

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 30TH-31ST, 2023 // 1 SAMUEL

A PARANOID KING (1 SAMUEL 22:6-10) "SAUL HEARD THAT DAVID AND HIS MEN HAD BEEN DISCOVERED..."

David now has a group made up of his family and 400 men in exile with him in Judah.

- Saul's informants quickly discovered David and his men when they came into Judah.
- Sitting under the tamarisk tree at the high place in Gibeah, Saul addressed his officials with his spear in hand (vs. 6).

The questions Saul asks in vs. 7-8 suggest that he now believes his officials have turned and conspired against him.

- Saul wants to know if the "son of Jesse" had ever promised them fields, vineyards, and major ranks in the military.
- Saul cannot imagine a world where someone would work and fight for something more than material reward and personal gain.

In Saul's sad, self-focused, sinful, and sick mind, there were now elaborate conspiracy theories about how everyone close to him had betrayed him (vs. 8).

- Saul is paranoid and whiny—he laments that nobody cares about him and even his own son has incited David to lie in wait for him.
- This is an example of distorted thinking—when we tell ourselves stories that seem very believable.

"THE STORY I'M TELLING MYSELF IN MY HEAD IS _____."

When emotions like jealousy, fear, or anger go unchecked, our thinking can become distorted, and we can create elaborate stories in our heads.

- We can assume to know what others are thinking and that we know their intentions, we can catastrophize and expect the worst-case scenario, and we can make broad, sweeping generalizations about complex situations.

"WE TAKE CAPTIVE EVERY THOUGHT TO MAKE IT OBEDIENT TO CHRIST..." (2 CORINTHIANS 10:5)

Not everything you believe is necessarily true—just because it feels a certain way doesn't mean it corresponds to reality.

- We have to learn to question the validity of negative thoughts about others and about complex situations by bringing them before the Lord in prayer, getting wise counsel, and being patient.

The irony is that David isn't conspiring to kill Saul; Saul is ruthless in his pursuit of killing David!

- Doeg the Edomite, Saul's chief shepherd, speaks and reports what he'd seen in Nob (vs. 9-10).
- Doeg reported that Ahimelech, the priest, had given David provisions, the sword of Goliath, and had inquired of the Lord for him.
- Doeg is an Edomite who doesn't really seem to care about following Yahweh (1 Sam. 21:7).

DOEG'S MOTIVATION FOR RATting OUT AHIMELECH SEEMS TO BE TWO-FOLD:

1. Accusing Ahimelech is a diversion of Saul's anger and suspicion away from his own staff and inner circle to the priests.
2. Doeg could benefit personally from material rewards for such information (vs. 7).
- Doeg's greed and self-preservation set the stage for an unspeakable tragedy.

SLAUGHTER (1 SAMUEL 22:11-19)

Ahimelech, the priest, and his father's entire family are brought before Saul because of Doeg's accusation (vs. 11-12).

- Notice Ahimelech is guilty before being proven innocent. Saul leads off with the question, "Why did you and Jesse's son conspire against me?"
- The story in Saul's head is that Ahimelech aided David for the sole purpose of overthrowing Saul (vs. 13).

Saul thought of himself as a victim, believing David and Ahimelech were out to get him.

- Nothing could be further from the truth! Ahimelech didn't even know that David was in bad standing with Saul (vs. 15). Besides, Ahimelech stated it was impossible for him to view David as a traitor (vs. 14).
- David was faithful, the king's son-in-law, captain of Saul's bodyguard, and honored in Saul's house.

In helping David, Ahimelech was actually trying to help King Saul (David had told Ahimelech that he was on a mission for King Saul, 1 Sam. 21:2).

- Because of Saul's paranoia, anger, sin, and rebellion, he couldn't stand to see an innocent, blameless, godly man like Ahimelech disagree with him.
- Saul commands the murder of Ahimelech (vs. 16).

When our emotions are unchecked, and our hearts aren't surrendered to the Holy Spirit, thoughtful and reasonable discussion about tense or complex situations is impossible.

- When we're NOT taking "every thought captive," we can react impulsively and aggressively out of our anger, fear, or defensiveness.
- This just hurts and harms everyone around us.

If we're unable to have others disagree with us without getting angry, attacking them, or reacting impulsively or defensively—we've got a problem.

- We're to be humble, gentle, patient, and to bear with others in love, seeking unity in the Spirit (Eph. 4), and we're not to be quarrelsome and divisive about opinions (Rom. 14:1, James 4:1-3).

King Saul is walking under the influence of his darkened, rebellious, paranoid, sinful heart and mind.

- Saul orders the murder of Ahimelech and all the priests of the Lord because they "sided with David" (vs. 17).

- None of the king's servants would carry out this awful, sadistic command against the priests of the Lord. Doeg the Edomite, who was not a Jew and probably not a worshipper of Yahweh, didn't hesitate to murder the priests and their families (vs. 18).

- Not only did Doeg kill eighty-five priests, with the apparent approval of Saul, but he then traveled an hour's distance to the city of Nob and continued his violence and bloodshed (vs. 19), striking down the entire town.

LONE SURVIVOR (1 SAMUEL 22:20-23)

Despite his best efforts, Saul didn't succeed in wiping out the Ahimelech family line—Abiathar, a son of Ahimelech, escaped and fled to David (vs. 20).

- The news of the entire slaughter of the priests of the Lord must have been unbelievably shocking and painful to hear (vs. 21).
- David's response is quite surprising and stands in stark contrast to Saul's character.

"I MYSELF AM RESPONSIBLE..." (VS. 22)

Instead of blaming Saul and letting hatred fill his heart, David looks in the mirror.

- If David had told Ahimelech the truth and stayed hidden in the Tabernacle, maybe Doeg wouldn't have spotted him.
- But David lied to Ahimelech and didn't stay hidden in the Tabernacle, which caused him to be seen by Doeg.

One of the most difficult spiritual disciplines to master is taking responsibility for our own foolish mistakes or sinful decisions.

- Admitting that we failed and did something wrong often brings with it shame and guilt, which are both uncomfortable and humiliating.
- We desire to protect our self-image and ego by shifting the blame or finding an excuse for our actions.

"THE ONE WHO CONCEALS HIS SINS WILL NOT PROSPER, BUT WHOEVER CONFESSES AND RENOUNCES THEM WILL FIND MERCY." PROVERBS 28:13

Some of us stay in places of spiritual stagnancy because we simply refuse to admit when we've sinned and failed.

- The gospel says that Jesus already took our shame and paid the penalty for our sins—we can be honest, confess, and find freedom!

David will make a lot of mistakes in his life and will, at times, fail miserably, but one attribute of David's spiritual life that is admirable is his willingness to humble himself and admit when he's sinned (2 Sam. 12:13, Psalm 51:4).

- The Lord shows David mercy because of his repentance and humility, but there are still painful and difficult consequences in David's life for his sins and poor choices.

David comforts Abiathar and invites him to stay with him where he'd be safe (vs. 23).

- David couldn't do anything about his past sins or the priests who were already murdered as a result of his lie—he confessed his guilt and sought forgiveness from the Lord.
- Now, all he could do was minister to and do good to Abiathar, the priest who was right in front of him.

YOU CAN'T CHANGE THE PAST.

- As we reflect on this past year, if we're being honest, some of the painful experiences we had were a result of our own poor choices.
- Some of us might have let our emotions go unchecked, and our thinking get distorted—out of that ungodly, self-centered frame of mind we acted defensively, aggressively, and impulsively, which hurt people.
- Some of us might have done some very sinful and shameful things that we deeply regret.
- You can't do anything to undo the mistakes you've made in your past—but you can confess your guilt and ask the Lord for forgiveness.
- Even if there are consequences for your poor choices, God is gracious to forgive and restore.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY.

- Have those closest to you ever heard you say, "I was wrong: I'm sorry, please forgive me"?
- If we can't say that without feeling the need to shift the blame or produce an excuse, we're either walking in pride or not walking by the Spirit.
- Distorted thinking and unchecked emotions will often make us self-righteous and prevent us from taking responsibility for our own wrongdoing.
- Trusting God with our future and bringing to God our past doesn't mean being passive as we dismiss yesterday and wait on tomorrow—it means being obedient and faithful today to what God puts right in front of us.
- Own your choices, live in the present, live under accountability, manage your time well, and do good and minister to what's in front of you.

GIVE GOD YOUR TOMORROW BY TRUSTING IN HIM TODAY.

- Psalm 52: A Maskil of David. When Doeg the Edomite went and reported to Saul, telling him, "David went to Ahimelech's house."
- "...I am like a flourishing olive tree in the house of God; I trust in God's faithful love forever and ever." (vs. 8)
- "I will praise you forever for what you have done. In the presence of your faithful people, I will put my hope in your name, for it is good" (vs. 9).
- You can't change the past. Take responsibility for today and give God your tomorrow by trusting in Him right now.