

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 16-17TH, 2023 // 1 SAMUEL

## A VISIT TO THE LORD'S HOUSE (1 SAMUEL 21:1-9)

David is on the run from the jealous and paranoid King Saul, who is bent on killing him.

- David flees from the presence of King Saul and runs to the house of the Lord at Nob, where he meets the priest Ahimelech (vs. 1).
- Because of David's friendship with Samuel, he knew he could find refuge and help from the priests at the sanctuary of the Lord.

The priest Ahimelech was afraid to meet David: it seemed unusual to him that David was there by himself without his usual company of soldiers.

- David is in a dilemma—he could tell Ahimelech the truth and risk Saul finding out where he is, or he could scheme and produce a cover story that protects himself.
- David lies and puts false words in Saul's mouth to save his own skin (vs. 2).

We can understand and sympathize with David's decision! Many of us have done the same or worse when we're placed in critical situations.

- We often feel like we have no choice but to compromise and be dishonest when our own self-preservation is at stake.
- We may think that we get away with dishonesty and untruthfulness, but there are always consequences.

Dishonesty produced out of fear or self-preservation ends up creating a bigger mess in the end than if we just told the truth and lived honestly.

- It damages relationships and our reputation, breaks trust, produces stress and guilt in our souls, can have serious legal consequences, and brings about isolation and hypocrisy.
- We will all answer to the Lord (Matt. 12:36).

David's lie, even if we sympathize with him, will lead to the slaughter of 85 priests and the genocide of the entire city of Nob (1 Sam. 22:18-19).

- David will later deeply regret his decision to not trust the Lord and lie (1 Sam. 22:22).
- For now, David is hungry and needs bread for both now and later (vs. 3).

The only bread on hand was the consecrated bread ("Bread of the Presence," "Showbread," "Bread of the Faces," vs. 4).

- This bread was made of fine flour, baked in 12 loaves, arranged in two piles of six loaves each on a table of pure gold, covered with frankincense, and served as a memorial food offering to the Lord.
- Normally, it was only eaten by the priests.

This bread was to be replenished each week, and the priests would eat the warm, fresh bread and discard the old bread (vs. 6).

- The bread was a representation of God communing with Israel face-to-face. It pointed also to God's provision and sustaining power.
- Jesus declared in Jn. 6:35, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never grow hungry" (NIV).

Ahimelech could offer David (and his men) some of the leftover Showbread as long as they were ritually clean and had abstained from intimacy with women (vs. 4-5).

- David assured him they were clean and took some of the bread.
- The Levitical law didn't specifically say that only priests could eat the Showbread, but that it was primarily and ordinarily for them (Lev. 24:9).

The principle in the law was that the bread must be regarded as holy and couldn't be distributed casually—the custom and tradition that applied that principle restricted it only to priests.

- When Jesus' disciples were criticized for breaking religious customs by eating against the traditions of the Pharisees, Jesus referred to what Ahimelech did (Matt. 12:1-8).

The point of Ahimelech and Jesus is that human traditions are never more important than God's word itself—legalism and tradition can't ever come before human need.

- David also needed a weapon. Goliath's sword, for some reason, was there at the Tabernacle behind the ephod, and so, David took it for protection (vs. 8-9).
- A crony of Saul was at the Tabernacle that day.

There's someone at the Tabernacle named Doeg the Edomite who worked for Saul (vs. 7).

- Doeg was chief of Saul's shepherds/herdsmen (chief could also mean "violent" or "obstinate").
- Doeg is there because he was detained before the Lord—he's probably not there to worship but just to fulfill some ceremonial requirement related to working for the king of Israel.
- Doeg notices David at the Tabernacle.

## FLEEING TO GATH (1 SAMUEL 21:10-15)

### "DAVID FLED THAT DAY FROM SAUL'S PRESENCE..."

Apparently, David noticed Doeg in Nob and fled 23 miles west of Nob into enemy territory in Philistia to the city of Gath.

- David's attempt to protect himself with lies instead of trusting in God didn't last long.
- Gath wasn't exactly a safe place to be, but maybe he ran there because he thought this would be the last place Saul would look.

Gath was Goliath's hometown, and David walks in carrying Goliath's sword.

- Perhaps this is why he's recognized as the, "king of the land" who has had songs written about his exploits in battle (vs. 11).
- David knew he'd been discovered and was afraid King Achish would now be after him as the one who killed their champion, Goliath.

The title of Psalm 56 helps us understand what happened here—"A *Miktam* of David. When the Philistines seized him in Gath."

- Chapter 21 doesn't specifically tell us, but Psalm 56 seems to indicate that David was captured by the Philistines.

- David came to this pagan, godless city seeking refuge and obscurity, but instead, he was seized and captured.

David again schemes and decides he will pretend to be insane when he's brought before the Philistine King Achish.

- David scribbles on the door of the city gate and drools down his beard (vs. 13).
- It somehow works! In most ancient Eastern cultures, this kind of madness would be a sign of divine possession or spiritual affliction.

Achish doesn't regard David as any real threat, and David is allowed to leave Gath (vs. 14-15).

- Psalms 34 and 56 both came out of this bizarre experience in Gath. Psalm 56 is David's prayer for God's help, and Psalm 34 is a hymn of praise after God's deliverance.
- David probably had no business being in Gath in the first place, and his schemes to get out of there certainly weren't honest.

God was merciful to David, even when David took some wrong turns and made mistakes.

- Sometimes, we end up in places we don't need to be with messes that we've created because of our own foolish and sinful decisions.
- According to Psalm 34, David did a lot of praying in Gath, and the Lord heard and delivered him.
- God is merciful and gracious to get us out of the messes we sometimes create.

## OUTLAWS (1 SAMUEL 22:1-5)

When David left Gath, he fled to the hill country of Judah and took refuge in the cave of Adullam.

- David couldn't go to his house, the palace, the house of the Lord, or even enemy territory in Philistia, so he created a hideout in this cave, and his family came to be with him there.
- David writes Psalm 57 as he's in this cave. He writes, "Be merciful to me, O God,... for in you my soul takes refuge" (ESV).

David's done a lot of scheming, and it has gotten him nowhere.

- It seems like this cave is where David learns that the only refuge where he can truly be safe and secure is in the Lord.
- When we're afraid, alone, and discouraged, God is the source of protection and strength that our soul can trust in—other things can not give us refuge and protection like God can.

All of David's family joins him at the cave, and then God sends David an unlikely army that is probably not made up of the kind of men David would have chosen for himself (vs. 2).

- Four hundred men who were "desperate, in debt, or discontented rallied around him, and he became their leader" (vs. 3).
- These were men who were unsatisfied with their lives in Israel or with King Saul's leadership.

God surrounded David with men who wanted something different and were willing to fight for God's choice as king.

- This band of 400 will grow to 600 and will be known as "David's mighty men" (2 Sam. 23:8, ESV).
- David can't see it now, but this ragtag group of misfits that God has sent him will grow into an elite fighting force that will fight for David and the Lord's honor.

David honors his mother and father by asking the King of Moab to shelter them during this time of exile (vs. 3-4. Ruth the Moabitess was David's great-grandmother).

- David's parents will stay there until David "know(s) what God will do for (him)."
- David doesn't know exactly what God's going to do in his life, but he has faith to know that God is going to do something.

The prophet Gad then shows up and gives David a very counter-intuitive command—he is to leave his own stronghold and return to the land of Judah close to where Saul is (vs. 5).

- This probably is not what David wants to hear, but David is learning to trust God's plan for his life instead of his schemes.
- It probably wasn't easy, but David obeys the Word of the Lord.

## THE MESSES WE OFTEN MAKE...

- When we're in critical situations, sometimes we feel like we have no choice but to compromise, be dishonest, or dishonor and disobey God.
- There are always consequences for our sinful choices, and often, they hurt other people.
- No matter how big of a mess we've created because of compromise, dishonesty, and sin, there's always mercy and grace from God.

## RUNNING TO THE WRONG THINGS.

- David runs to the unbelieving, pagan city of Gath and ends up in captivity and in a shameful, disgraceful situation—but should he have even been there in the first place?
- We can take some wrong turns in life and end up in places that lead to bondage, shame, and disgrace—but God is merciful and gracious to deliver us if we're willing to call on Him.

## GOD IS OUR REFUGE.

- When we're afraid, alone, discouraged, and without hope, God is the refuge we need.
- Sometimes, we don't realize this truth until we've got nowhere else to run.
- When God is our refuge, we don't have to fear situations, people, or circumstances that threaten us because we know that God's perfect will for us is the safest place we can be.

## GOD'S UNLIKELY INTERVENTIONS.

- When we make God our refuge and trust him fully with our lives, he may start to stretch our faith by intervening in unlikely ways.
- God may send us provisions that seem small or inadequate, and He may direct us toward a decision that doesn't exactly make much sense.
- When you're trusting the Lord with your life, you may not know exactly what He's going to do, but you know He will do something.