

16: God's Presence Enduring Difficult Days

(1 Sam 21:1-22:2)

When life gets hard and fear feels overwhelming, it's easy to wonder if God is still near. Today we follow David through desperate days of hunger, danger, and betrayal—and we discover the same truth Jesus taught His followers: God is not absent in our struggles. He is near to the brokenhearted, attentive to our cries, and faithful to protect those who trust Him.

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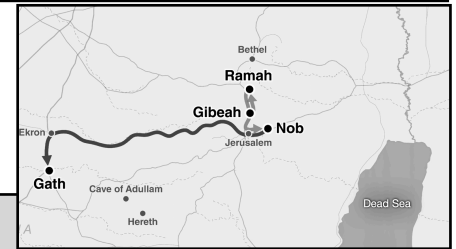
* All Scripture is from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) unless otherwise noted.

CATCH THE CONTEXT

1 Samuel 20:41-42

David got up from the south side of the stone Ezel, fell facedown to the ground, and paid homage three times. Then **he and Jonathan kissed each other and wept with each other**, though David wept more. Jonathan then said to David, "Go in the assurance the two of us pledged in the name of the LORD when we said, **The LORD will be a witness between you and me and between my offspring and your offspring forever.**" Then David left, and Jonathan went into the city.

All of this had taken place within about 2 miles of where David had fled and Saul had pursued (Ramah). King Saul's palace was in Gibeah, and this is likely where David and Jonathan had said their goodbyes. But now David has to get a move on, so he left Gibeah and took a 5 mile journey to Nob.



1 Samuel 21:1-2

David went to the priest Ahimelech at Nob.

Ahimelech was afraid to meet David, so he said to him, "Why are you alone and no one is with you?" David answered the priest Ahimelech, "The king gave me a mission, but he told me, 'Don't let anyone know anything about the mission I'm sending you on or what I have ordered you to do.' I have stationed my young men at a certain place."

Why was Ahimelech was afraid to meet with David? It seems that many who knew of King Saul's strange behaviors were walking on eggshells. Maybe the priest had heard about the on/off relationship between Saul & David.

- Once again we see a LIE in order to protect an innocent life from the wicked King Saul. David speaks as if he is on a special mission from the king - a mission that no one else can no about.

1 Samuel 21:3-4

Now what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread or whatever can be found."

The priest told him, "There is no ordinary bread on hand. However, there is **consecrated bread**, but the young men may eat it only if they have kept themselves from women."

David answered him, "I swear that women are being kept from us, as always when I go out to battle. The young men's bodies are consecrated even on an ordinary mission, so of course their bodies are consecrated today." So the priest gave him the consecrated bread, for there was no bread there except the Bread of the Presence that had been removed from the presence of the LORD. When the bread was removed, it had been replaced with warm bread.

This **consecrated bread** is also known as the "showbread" or "bread of Presence." It is described in Ex 25:23-30 and Lev 24:5-9 where 12 loaves (# of tribes) - 2 rows of 6 loaves - placed on a golden table in the Holy Place of the tabernacle and temple - a place that only priests could enter. This bread was to be eaten by the priests as they worked in the tabernacle/temple. Any excess bread would be removed the fresh bread replaced it on each Sabbath (Lev 24:8-9).

The priest would allow this bread to be given to David, BUT...**only if they have kept themselves from women**. Sexual abstinence was a regular practice of people engaged in holy war (cf. Deut 23:10-15; Josh 3:5; 2 Sam 11:11-12).

1 Samuel 21:5-6

David answered him, "I swear that women are being kept from us, as always when I go out to battle. The young men's bodies are consecrated even on an ordinary mission, so of course their bodies are consecrated today." So the priest gave him the consecrated bread, for there was no bread there except the Bread of the Presence that had been removed from the presence of the LORD. When the bread was removed, it had been replaced with warm bread.

So, the **bread** that had been **removed** and **replaced**, was still available to eat. So, while this bread was intended for priests alone, feeding starving men was considered to be a weightier law, and therefore allowed. Jesus pointed to this very story when Jesus said...

Luke 6:3-4

Jesus answered them, "**Haven't you read what David** and those who were with him did when he was hungry—how he **entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat?** He even gave some to those who were with him."

Jesus poses a question without ever asking it: "*So did King David break God's Law? And if so, why were David and his men not condemned for their actions?*" They weren't attempting to *misuse* the bread. The hunger of King David & his holy men overrode the written rule. And - based on the evidence - God was good with that. In fact, Jesus was good with that, and he called Himself "THE LORD OF THE SABBATH" (Lk 6:5)!

1 Samuel 21:7-9

One of Saul's servants, detained before the LORD, **was there that day**. His name was **Doeg the Edomite**, chief of Saul's shepherds. David said to Ahimelech, "Do you have a spear or sword on hand? I didn't even bring my sword or my weapons since the king's mission was urgent."

The priest replied, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the Valley of Elah, is here, wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you want to take it for yourself, then take it, for there isn't another one here." "There's none like it!" David said. "Give it to me."

Doeg, is evidently undergoing some sort of punishment, **detained** to help the priests. Doeg is going to become a problem. David knows he and his men are in danger, he asks the priests for any available weapons.

The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed. Think about what memories this brings back to David, when the young shepherd boy trusted Yahweh to give him victory over the massive mighty man called Goliath! So too, in the midst of running from his enemy, Yahweh reminds David to remember God's provision & Presence.

1 Samuel 21:10-11

David fled that day from Saul's presence and went to King Achish of Gath.

But Achish's servants said to him, "**Isn't this David, the king of the land?**

Don't they sing about him during their dances: Saul has killed his thousands, but David his tens of thousands?"

David is in trouble as long as he stays anyone in Saul's dominion, so David has to flee to another nation - into the Philistine territory of **Gath**. Gath was one of the 5 main Philistine city-states, the hometown of Goliath! And now David travels there... *carrying the sword of Goliath!* This demonstrates that David feared Saul more than he feared the Philistines.

It's unlikely that David showed up and announced who he was, but David's name had become famous beyond his own people. People from Gath had heard about David's accomplishments which were even greater than Saul. When David saw their stares & heard their whispers he foresaw trouble coming.

1 Samuel 21:12-15

David took this to heart and became very afraid of King Achish of Gath, so **he pretended to be insane in their presence**. He acted like a madman around them, scribbling on the doors of the city gate and letting saliva run down his beard. "Look! You can see the man is crazy," Achish said to his servants. "Why did you bring him to me? Do I have such a shortage of crazy people that you brought this one to act crazy around me? Is this one going to come into my house?"

This might be seen as a moment where David didn't trust Yahweh, OR - as we have seen before - an astute recognition of danger and a wise tactic to push the target off himself. The people of Gath had captured David & brought him to King Achish. In fact, David writes about what he was going through in Gath in Psalm 56.

1 Samuel 22:1-2

So David left Gath and took refuge in the cave of Adullam. When **David's brothers and his father's whole family** heard, they went down and **joined him there**. In addition, every man who was desperate, in debt, or discontented rallied around him, and **he became their leader**. About four hundred men were with him.

Here is David, the one whom God has anointed as king...running for his life! Yet, he is surrounded by people who love him and believe in him.

Both Ps 34 & Ps 56 are believed to be written regarding these difficult days David was facing.

Psalm 34:15-18

The eyes of the LORD are on the **righteous**, and **His ears are open** to their cry for help. The face of the LORD is set against those who do what is evil, to remove all memory of them from the earth. **The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, and rescues them** from all their troubles. **The LORD is near the brokenhearted; He saves those crushed in spirit.**

Psalm 56:3-4

When I am afraid, **I will trust in You.** In God, Whose word I praise, **in God I trust; I will not be afraid.**

What can mere mortals do to me?

They could KILL you, but David has learned that God CAN protect him (remember when God caused Saul & all his agents forget about catching David and go into prophet mode?).

From an eternal perspective - **what can mere mortals do** to us?

John Woodhouse notes that approximately 1/3 of each of the Gospel accounts of the New Testament is focused on the last week of Jesus' earthly life & the difficulties He faced, just as about the last third of 1 Samuel focuses on the troubles of David.¹

About 1,000 years after David's difficult days, the first followers of Jesus would understand how David felt. Jesus had given them a heads up and what to expect during difficult days - and in the middle of it all - followers of Jesus were to remember God's Presence Enduring Difficult Days.

Matthew 10:24-26a

A disciple is not above his teacher, or a slave above his master. It is enough for a disciple to become like his teacher and a slave like his master. If they called the head of the house 'Beelzebul,' how much more the members of his household! Therefore, **don't be afraid of them...**

If you follow Jesus, and people don't like Him...they probably won't like you either. If they persecuted him, they'll probably persecute you too. Don't be surprised. Yet, we aren't to fear them.

Matthew 10:28-31

Don't fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; rather, **fear Him Who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.** Aren't two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's consent. But even the hairs of your head have all been counted. So **don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.**

For most of us, DEATH is one of the greatest things we FEAR. But Jesus says there is something much scarier - facing the judgment of the CREATOR of life. In light of that reality, we should be much more concerned about what God thinks that what anyone else thinks.

✓ Today is the day you can move from FEAR of death & judgment and put trust in the One Who offers to become your Heavenly FATHER. *Turn from your sin and trust in Jesus.*

If you are a follower of Jesus, you need to know that your Heavenly Father knows what you are going through. You are VALUABLE and God CAN protect you - you can know God's Presence Enduring Difficult Days. And one day when God doesn't intervene to extend your life on THIS side of eternity, you will open your eyes and KNOW God's Presence to a degree you can't fully appreciate right now.

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

* Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Christy** (850-673-9764), **Caleb** (864-315-8015), **Gary** (850-673-2507), **Betty** (850-973-3266), or another follower of Jesus soon!

* Or call our **deacons & wives: Alan & Christy Androski** (850-464-1428), **Steve & Debbie Bass** (850-673-7952), **Noel & Patricia Barnes** (813-767-2881), **Derek & Emily Beaty** (813-763-4421), or **Tim & Joni Hughey** (850-464-1156).

¹ John Woodhouse, 1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 416.

Discussion questions

These discussion questions are designed to help you LIVE what you LEARN with your Family, Friends, or Small Group.

1. God's Provision in Unexpected Ways (1 Samuel 21:3-9 & Luke 6:3-4)

- Did David disobey God by eating the consecrated bread? If not, why not?
- What does this tell us about the value of protecting innocent human life?
- After reading what Jesus said about this event (Luke 6:3-5), talk about the significance of what it means when Jesus says, "Then he told them, 'The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.'"
- What memories/reminders are attached to David taking the sword of Goliath for his own protection?
- Share about a time when God provided for you in an unexpected/powerful way.

2. Fear, Faith, and Wisdom (1 Samuel 21:10-15)

- When David fled to Gath and acted insane before King Achish, do you see that as a failure of faith or an act of wisdom? Why?
- What can we learn about balancing **trust in God** with **using practical wisdom** in dangerous or stressful situations?

3. God's Presence in Hard Places (1 Samuel 22:1-2)

- David found refuge in the cave of Adullam surrounded by broken, desperate people. How might God use your own "caves" (difficult seasons) to shape your faith and draw others to Himself?
- In what ways have you experienced God's nearness during your most difficult days?

4. Learning from David's Psalms (Psalm 34:15-18 & Psalm 56:3-4)

- Read Psalm 34:15-18 and Psalm 56:3-4. How do these passages help us face fear today?
- What specific truth from these Psalms can you cling to the next time you're overwhelmed or uncertain?

5. Living Fearlessly with Eternal Perspective (Matthew 10:28-31)

- How does Jesus' teaching in Matthew 10:28-31 change the way you view fear, persecution, or even death?
- What does it look like to "fear God more than men" in your daily life?

6. Group Share

Before closing, invite your group to share one current "difficult day" they're walking through—and then pray together, thanking God for His **presence** and **power** even in hardship.