

1 Samuel 21:1-22:5 – The Fugitive

September 25, 2022

Background

1. David and the Priests of Nob

Then David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest... 1 Samuel 21:1a (ESV)

...And Ahimelech came to meet David, trembling, and said to him, “Why are you alone, and no one with you?” 1 Samuel 21:1b (ESV)

And David said to Ahimelech the priest, “The king has charged me with a matter and said to me, ‘Let no one know anything of the matter about which I send you, and with which I have charged you.’ I have made an appointment with the young men for such and such a place. 1 Samuel 21:2 (ESV)

...casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7 (ESV)

Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever is here.” 1 Samuel 21:3 (ESV)

And the priest answered David, “I have no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread—if the young men have kept themselves from women.” 1 Samuel 21:4 (ESV)

“You shall take fine flour and bake twelve loaves from it; two tenths of an ephah shall be in each loaf. And you shall set them in two piles, six in a pile, on the table of pure gold before the Lord. And you shall put pure frankincense on each pile, that it may go with the bread as a memorial portion as a food offering to the Lord. Every Sabbath day Aaron shall arrange it before the Lord regularly; it is from the people of Israel as a covenant forever. And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, since it is for him a most holy portion out of the Lord’s food offerings, a perpetual due.” Leviticus 24:5–9 (ESV)

And David answered the priest, “Truly women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition. The vessels of the young men are holy even when it is an ordinary journey. How much more today will their vessels be holy?” 1 Samuel 21:5 (ESV)

So the priest gave him the holy bread, for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence, which is removed from before the LORD, to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away. 1 Samuel 21:6 (ESV)

He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?... And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. Matthew 12:3–4, 7 (ESV)

Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD. His name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's herdsman. 1 Samuel 21:7 (ESV)

Then David said to Ahimelech, "Then have you not here a spear or a sword at hand? For I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste." 1 Samuel 21:8 (ESV)

And the priest said, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you struck down in the Valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you will take that, take it, for there is none but that here."... 1 Samuel 21:9a (ESV)

...And David said, "There is none like that; give it to me." 1 Samuel 21:9b (ESV)

"...and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand." 1 Samuel 17:47 (ESV)

2. David flees to Gath

And David rose and fled that day from Saul and went to Achish the king of Gath. 1 Samuel 21:10 (ESV)

And the servants of Achish said to him, "Is not this David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances, 'Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands?'" 1 Samuel 21:11 (ESV)

And David took these words to heart and was much afraid of Achish the king of Gath. 1 Samuel 21:12 (ESV)

So he changed his behavior before them and pretended to be insane in their hands and made marks on the doors of the gate and let his spittle run down his beard. 1 Samuel 21:13 (ESV)

Then Achish said to his servants, "Behold, you see the man is mad. Why then have you brought him to me? Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to behave as a madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?'" 1 Samuel 21:14–15 (ESV)

Be gracious to me, O God, for man tramples on me; all day long an attacker oppresses me; my enemies trample on me all day long, for many attack me proudly. When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me? Psalm 56:1–4 (ESV)

You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book? Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call. This I know, that God is for me. In God, whose word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me? Psalm 56:8–11 (ESV)

I must perform my vows to you, O God; I will render thank offerings to you. For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life. Psalm 56:12–13 (ESV)

I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. Psalm 34:4–7 (ESV)

3. David in the Cave of Adullam

David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam... 1 Samuel 22:1 (ESV)

Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by. I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me. Psalm 57:1–2 (ESV)

When my spirit faints within me, you know my way! In the path where I walk they have hidden a trap for me. Psalm 142:3 (ESV)

I cry to you, O Lord; I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living." Attend to my cry, for I am brought very low! Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me! Psalm 142:5–6 (ESV)

...And when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him. 1 Samuel 22:1 (ESV)

And everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul, gathered to him. And he became commander over them. And there were with him about four hundred men. 1 Samuel 22:2 (ESV)

And David went from there to Mizpeh of Moab.... 1 Samuel 22:3 (ESV)

...And he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and my mother stay with you, till I know what God will do for me." 1 Samuel 22:3 (ESV)

And he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold. 1 Samuel 22:4 (ESV)

Then the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not remain in the stronghold; depart, and go into the land of Judah."... 1 Samuel 22:5 (ESV)

...So David departed and went into the forest of Hereth. 1 Samuel 22:5 (ESV)

Applications

1. **When life falls apart, we must not try to save ourselves by lies, trusting worldly sources of security, turning to godless places, or trusting in godless people. Turn to the God who loves us, has not forgotten us, and promises to fulfill his purposes for us.** David tried to save himself by lying to the priests of Nob, trusting in the failed security of the sword of Goliath, going for safety to the godless place of Gath, and trusting in the godless people of that city. All of them failed him and led to disaster. It was only when David got on his knees and called out to the God who loved him that he found rescue and hope. The same is true for us.
2. **We may turn our back on God, but He will never turn His back on us.** God loved David and didn't leave David in the brokenness of his messy choices. As David says in Psalm 34, this poor man cried, the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his trouble.
3. **After God saves us and restores us, He calls us to trust Him and obey His Word, even if it is hard.** After God answered David's prayers for rescue, through the prophet Gad, God eventually called David to move from the safety of the Moabite fortress and return to Israel to face his future even though his life was in danger.

Life Group Questions

1. What is one thing you didn't understand from the message? What from the message stuck out as important for your life?
2. Share about a dark moment in your life. Like David, what were the dead-end strategies, places, and people you turned to in that time that only ruined your life?
3. It didn't take long for David to go from a man of faith who was known for his faith-filled victory over Goliath, to telling lies, trusting the failed sword of Goliath, and moving to Gath for safety. What does this teach us about how fast and how far we can fall when put under extreme stress? What can we learn from David's life to better handle our times of stress and pain?
4. David was concerned for his elderly parents and translated that into practical action. Is there a lesson in this for us?
5. When David was set free from the Philistines, what were the practical ways God restored in 1 Samuel 22:1-5 before sending him back to Israel to face suffering and his future?
6. Read Psalm 56. Knowing David wrote this psalm as a summary of his near-death experience in Gath, where do we see David's Gath experiences in these verses? What does David teach us in this psalm about how to handle hard times?
7. EXTRA CREDIT: Read Psalm 57 and 142. Knowing David wrote these psalms when he was alone in the cave of Adullam and reflecting on his near-death experience in Gath, what do these psalms teach us about relying on God in times of trouble?