

1 Samuel 22
February 19, 2023

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Does God always protect his faithful people from harm? Why or why not? [Let people engage]

Transition: David has been on the run knowing full well that Saul wants to kill him. He is now completely separated from Saul's court and is considered an outlaw and a rebel. He most likely felt like an exile. This period of persecution in David's life was a part of the preparation for the throne. He was already a great soldier; now he needed to suffer in the wilderness to learn NOT to trust men, but to trust the Lord. But the good news is that God was with David and helped him. Let's read the text.

BOOK:

David at Adullam and Mizpah

22 David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and his father's household heard about it, they went down to him there. ² All those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him, and he became their leader. About four hundred men were with him.

³ From there David went to Mizpah in Moab and said to the king of Moab, "Would you let my father and mother come and stay with you until I learn what God will do for me?" ⁴ So he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him as long as David was in the stronghold.

⁵ But the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not stay in the stronghold. Go into the land of Judah." So David left and went to the forest of Hereth.

Saul Kills the Priests of Nob

⁶ Now Saul heard that David and his men had been discovered. And Saul, spear in hand, was seated under the tamarisk tree on the hill at Gibeah, with all his officials standing around him. ⁷ Saul said to them, "Listen, men of Benjamin! Will the son of Jesse give all of you fields and vineyards? Will he make all of you commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds?" ⁸ Is that why you have all conspired against me? No one tells me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse. None of you is concerned about me or tells me that my son has incited my servant to lie in wait for me, as he does today."

⁹ But Doeg the Edomite, who was standing with Saul's officials, said, "I saw the son of Jesse come to Ahimelech son of Ahitub at Nob. ¹⁰ Ahimelech inquired of the LORD for him; he also gave him provisions and the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

¹¹ Then the king sent for the priest Ahimelech son of Ahitub and his father's whole family, who were the priests at Nob, and they all came to the king. ¹² Saul said, "Listen now, son of Ahitub."

"Yes, my lord," he answered.

¹³ Saul said to him, "Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, giving him bread and a sword and inquiring of God for him, so that he has rebelled against me and lies in wait for me, as he does today?"

¹⁴ Ahimelech answered the king, “Who of all your servants is as loyal as David, the king’s son-in-law, captain of your bodyguard and highly respected in your household? ¹⁵ Was that day the first time I inquired of God for him? Of course not! Let not the king accuse your servant or any of his father’s family, for your servant knows nothing at all about this whole affair.”

¹⁶ But the king said, “You will surely die, Ahimelech, you and your father’s whole family.”

¹⁷ Then the king ordered the guards at his side: “Turn and kill the priests of the LORD, because they too have sided with David. They knew he was fleeing, yet they did not tell me.”

But the king’s officials were not willing to raise a hand to strike the priests of the LORD.

¹⁸ The king then ordered Doeg, “You turn and strike down the priests.” So Doeg the Edomite turned and struck them down. That day he killed eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod. ¹⁹ He also put to the sword Nob, the town of the priests, with its men and women, its children and infants, and its cattle, donkeys and sheep.

²⁰ But Abiathar, a son of Ahimelech son of Ahitub, escaped and fled to join David. ²¹ He told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD. ²² Then David said to Abiathar: “That day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, I knew he would be sure to tell Saul. I am responsible for the death of your father’s whole family. ²³ Stay with me; don’t be afraid; the man who is seeking your life is seeking mine also. You will be safe with me.”

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

This period of persecution in David’s life was a part of the preparation for the throne. He was already a great soldier; now he needed to suffer in the wilderness to learn *not* to trust men but to trust the Lord. All of us need “wilderness testings” to bring us closer to the Lord and to make us better equipped to serve Him.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (1 Sam 22). Victor Books.

David is now completely separated from Saul's court and is considered an outlaw and a rebel. Psalm 34 grew out of his narrow escape from Achish (1 Sam. 21:10–15) and perhaps best expresses David's trials and triumphs during his exile period. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all" (Ps. 34:19, NKJV). God was with David and helped him.

I. God Guided David's Steps (22)

David assembled a loyal band of followers at the cave of Adullam, a crowd of 400 men that eventually grew to 600 (23:13). His experiences in the cave are found in Ps 54 and 142. David would want to protect his brethren since Saul might want to slay them as well as David. Certainly this "motley crew" illustrates the kind of people who flee to Christ for refuge: people in distress or in debt (because of our sins); people discontented with life. David's band was small and despised, *but to them belonged the kingdom!* David was able to get protection for his parents at Moab since his family (through Ruth) came from there. How thoughtful of David to care for his loved ones; see John 19:26–27.

This period of persecution in David's life was a part of the preparation for the throne. He was already a great soldier; now he needed to suffer in the wilderness to learn *not* to trust men but to trust the Lord. All of us need "wilderness testings" to bring us closer to the Lord and to make us better equipped to serve Him. Saul's persecution of David is an illustration of the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. It also pictures Satan's persecution of the church today: Saul was not the king, yet he was reigning; David was the king, but he was not yet on the throne. Satan seems to be "reigning" today, but Christ is King and one day He will take His rightful throne.

Saul's murder of the innocent priests at Nob shows to what extent people will go once they have rejected the Lord. Saul was a liar and a murderer, just like Satan (John 8:44). Doeg was an Edomite, a descendant of Esau (Gen. 25:30), so his hatred for David and the priests is but another stage in the battle between Esau and Jacob. David's presence at Nob brought death to these people, so his deception only resulted in tragedy. Saul was unwilling to slay the Amalekites (chap. 15), yet he had no problem slaying innocent priests. This slaughter was a fulfillment of God's prophecy to Eli that his house would be judged; see 2:30–36. Saul was able to slay the priests, but he was not able to prevent Abiathar from fleeing to David with the ephod, the instrument for determining the will of God. What use had Saul for the ephod? He was determined to do his own will! Abiathar later became a help to David; see 23:9; 30:7.

Merrill, E. H. (1985). 1 Samuel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 1, p. 451) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

Chapter 22. David next moved to **Adullam**, about 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem and 10 miles northeast of **Gath** (v. 1). There he took residence in **the cave** along with **400** other **men** who, for various reasons, were refugees (v. 2). Meantime, sensing a threat to his own family, **David** took them to **Moab** (vv. 3–4), perhaps to live among the kinfolk of his own great-

grandmother Ruth. **David** then **went to the forest of Hereth**, east of Adullam, in **Judah** (v. 5), no doubt to be among his own people over whom God had anointed him to reign.

As soon as **Saul** found out about David's return to Judah, he began to blast his followers for their failure to communicate all they knew about David's activities, particularly his close relationship with Jonathan (vv. 6–8). To soothe Saul **Doeg**, who had seen David at Nob, told the king how the priest **at Nob** had assisted David in his need. In his paranoia **Saul** concluded that **Ahimelech** and the other **priests** were conspirators **against** him, and after calling for them and listening to their self-defense he ordered them slain (vv. 11–16). Only **Doeg** was willing to undertake the gruesome assignment. He **killed** the **85** priests of **Nob** together with their families and livestock (vv. 17–19).

David then was joined by **Abiathar** (vv. 20–23), **son of** the priest **Ahimelech**, who **fled to** David after Saul exterminated the whole priestly community. This marked the beginning of David's priestly staff which would later lead the tabernacle worship in Jerusalem.

Mathews, K. A. (1998). *The Historical Books. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (p. 117). Broadman & Holman Publishers.*

David's Deceptions (21:1–22:5). For fear of his life, David took matters into his own hands. At Nob he lied to the priest Ahimelech to save himself by receiving food and Goliath's sword. His deception would cost many innocent lives (see 22:18–19).

David mistakenly thought he could find refuge as a mercenary soldier in the Philistine city Gath, but Achish the king discovered his identity. David pretended to be a madman to save himself.

Saul Murders Priests (22:6–23). David hid in the wilderness of Adullam where he was joined by social outcasts like himself. He arranged for his family's care in Moab, and he hid in the forest of Hereth at the advice of the prophet Gad. David likely turned to Moab because of his ancestral linkage with Ruth, the Moabitess (Ruth 4:18–22), and because of Moab's hatred for Saul (see 14:47).

Saul learned from Doeg, the Edomite, that David had received comfort from the priest Ahimelech (see 21:1–9). Saul's paranoia led him to think that Ahimelech had conspired with David against him. The deranged Saul ordered the murder of the priests of the Lord! His guards refused to obey, however, because they would not harm the Lord's servants. Doeg, of Edomite descent, had no regard for the Lord and carried out the king's command. Only Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, escaped to David's camp. There he found safety under David's protection.

Philbeck, B. F. (1972). *1 Samuel. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher's Bible Commentary (p. 175). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.*

David Begins His Comeback (1 Sam. 22:1–23)

The passage—David knew that he could not successfully elude Saul within Israelite territory, nor could he withstand his forces single-handedly. After failing in his attempt to escape quietly into Gath, he moved back to Adullam on the frontier between Israel and Philistia. There in a region of steep ravines and numerous caves, David began gathering an army. In time he drew about 400 men from his own family and various malcontents from all Israel.

When Saul was informed that David was gathering troops and moving back into Israelite territory, his worst fears appeared confirmed. Seeking to make an example of anyone who offered David aid, Saul directed his wrath against the priests of Nob. Their leader Ahimelech admitted helping David, but he had been unaware of David's defection and had considered himself merely assisting an emissary of the king.

Saul's fury, however, could not be contained. Unable to get any native Israelites to take action against the priests, Saul finally persuaded Doeg the Edomite to carry out his orders. Ultimately the entire city was destroyed.

Special points—By his actions at Nob, Saul alienated the entire religious community. Conversely, David gained the friendship of many who continued to uphold religious institutions associated with the period of the judges.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (1 Samuel 22). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

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