

I Samuel Lesson 21

I Samuel Chapter 21

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Memory verses for this week: *Micah 3:8 But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.*

Introduction: We continue our study on Samuel this week. In last week's lesson, we studied about the protection that Jonathan brought to David. He determined what King Saul's plans were and then came and gave instructions by a code when he shot three arrows into the field. Jonathan realized his father intended to kill David, and sent David away to wander for several years before he took the throne as king of Israel.

I. David Flees to Ahimelech

1 Sam 21:1 Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee?

1 Sam 21:2 And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place.

In David's flight from Saul, he first came to Nob. This was the city where the tabernacle was set up. The priest in charge was still under the leadership of Ahimelech who was of the line of Eli. Because of this, this priest was not actually recognized by the Lord. Ahimelech is fearful of David because he came alone. When Ahimelech asked him why he was alone, he told him a lie and said that he was there for the king, taking care of some business. This was a lie, and breaks one of the ten commandments.

Exo 20:16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

David claimed to be on urgent business for the king. He also told the priest that he had sent servants to a place where they were to meet. In Ecclesiastes, it says that two are better than one, and this can be true in a large number of situations.

Eccl 4:9 Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for

their labour.

Eccl 4:10 For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.

Eccl 4:11 Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?

Eccl 4:12 And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

1 Sam 21:3 Now therefore what is under thine hand? give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present.

1 Sam 21:4 And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women.

David is hungry from his journey and asks the priest for five loaves of bread. He tells David that there is no common bread available. All that was there was the 12 loaves that were dedicated on the table of showbread. Those 12 loaves were kept on the table that was in the holy place of the tabernacle. These were being replaced with fresh bread, and the priest tells him that he and his men could have it if they met certain qualifications.

1 Sam 21:5 And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel.

1 Sam 21:6 So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the showbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.

David assured the priest that the men were undefiled and could receive the bread appropriately. The priest believes David and gives the bread to him as he requested. Jesus referred to this account when he was defending the disciples for taking grain and rubbing it out on the Sabbath day.

Mat 12:3 But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him;

Mat 12:4 How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the showbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?

David referred to the young men as vessels that were holy. Christians that know Jesus as Lord and Savior are vessels mete for the master's use.

2 Tim 2:21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

We are so blessed when we know Christ as our Lord and Savior. It talks about this treasure we've been given in our earthen vessels.

2 Cor 4:6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

2 Cor 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

Matthew Henry said that God did not condone David's false tales.

David, under pretence of being sent by Saul upon public services, solicits Ahimelech to supply his present wants, v. 2, 3.

1. Here David did not behave like himself. He told Ahimelech a gross untruth, that Saul had ordered him business to dispatch, that his attendants were dismissed to such a place, and that he was charged to observe secrecy and therefore durst not communicate it, no, not to the priest himself. This was all false. What shall we say to this? The scripture does not conceal it, and we dare not justify it. It was ill done, and proved of bad consequence; for it occasioned the death of the priests of the Lord, as David reflected upon it afterwards with regret, ch. 22:22. It was needless for him thus to dissemble with the priest, for we may suppose that, if he had told him the truth, he would have sheltered and relieved him as readily as Samuel did, and would have known the better how to advise him and enquire of God for him. People should be free with their faithful ministers. David was a man of great faith and courage, and yet now both failed him, and he fell thus foully through fear and cowardice, and both owing to the weakness of his faith.
2. Had he trusted God aright, he would not have used such a sorry sinful shift as this for his own preservation. It is written, not for our imitation, no, not in the greatest straits, but for our admonition. Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall; and let us all pray daily, Lord, lead us not into temptation. Let us all take occasion from this to lament, (1.) The weakness and infirmity of good men; the best are not perfect on this side heaven. There may be true grace where yet there are many failings. (2.) The wickedness of bad times, which forces good men into such straits as prove temptations too strong for them. Oppression makes a wise man do foolishly.

II. Doeg, the Edomite

1 Sam 21:7 Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name was Doeg, an Edomite, the chiefest of the herdmen that belonged to Saul.

1 Sam 21:8 And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste.

1 Sam 21:9 And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is no other save that here. And David said, There is none like that; give it me.

The servant of Saul, Doeg, the Edomite, was listening to the conversation between David and Ahimelech. This man was a servant of Saul and was over his herdmen. David now asks Ahimelech if he could supply him with a sword or spear. He lies again and says that he failed to bring a sword or any weapon due to the king's business requiring haste. The priest says that there was a sword there, the sword of Goliath whom David slew earlier. In our Christian lives, we need to be sure to put on the whole armour of God.

Eph 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Eph 6:11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Eph 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Eph 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Eph 6:14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

Eph 6:15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

Eph 6:16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

Eph 6:17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

As before, there truly was no justification in David telling the lies he told. Probably, it all comes back to a lack of faith at this time. In our walk here on earth, we will have times of great faith as David had exemplified in his willingness to take on Goliath. Then when life beats us down as it had with Saul's

oppression, we have moments where we are not so strong. We must turn back to God in that hour and seek God's face that he might give us more faith.

Heb 11:4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

Heb 11:5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

No doubt David was aware of God's protecting hand upon his life as he delivered him three times from Saul. Also, God gave him a friend he could truly depend on in Jonathan. All good gifts in this life come from God.

J. Vernon McGee had some good points about how we need to not hurry in haste to do God's work. We need to be slow and steady just as the pace God sets.

Now I would like to call your attention to the way that last clause is misquoted. I have heard it said that certain things should be done for the Lord and done quickly because "the King's business requires haste." To begin with, let's understand what David is actually saying. He does not have a sword or a spear because he had to leave in a hurry. Also David is not on a mission for his king—he is misrepresenting here.

I am here to say that the King's business does not require haste. Have you ever noticed how patiently God works? He is going to work that way in the life of David. David is going to be schooled and trained in the caves of the earth. That is God's method. God is in no hurry. Moses was in a hurry, and he wanted to deliver the children of Israel forty years before God was ready. Moses was not ready either. God put him out in the desert and trained him and schooled him for forty years until he was ready. God brought His Son into the world thirty-three years before He went to the Cross! The thing that marks the work of God is not haste but the fact that He works slowly and patiently. Oh my, how impatient we become! I am sure my wife would say, "Yes, and you are not the one to talk to people about patience because you are a very impatient man."

That is true, I am impatient. I am trying, now that I am retired, to learn the art of waiting before the Lord. That is something we all need to learn. David needed to learn it too. God has had to train His men like that. God has had to teach patience to every man He has ever used. God moves and works slowly. If you want to see the way He moves, look how long it takes Him to make a diamond or a redwood tree. God's work does not require haste, friends. That is not God's method.

David is saying something in this chapter that is not true, as the context reveals. David was not on a mission for the king, and “the king’s business requires haste” is in no way applicable to Christian work.

III. David Flees Gath

1 Sam 21:10 And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath.

1 Sam 21:11 And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?

1 Sam 21:12 And David laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath.

When David fled the country, he head to the leading city of his old enemies the Philistines. David’s reputation preceded him, and he was not well received. The counselors of Achish, king of Gath, told him of the song that the women sang about Saul slaying his thousands while David slew ten thousands. When David heard this, he realized his life could be in danger. Going to this place showed a lack of faith on David’s part.

We need to realize that the tougher the going gets, the slower and more direct we need to follow God’s directions. Human nature wants us to jump out and do something great to change our circumstances sometimes, when most of the time, being very quiet and listening to that still small voice of the Holy Spirit is what we should do. God will never leave us nor forsake us, and His guidance will never lead us wrong. Our own desires and direction can lead us down a primrose path. But the Holy Spirit guides us in the perfect paths that always lead us to the best and the righteous way.

1 Sam 21:13 And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard.

David feels he must do something to save his life, and begins to act like a mad man and let the spittle fall down on his beard. He deceives them into thinking that he has lost his mind. He acts like a crazy man and scratches at the door like a dog and lets the spittle run down on his beard. When you get out of God’s perfect will for your life, you can do some really strange things when you are letting yourself guide you. This was a shameful way for the future king of Israel to act, and it was David guiding himself to do this. We certainly don’t see him praying or seeking God’s will at this certain time of his life. Perhaps he doubted God could protect him from these Philistines, but how many times in the past had God done that very thing.

1 Sam 21:14 Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad:

wherefore then have ye brought him to me?

1 Sam 21:15 Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence? shall this fellow come into my house?

Achish responds by rebuking the men for bringing David to his court. He tells them that he had no need for a mad man. David remembered this account when he wrote the 34th Psalm. It says in verse 1 “When he changed his behavior before Abimelech; who drove him away and he departed.” I want to read the first nine verses of that Psalm, and I’ll let you determine whether David learned anything from his mistake or not.

Psa 34:1 A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed. I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

Psa 34:2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.

Psa 34:3 O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.

Psa 34:4 I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

Psa 34:5 They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.

Psa 34:6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

Psa 34:7 The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

Psa 34:8 O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

Psa 34:9 O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.

No doubt David learned much from walking on his own. He learned to fear God and seek his face when troubles come our way. David called King Achish, “King Abimelech” which was a title often used for Philistine kings. We can see from the verses that we read that David repented of his wrong and his lack of faith. He said he would bless the Lord at all times.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.