

THE ROCK COMMUNITY CHURCH

1 Samuel 21

“David on the Run”

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Speaker: Pastor Dave Briggs

Anaheim Hills, CA | RockCC.com

29:46

Good morning. So I have a question for you. Have you ever had your life turned upside down by something that was out of your control?

30:36

Maybe something with your health, something changed with your family, your finances, your career, your world. And suddenly you found yourself on a road you did not want to be on. While you were on that road, did you discover that God works in unexpected ways?

31:01

Today we're going to be with David as he starts his new life as an outcast and a fugitive. And we're going to see together some interesting ways that God is going to bless and protect David. Let's pray together, please.

31:19

Father, we are so grateful for your word, for your truth, for your love in our life. And we now ask your Holy Spirit to give us understanding so that we will hear everything you have for us this morning.

31:34

In the name of Jesus, amen. Our passage is 1 Samuel chapter 21. If you want to use the Bible that's under your chair, it'll be on page 297. I have good news for you. Chapter 21, if you were here last week, is much shorter than Chapter 20 was.

31:54

David, as we know and we've seen, was very loyal to King Saul, wasn't he? He accomplished each and every task that the king gave him, and yet, in Chapter 19, Saul made five attempts to kill David. Then last week, in Chapter 20, David had to hide in a field for days to keep out of Saul's sight, while Saul's son Jonathan did his best to try to help David.

32:20

But in the end, all Jonathan could do to help his best friend David was to send him away out of Israel for as long as his murderous father Saul was alive. David and Jonathan were in tears at the end of our chapter when they said their goodbyes to each other.

32:41

And then Jonathan got to go home, but David could not go home. He had to run for his life. So, where will he go? How will he live? How will he survive? What will his life be like now? We'll start to find out in chapter 21.

33:04

Let's read it together. Then David came to Nob to Ahimelech the priest, and Ahimelech came to meet David trembling and said to him, why are you alone and no one with you? And David said to Ahimelech the priest, the king has charged me with a matter and said

to me, let no one know anything in the matter about which I send you and with which I have charged you.

33:25

I've made an appointment with the young men for such and such a place. Now then, what do you have here on hand? Give me five loaves of bread or whatever is here. 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.

33:43

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?

33:55

So the priest gave him the holy bread, for there was no bread there but the bread of the presence which was removed from before the Lord to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away. Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day detained before the Lord.

34:11

His name was Doeg, the Edomite, the chief of Saul's herdsmen. 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.

34:27

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.

34:40

And David said, there is none like that. Give it to me. And David rose and fled that day from Saul and went to Achish, the king of Gath. And the servants of Achish said to him, Is not this David, the king of the land?

34:54

Did they not sing to one another of him, in dances Saul has struck down his thousands and David his ten thousands? And David took these words to heart and was much afraid of Achish, the king of Gath.

35:06

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. And Achish said to his servants, Behold, you see the man is mad.

35:20

Why have you brought him to me? Do I lack madmen? Did you have brought this fellow to behave as a madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house? What a start. Chapter 21 describes day one of David's new upside down life where he is going to be chased by Saul for years.

35:44

Let's look at a map for just a moment. David left Gibeah, that's at the top of the red dot, and then he traveled about five miles south to a town called Nob. Nob was also called the city of priests. It's where the tabernacle was.

36:00

Let's look at verse 1. Then David came to Nob to Ahimelech the priest, and Ahimelech came to meet David, trembling, and said to him, why are you alone and no one with you? Ahimelech was the high priest.

36:15

He was also the great grandson of Eli. We haven't talked about Eli for a while. Do you remember Eli? We met Eli in chapter one. Eli was the high priest and the second to last judge of Israel, and he was also the man that raised and tutored a little boy named Samuel.

36:36

When Ahimelech saw David, the priest could sense something was wrong. Maybe it was because David looked so tired and maybe dirty from the last few days. Ahimelech was welcoming, but he was nervous. He asked David why the son-in-law of the king was alone without his bodyguards or his soldiers or his attendants.

36:58

It was dangerous for David to travel alone, and David was fully aware of that, but of course he had no choice. Let's see what David told the priest in verse 2. 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.

37:19

I have made an appointment with the young men for such and such a place. David might have planned what he was gonna say, or maybe the priest's question caught him totally off guard, but either way, David said he was on a top secret message, mission from the king, and he was forbidden to disclose any of the details.

37:42

Okay. We know that's a lie, don't we? But it stopped Ahimelech from asking any further questions that David would not want to answer. But it does leave us with a question. Was it wrong for David to lie?

38:06

You know, there are many places in the Bible like this one where God's imperfect servants do questionable things, that God does not condemn in the text, nor does He approve it in the text either. The Bible is an open and honest book that just simply reports the facts so we know what happened.

38:26

David told a lie. Maybe you and I have told a lie once or twice. We should not judge David, or we should not think the Bible is teaching us the lying is okay, because Scripture very clearly, strongly, and consistently condemns lying as a sin.

38:45

When David then went on to answer the priest's question about why he was alone, and he said, I've told my men to meet me at a certain place in town. Okay, that sounds like a lie too, doesn't it? Because he was alone.

38:57

However, in the New Testament, Jesus confirmed that there were men with David at Nob, and we'll read Jesus' words in a few minutes. Let's look at verse 3. So after telling a lie to the priest, David kind of wanted to change the subject real fast.

39:16

So he goes, now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread or whatever is here. What you got to eat around here, right? You know, David probably would have loved to have sat down with the priest for counsel, for prayer, for spiritual guidance, but he was in a terrible hurry and he needed food.

39:36

He was oddly specific though, wasn't he, about asking for five loaves of bread instead of saying, do you have some bread around here? Maybe it was because he could see the five loaves, but we aren't told why.

39:49

But the number of the loaves really isn't important, it just got me thinking. But what is important is the bread itself. Let's look what the priest said in verse 4. The priest answered David and said, I have no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread if the men have kept themselves from women.

40:11

Holy bread is sacred bread that only the priests were allowed to eat. God gave Moses very specific instructions about this bread because this bread was a representation of Jesus, the bread of life. Let's look at Leviticus together, chapter 24, verses 5 to 9, and as we read these words, remember, these are God's words speaking to Moses about this bread.

40:37

God said, you shall take fine flour and bake twelve loaves from it. Two tenths of an ephah, that's about 8 cups, 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.

40:54

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, that means Aaron's descendants, the future priests.

41:16

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. Holy bread was also called showbread or the bread of the presence. It was carefully, you could hear the instructions, it was carefully prepared each Sabbath as a food offering for the Lord.

41:36

The bread was replaced each Sabbath with fresh hot bread, but only, that's the key, only the priests were allowed to eat this bread. David and his men were not priests, so the law of Moses made it unlawful for them to eat the bread.

41:55

Let's go back to verse 4 one more time to look at what the priest said. And the priest answered David and said, I have no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread if the young men have kept themselves from women.

42:07

So as Ahimelech considered actually giving this holy bread to David, he asked if his men had a basic level of ceremonial cleanness. Verse 5, let's look at David's answer. David answered the priests, truly women have been kept from us as always when we go on an expedition.

42:26

The vessels of the young men are holy even when it's an ordinary journey. How much more today will their vessels be holy? David said he and his men always keep away from women when they're on a special military mission and even on ordinary assignments.

42:43

And then, I think, he made sort of a joke. He said, how much more today will their vessels be holy? But I have to tell you, I don't get the joke. I've tried really hard this week, but I don't get it.

42:59

Maybe David was saying the vessels or their bodies were especially holy now because of that mission they were on, or maybe he meant, well, after we get the holy bread we'll be extra holy. I don't know. The scripture isn't clear what he meant, and the scripture

isn't clear if Ahimelech got the joke either, so I don't feel so bad that I didn't understand it.

43:20

Let's read on, verse 6. 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.

43:35

Let's think about this. Ahimelech gave David the only bread they had for him and the other priests to eat. He gave him everything they had. What an act of kindness and selfless generosity from this high priest.

43:54

But it does raise another question for us. Did David sin by eating holy bread that is reserved only for priests? We're not going to take a vote. Let's see what Jesus said in the New Testament. Matthew chapter 12 verses 1 to 4.

44:17

At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and they began to pluck heads of grain and eat. But when the Pharisees saw it they said to him, look your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.

44:31

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

44:44

but only for the priests? If you know anything about the Pharisees, you know they love their rules. In addition to the law of Moses, wow, they wrote a whole bunch of their own rules for the people to obey.

45:02

So when they saw Jesus' disciples walking along, just plucking a few heads of grain, the Pharisees considered that harvesting work, and therefore they said, that's forbidden by the law on the Sabbath.

45:16

And then Jesus turned to them and said, well, haven't you ever read the passage that the Rock Community Church are going to read on what is today, the 18th of August, 2024? No, he kind of said that. He said, he asked them, haven't you read what David did when he and his men were hungry, how they ate holy bread that God's law said was only for priests?

45:38

This question really put those hypocritical, nitpicking Pharisees in a tough spot because the Pharisees revered David as a hero and Jesus asked them, why do you forgive David who clearly did what is unlawful, but you want to condemn Jesus' disciples for doing something that was not wrong at all?

46:03

Then let's read what Jesus said just a few seconds later in verse seven. Jesus said, if you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless. Jesus quoted the prophet, Hosea, to rebuke the Pharisees for loving the letter of the law, but totally ignoring its spirit.

46:29

The mercy, the priest Ahimelech showed toward David was more precious to God than just heartlessly enforcing the letter of the law, which is what the Pharisees did. Jesus told the Pharisees, If they understood the heart of God, they would understand the Word of God much better.

46:51

Let's go back to our passage in verse 7. We have this note dropped into the middle of the conversation between Ahimelech and David. Now here's this note for us. Verse 7, now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the Lord.

47:05

His name was Doeg, the Edomite, the chief of Saul's herdsman. If this was a movie, the music would become really ominous here to let us know that Doeg being in the tabernacle at this moment, at this point in time, was going to be a whole lot of bad trouble later on in the story.

47:28

What kind of trouble is Doeg going to cause? Come back next week. Or you can go home and read chapter 22. It's not good. Doeg was an Edomite. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau. Esau was the firstborn son of Isaac and the twin brother of Jacob.

47:49

If you remember the story of Esau and Jacob, when Esau was a teenager about David's age, he got really hungry. Teenagers do that. He got really hungry and he foolishly sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of soup.

48:08

Esau hated his brother after that. Esau became the father of the Edomites and Jacob became the father of the Israelites, and those two nations never really played very well together throughout their history.

48:23

Doeg probably did not come to the tabernacle to worship Israel's God. It's more likely he was just going through the motions so he could work for Saul. Let's look at verse 8. Then David said to Ahimelech, Then have you not hear a spear or a sword at hand?

48:42

For I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste. We have to remember something. David's life was in complete upheaval. He is a teenager. He is trying to figure out what in the world he needed to do to survive.

49:08

And maybe the sight of Doeg made him realize, yeah, he didn't have any weapons. So David tried to explain to the priest why he didn't have a weapon with him. And if Ahimelech wondered why any kind of king's mission would be so urgent that a warrior like David wouldn't have time to grab his sword, well, the priest was too gracious to ask.

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David kind of sorta told the truth here. Because the king's business did require haste. Not in the way he presented it, but in real life it did because the king's business was to kill David on sight.

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So yes, David was in great haste when he left and he really did not have time to go home and get his weapons, but he kind of left those details out of his story. Let's look at verse 9. And then, oh wow, what a moment for David.

50:13

And then the priest said, the sword of Goliath, the Philistine, whom you struck down in the valley of Elah, behold, it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you will take that, take it, for there is none but that here.

50:30

And David said, there is none like it, give it to me. Do we see the unexpected ways the Lord is providing for David on day one of his upside down new life? God led him to Nob where a very caring priest just happened to have the right amount of food for him and his men.

50:54

And that priest just happened to have the greatest sword in the land for David too. That sword was the one that David used to separate Goliath's head from his body. That sword represented to David God's incredible faithfulness and protection.

51:11

What a huge blessing that had to be for David to have that sword in his hands with him on this part of his life, just as he's starting out on this absolutely uncertain journey. He would have been happy to have any kind of weapon, anything with a sharp point on it, he would have been happy to have.

51:30

But here he said happily, there's no sword I'd rather have in the whole world, I'll take it. Goliath's sword being at that tabernacle at that time was a wonderful surprise for David wasn't it? Our God has such an unpredictable way of exceeding our expectations, doesn't he?

51:55

You just never see it coming. God has unpredictable ways to exceed our expectations. Verse 10, and now David rose and fled that day, this is all one day, fled that day from Saul and went to Achish, the king of Gath.

52:15

David had to leave the country so he headed sort of Southwest to Gath. Gath, does that name set off any alarms in your head? Gath. Gath was one of the five major Philistine cities and was also the hometown of Goliath, that's right.

52:39

David left Nob and ran straight. for arch enemy territory with the sword of Goliath to Goliath's neighborhood. What could possibly go wrong? Let's look at a map. You see here Gath was about 25 miles from Nob, so it was the nearest Philistine city.

53:01

David believed he could find refuge with Achish, the king or the lord of Gath. Again, we need to understand about David here. He didn't have a lot of options about where he could run and hide. Gath was certainly an extremely dangerous place for him to go.

53:23

However, David knew it was one place Saul would not go. Let's go to verse 11. 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 and dances?

53:42

Saul has struck down his thousands and David his ten thousands. Verse 11 jumps forward in time a little bit, to David has now made that 25 mile run or walk, and I'm sure he prayed every step of the way.

53:54

And now he stood before King Achish in the hand of his servants or guards, and they said to the king, isn't this David, the king of the land? That phrase, king of the land, was a term the Philistines used to refer to their prominent leaders.

54:08

So they're saying, isn't this David, one of the most prominent leaders of Israel? And then they went on to say, isn't this the guy they sing and dance about that Saul had struck down his thousands and David his ten thousands?

54:22

Apparently that song from chapter 18 had become a big hit on the Gath top 40. Let's look at verse 12. David's sitting there listening to all this, right? And David took these words to heart, and that was now much afraid of the king of Gath.

54:41

If David had hoped and prayed, he would be unrecognizable among the Philistines in Gath. Well, he got a very rude awakening here. Up until now, up until this moment, David was overwhelmed and consumed with fear over what Saul was going to do to him.

55:00

And now all of a sudden when he heard these men talking, he had a new fear. What is King Achish going to do to him? As scared as David was, he put his confidence in the Lord. Now how do we know that?

55:15

Our passage doesn't say that. Well, fortunately, David wrote Psalm 56 based on this experience he had in Gath. Let's just look at one portion of Psalm 56. I picked out one, but it's a good one. If you are ever afraid, maybe you are not ever afraid, but if you are ever afraid, write this first down.

55:39

Keep it with you. David wrote, 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? David was afraid, not because he didn't have enough faith, but because fear is an automatic human response to danger.

56:05

We can't help feeling scared when unwanted things happen to us or look like they might happen to us. David was in a terrifying situation, right? But then David said, I put my trust in you, in God whose word I praise, in God I trust.

56:22

Trust in God is not an automatic human response. Panic is our automatic human response. But we can learn, we really can learn to trust God like David did by reading and obeying his word and remembering God's faithfulness

56:41

to us in the past when we're in trouble and when we are afraid. Then he wrote, I shall not be afraid. This does not mean that David had some magic switch that you and I don't have. David did not just switch off his fear emotion.

57:01

No, he put his trust in Almighty God instead of giving in to the fear. That's a choice. He chose to keep his eye on the Lord. He chose to trust in God instead of panic and we can do that too. We really, really can.

57:18

We can do that too. What can flesh do to me, he asked. David knew God was in control. This is the beautiful thing. What can flesh do to me? God was in control, not Achish, not those big guards he had with him, not King Saul.

57:35

God was in control. Who do you and I turn to when we are much afraid? Who we trust makes all the difference in the world. Let's look at verse 13. 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 spittle run down his beard.

58:01

Now in earlier chapters we learned David was a brilliant musician and now we find out he was an actor too. And being a good actor, he used fear for his motivation to put on quite a show. He started scratching on the doors of the gate like an animal and he drooled all over his beard.

58:17

In ancient times, it was a terrible offense to spit in a, to spit, I'm not making this up. It's an offense to spit in another man's beard or to let spit run down your own beard. It's not too popular in our culture either, by the way.

58:33

Let's read the last two verses, 14 and 15. Then Achish said to his servants, as David is putting this act on. Behold, you see the man is mad? Why then have you brought him to me? Do I lack madmen that you've brought this fellow to behave as a madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house? Achish is kind of funny.

58:53

Now it's possible, it's possible that Achish knew David was just pretending. And maybe he thought he would let David go because David would become useful to him in the

future. And in fact, in future chapters of 1 Samuel, we'll see that Achish and David do form an alliance.

59:11

And Achish, you've got to love him. He said to his men, look, it's obvious this guy is mad. Why did you bring him to me? Don't you think I have enough madmen around me already? I mean clearly the king is throwing shade at his servants, so I like that.

59:23

And then the king said, what do you want me to do? Invite him to hang out in my house? Achish told his servants that he wasn't going to show David any hospitality, but they better not hurt him when they let him go.

59:37

This could have turned out really badly for David, couldn't it? But the Lord protected David among the Philistines, just like God protected Daniel in the lion's den. So this is where our passage ends, but it's not where the story ends because David also wrote Psalm 34.

59:57

Let's look at the title of what it says in your Bible on the title for Psalm 34. It says it's of David, written by David when he changed his behavior before Abimelech so that he drove him out and he went away.

01:00:11

So Psalm 34, when you go home and read it today, reveals what David was thinking and praying about when he put on a show in front of King Achish. Now I know what you're thinking, okay, why does the Bible say Abimelech when we know it was Achish?

01:00:28

I had to look this up, but the word, the name Abimelech is not a proper name in this case. It was a title, a royal title, the Philistines used, much like the Egyptians would use the word Pharaoh. Let's look at just quick little passages of Psalm 34, then we'll be done.

01:00:47

Psalm 34:6. David wrote this, this poor or afflicted man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. David is talking about himself, isn't he? When he needed food, God gave him holy bread.

01:01:07

When he needed strength, God gave him the sword of Goliath. And when he needed to be rescued in Gath, the Lord reached in and stirred the heart of the king and saved him. And David knew the Lord saved him in Gath, not his acting ability.

01:01:24

First, let's look at Psalm 34:8. David writes this, another verse we need to keep close at hand. O taste and see, the Lord is good, blessed is the man who takes refuge, man and woman, who takes refuge in him.

01:01:42

Now, David's talking to us, isn't he? He's encouraging us. Actually, in the language he's begging us. He's begging us to come, experience the goodness and faithfulness of God, especially when we're scared. Especially when we're scared, because the Lord is full of unexpected blessings for those who trust in Him.

01:02:06

I cannot tell you how true that is. I'm sure you know as well. The Lord is full of unexpected blessings for those who trust in Him, especially when you're scared. Psalm 34, verse 22, the last one we'll look at.

01:02:22

The Lord redeems the life of His servants. None of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned. The word redeem means to buy out, to purchase a slave's freedom. Those who are redeemed by the Lord are

01:02:40

released. They are set free from their bondage to sin. Those who put their faith in the Lord are saved from condemnation before a holy God. Jesus would later say, I think in the Gospel of John, he said, truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life.

01:03:03

He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life. Only the Lord can rescue us from the evil in this world. Only the Lord can set us free from the power of condemnation through sin. And only the Lord can turn our upside down lives right side up.

01:03:31

That's our takeaway. We can't help being scared in this broken world, but let's not give in to the fear. Let's trust our all powerful God and expect unexpected blessings on whatever road God gives us to walk or run.

01:03:54

Our prayer team is going to be down here to pray with you at the end of the service. We also have a prayer wall. Please don't ignore the prayer wall. It's there for you. Just go out the door to your right and you have a prayer request, anything going on in your life.

01:04:08

You do not have to sign it. Just write it down and we will be praying for you. Let's bow our heads together now. I would like to read just a few more verses of Psalm 34 for us to make this our closing prayer to the Lord.

01:04:24

I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the Lord. Let the humble hear and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt his name together.

01:04:40

O fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him, have no lack. When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. The Lord redeems the life of his servants. None of those who take refuge in him will be condemned. O father, we thank you in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen.