David's men slept well that night. They were relieved by what God did through her—relieved by David hearing her and answering her.

36) *And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king;* (KJV)

He's pretending to be the big shot in having this big feast. I've been in business situations where the president of the company puts on a big feast—and he's strutting around and proclaiming all the good he and the company have done, with lavish meals and all that—to aggrandize the self. Nabal is doing the same thing.

36 continued) *... and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light.* (KJV)

As we saw earlier, Abigail was a wise woman of good understanding. One cannot reason with a drunk and shouldn't even try. I've tried several times over the years and it does not work; it can't be done. She was smart enough to say, ok, this isn't going to

work; he's not in his right mind (not that he had a right mind anyway). He's not sober so I'll let it go until the morning.

37) *But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, [notice his reaction] that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. (KJV)*

No emotions, not happy, silent as a stone—why? Because he had been exposed openly for who he was. David and his men saw it, his own servants saw it, his wife saw it—everybody saw clearly that this man was a vile, evil person. Nabal finally realized that everybody knew it, and if it hadn't been for this woman, whom he probably hated, he would have been dead.

38) *And it came to pass about ten days after, that the LORD smote Nabal, that he died.*

39) *And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed be the LORD, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: [referring back to what Abigail said] for the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head. (KJV)*

David could just as well have said, Nabal reaped what he sowed—a biblical principle, and here we have an example.

39 continued) ... *And David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife.*

40) *And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel, they spake unto her, saying, David sent us unto thee, to take thee to him to wife.*

41) *And she arose ... (KJV)*

Notice this, remembering what Abraham Lincoln said, that one may judge somebody's character by giving them some power, and see what happens; now, all of a sudden, this woman has gone from the wife of this stupid, evil, wicked man to the wife of the future king—notice her reaction.

41 continued) ... *and bowed herself on her face to the earth, and said, Behold, [this is not in front of David but his servants] let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord. (KJV)*

What humility—true humility—this woman had. She was so thankful to be out of the mess she'd been in and was willing to wash the feet of David's servants; she was just that thankful to God and to David.

42) *And Abigail hasted, and arose, and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers that went after her; and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife. (KJV)*

We've seen the long account of Nabal, realizing it's the name of a man but also one digit away in Strong's, meaning, *wicked, evil, and vile*. We see that Nabal was more than a fool, he was wicked, he was vile, he was a villain. We also learned that the Hebrew word *nabal*, apart from the name of this man, means far more than just being a fool. It should inform us about the use of the word *fool* in Matthew 5:22. Maybe it will help us to understand better because if the original text of Matthew was written in Hebrew, even if we don't know what particular word was used for fool in the Hebrew, *nabal* certainly fits the context, and it wouldn't surprise me if *nabal* was the word used in the original Hebrew in which Matthew 5:22 was written.

#### 4. In summary, what is Christ telling us in Matthew 5:22?

Let's go back to Matthew 5:22, read it again, and see if now it makes a little more sense. I'm going to read out of the King James but I'm going to make some changes based on what we discussed.

**Matthew 5:22** *But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother [I'm leaving out the words, without a cause] shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, [if we use the word nabal, then it means, whosoever shall say, you wicked, vile person] ...*

If we say that to somebody and call them a wicked, vile person,

22 continued) ... *Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.* (KJV)

To me this makes complete sense, it's consistent with other scriptures, and here Christ is giving us two warnings; if the word *nabal* is correct, by substituting the word *nabal*, He's giving us two warnings regardless. If we condemn somebody's character or heart, we are indeed in danger, or are getting close to it; if we condemn somebody, then we will be condemned, as Christ said. The ultimate condemnation is the lake of fire, so we have to be very careful about judging somebody's heart or somebody's character. Why? Because only God and only Christ know somebody's heart; we do not. We judge the fruits, yes, but only God and Christ know somebody's heart. Let's go to Acts 1:24; we're breaking into the account—Judas is dead and the apostles are praying over which of two men should replace Judas. We know Matthias got the call, so to speak.

**Acts 1:24** *And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men ["men" is in italics and has been added], shew whether of these two thou hast chosen ...* (KJV)

So what the apostles are saying is, we don't know their hearts, we don't know their innermost thoughts, we don't know their motivations, but You do, so show us which one You want to be a replacement for Judas. Now let's go to Hebrews 4:13. I'm going to read this out of the New International Version. Notice what Paul says.

**Hebrews 4:13** *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. (NIV)*

Nothing is hidden. It's amazing how people can sin and think God doesn't know. Or they think somehow it's hidden from God, and because God doesn't strike them down right away somehow He has winked at their sin, or was off doing something else when they sinned and therefore He doesn't know.

13 continued) ... *Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (NIV)*

That's what Christ is saying. You think this, you say this, you are going to have to give account to Me, Christ, or to the Father especially—They know what our thoughts and intentions are. Judgment belongs to Christ and not to us. That's a fact. Let's go to John 5:22 and see that. God has delegated the judging part to Jesus Christ. We all have to answer to God but God has said to his Son, You will do the judging. Notice in John 5:22, we're told:

**John 5:22** *For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: (KJV)*

Verse 27.

27) *And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. (KJV)*

Jesus Christ has been a human being and God is saying, in part because of that, I am delegating to Him to judge. With that in mind, who are we to say what's in somebody's heart? If God and Christ are the only Two who know, how dare we claim to know what's in somebody's heart, because we don't—we just don't. The sad thing today is, the greater church of God is full of condemnation, isn't it? People throwing rocks at each other, saying bad things about each other, even saying things about people's motives, that are inside us—our motives. Saying they are doing it because of this or that. When we get in a position of doing that, we become judges and we are usurping Christ's authority, given to Him by the Father. I don't want God looking down at me, when we're standing naked in front of Him, saying, how dare you do that? How could you think of doing that? We have to be careful today. It's common in the greater church to judge people's motives and character. It's something we need to watch for, or we are a little closer to that lake of fire that we want to avoid. Christ is giving us a warning about condemning others.

By the example of Nabal, and the fact that his name is translated *fool* and it has a connection to Matthew 5:22, the lesson is we can never become like Nabal or behave like Nabal. The tie-in between the Hebrew word *nabal* and the individual named Nabal is no coincidence; God designed it and it's there for our learning so we can understand the meaning of the Hebrew word *nabal* by the actions of the man named Nabal. It really



cements it in our minds; it's not a coincidence. Let's go to Psalm 74:18. Here we see the use of the word *nabal* and notice how it's used and the context in which it is used.

**Psalm 74:18** *Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, and that the foolish [nabal] people have blasphemed thy name. (KJV)*

We can easily imagine a man like Nabal blaspheming God—putting himself above God. Now look at verse 21; I'm going to read out of the NIV.

21) *Do not let the oppressed retreat in disgrace; may the poor and needy praise your name.*

22) *Rise up, O God, and defend your cause; remember how fools [nabal] mock you all day long. (NIV)*

They do it today by saying there is no God, evolution proves there is no God—we don't need a God, God doesn't exist, He isn't real. Even in God's church sometimes, a blessing will occur or a healing will occur, and people will say it's because of this medicine I took, or it's because of what this doctor told me to do and I did it, or I changed my diet—and God is out of the picture. In a sense we have to be careful about mocking God's name by not giving Him credit for our blessings, our healings, for the good things that happen to us, for our protection and His rescue of us. Now let's go to Isaiah 32:6; we read this earlier, the first part of it. Here we have the LORD of hosts uttering a prophecy—that is the context. Notice what we find.

**Isaiah 32:6** *For the vile person [vile has been translated from the word *nabal*—a good translation] will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, [I'm reading out of the King James] to practice [notice what the vile person does] hypocrisy, and to utter error against the LORD [against Yehovah, to utter error], to make empty the soul of the hungry ... (KJV)*

What did Christ tell Peter three times? Feed My sheep, feed My lambs. We see here there's going to be a time—has been a time, will be a time—to utter error against Jehovah, the LORD.

6 continued) *... and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. (KJV)*

In other words, He is going to deprive the thirsty of water. We know that spiritually, water symbolizes God's Holy Spirit. So they are depriving the feeding of the sheep, one could say, physically as well as spiritually. Sadly this exists today in the greater church. Let's go to a final scripture now in Ezekiel 13:1. God is speaking to Ezekiel.

**Ezekiel 13:1** *And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,  
2) Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy [how do they prophesy?] out of their own hearts ...*

What we're being told is that their prophecy is coming out of their mind—their carnal mind. It's not coming from God. Prophecy can be foretelling of the future, but it can also be what people preach and say.

2 continued) ... *Hear ye the word of the LORD;*

3) *Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish [that is, nabal—the vile, the evil] prophets, that follow their own spirit [not God's Spirit], and have seen nothing! (KJV)*

They're saying they have this revelation or this understanding of some kind, and God is saying, no—they didn't receive that from Him because they are following their human nature, they're following what is in their own mind, and the lesson, obviously, is that we have to yield to the Holy Spirit of God. The message is we can't become like Nabal; we have to put God first, we have to yield to Him. Abigail yielded to the inspiration of God when she went in and put her face to the ground and said what she said—she was yielding to God. Nabal did just the opposite and David's first reaction was to do something that wasn't very good, and thankfully God's intervention stopped it. We have to put God first, and yield to Him and to what His word tells us. Nabal did neither.

This has been a long sermon, and people are ready to go do something else ((laughs)) but the fact is, what we've done today is just look at one verse. Just one verse in the Bible, and on the surface when we first read it, it didn't seem right or correct. How can this be? Remember, Satan will do everything possible to pervert God's word. He will provoke human beings to mistranslate God's word. He will provoke human beings to misconstrue God's word so that our image of God is incorrect, so that what we think we understand of God is incorrect—Satan will do anything that he can.

If there is something that's in scripture that we don't understand (relative to all that we know of the other scriptures), and it doesn't fit or doesn't quite make sense, we must remember that God's word is true. God's word is consistent and if there is something on the surface that doesn't look right, it's probably due to us not looking at it correctly; it could be a mistranslation, in this case from Hebrew to Greek to English, and all the possibilities for error inherent in that. That doesn't change the fact that God's word is consistent and God's word is true, and if we will put the time and the effort into it, and it's something that is a point of salvation—I'm not talking about some detail that God doesn't want us to know right now, or that we don't need to know—but if it's a point of salvation, God will reveal His truth to those who diligently seek it and are willing to put the time and effort into digging it out, so to speak. Let's remember Christ's words. Let's not condemn our brothers and sisters and remember that if we do, we can be in danger of the lake of fire.