

David in Desperation

I Samuel 21:1-15

Introduction: February, 1948. Dov Joseph decided not to evacuate Jerusalem which caused the fighters to fight with desperation knowing what was at stake. Sometimes desperation leads us to do extraordinary things- but usually it causes us to do sinful things

- I. Ahimelech's kindness
 - a. (1Sa 21:1-2) David, fleeing from Saul, comes to the city of Nob.
 - b. To Ahimelech the priest: In his uncertain circumstances David went to the right place – the house of the Lord.
 - c. Ahimelech was afraid when he met David: It seemed unusual to Ahimelech that a prominent man like David wandered around the villages of Judea by himself. It made Ahimelech think something was wrong so he asked David, "Why are you alone, and no one is with you?"
 - i. Ahimelech did not know about David vs. Saul
 - ii. David may have looked like a weary traveler- tired, disheveled
 - d. The king has ordered me on some business: This was a plain lie. David came to the house of the Lord but he lied to protect himself.
 - i. We may understand why David lied, but we must recognize that it was still wrong
 - ii. There would be consequences, and David would soon regret this
 - iii. We should consider not what David is doing, but what is God doing here? Providing for his servant during a desperate, low point. Give us this day our daily bread...
 - iv. Gen 32:9-10- we receive daily bread not based on our godliness, but on His mercy and grace
 - v. We face many dark times- but are our basic needs being met??
 - e. (1Sa 21:3-6) David asks for and receives holy bread.

- i. There is no common bread on hand; but there is holy bread: The tabernacle of the Lord had a table that held twelve loaves of bread, symbolizing God's continual fellowship with Israel.
- ii. The importance and meaning of the bread is found in its name. Literally, showbread means "bread of faces." It is bread associated with, and to be eaten before, the face of God. F.B. Meyer calls the showbread "presence-bread." To eat the showbread was to eat God's bread in God's house as a friend and a guest of the Lord, enjoying His hospitality. In that culture eating together formed a bond of friendship that was permanent and sacred.
- iii. The table of showbread was a small table made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold. It measured 3 feet by 1.5 feet and was 2 feet, 3 inches high. It stood on the right side of the Holy Place across from the lampstand and held 12 loaves of bread, representing the 12 tribes of Israel. The priests baked the bread with fine flour and it remained on the table before the Lord for a week; every Sabbath day the priests would remove it and eat it in the Holy Place, then put fresh bread on the table. Only priests could eat the bread, and it could only be eaten in the Holy Place, because it was holy.
- iv. "Showbread" also was called "bread of the presence" because it was to be always in the Lord's presence. The table and the bread were a picture of God's willingness to fellowship and communion (literally speaking, sharing something in common) with man. It was like an invitation to share a meal, an extension of friendship. Eating together often is an act of fellowship. God was willing for man to enter into His presence to fellowship with Him, and this invitation was always open.
- v. Mark 2:13-17- Jesus exemplified this when He ate with tax collectors, prostitutes and the sinners of Jewish society. But this was more than just a gesture of friendship on earth. Jesus came to call sinners to Him, make

them right with God, so that they could enjoy everlasting fellowship with God.

- vi. See John 6:35, 49-50
- vii. God so desires our fellowship that He was willing to come to earth from heaven as our “bread of life” to give eternal life to all those who would partake in it.
- viii. Revelation 3:20
 - ix. The Lord’s Supper is our remembrance of God’s love and the access we have to God through Christ’s broken body on the cross
- f. The showbread was to be fresh- fresh fellowship!
- g. If the young men have at least kept themselves from women: The showbread was not to be treated casually. Ahimelech asked David for a basic level of ceremonial cleanness before he gave him the showbread.
- h. In giving David the bread, he broke with priestly custom. He rightly understood that human need was more important than Levitical observance.
- i. When Jesus’ disciples were criticized for breaking religious custom by eating against traditions, Jesus used what Ahimelech did to explain the matter (Matthew 12:1-8). Jesus approved of what Ahimelech did, and Jesus honored him by standing on Ahimelech’s same ground. See Deut 23:25.
 - i. Ancient rabbis taught that on the Sabbath a man could not carry something in his right hand or in his left hand, across his chest or on his shoulder; but he could carry something with the back of his hand, with his foot, elbow, or in the ear, on the hair, in the hem of his shirt, or in his shoe or sandal. On the Sabbath one was forbidden to tie a knot – except a woman could tie a knot in her girdle. So if a bucket of water had to be raised from a well, one could not tie a rope to the bucket, but a woman could tie her girdle to the bucket and then to the rope.
 - ii. “The Jews were so superstitious, concerning the observance of the Sabbath, that in their wars with Antiochus Epiphanes, and the Romans,

they thought it a crime even to attempt to defend themselves on the Sabbath: when their enemies observed this, they deterred their operations to that day. It was through this, that Pompey was enabled to take Jerusalem.” (Clarke)

iii. Jesus violated their extra traditions, not the Word of God

j. The point with Ahimelech and Jesus is powerful: human traditions are never more important than God’s word itself. If God had said, “Only the priests can eat this bread,” it would have been different. But God never said that.

II. Goliath’s Sword

a. (1Sa 21:7-9) David receives a sword

b. David can have the sword of Goliath in his arsenal but he would be better equipped if he had the faith that killed Goliath. Is David now trusting in Philistine swords more than the shepherd tools?

c. V. 9- there is none like that!

Tried Weapons

We propose to treat this text with special reference to the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

1. There is none like it for variety of adaptation.

2. As for argument, where can we find a blade more keenly argumentative?

3. I would impress all young readers with the comprehensiveness of the Bible, with its universality of adaptation to all the circumstances and necessities of human life.

4. There is none like it for ease of carriage. There are weapons that are very difficult to carry, but the sword of the Lord is not one of them.

5. There is none like it for universality of use. Children and sick persons can use it; the poorest man can avail himself of it; the busiest man may find a moment for its exercise.

6. The sick can use this sword of the Lord. (*J. Parker, D. D.*)

d. V. 7- David is spotted by Doeg

i. This is almost a haunting forewarning

ii. He was at Nob when Ahimelech gave David the sword of Goliath, and not only gave information to Saul, but when others declined the office,

himself executed the king's order to destroy the priests of Nob, with their families, to the number of 85 persons, together with all their property. (1 Samuel 21:7; 22:9,18,22; Psalms 52)

III. David at Gath

- a. (1Sa 21:10) David flees to Gath- persona non grata
- b. David's attempt to protect himself with clever lies instead of trusting God to protect him didn't bring lasting results. He had to flee.
- c. Went to Achish the king of Gath: David was now among the Philistines. He must be discouraged or deceived to think he could find peaceful refuge among these enemies of Israel – especially as he carried Goliath's sword into Goliath's hometown.
- d. We must not let desperation cloud our judgment
- e. David is recognized- David took these words to heart, and was very much afraid: David knew he was discovered and understood that King Achish would not let the man who killed Goliath go.
- f. David's words in Psalm 56 help us understand what happened here. The title of that Psalm identifies as the song he wrote when the Philistines captured him in Gath. Apparently, although 1 Samuel 21 doesn't detail it, the Philistines captured David when he came to Gath. David thought he could find anonymity or sympathy among the ungodly Philistines in Gath, but he was wrong. Psalm 56 describes David's journey from fear to praising as a prisoner in Gath.
- g. (1Sa 21:13-15) To escape, David pretends madness.
- h. Here David played the fool, and played it well
- i. David's plan worked. Achish decided that this wasn't David after all, or if it was he was such a pathetic specimen that he may as well let him go.
- j. Psalm 34 is David's declaration of joy when he escaped from Gath with his life. The title of Psalm 34 reads, A Psalm of David when he pretended madness before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed.
- k. Through this foolishness and desperate experience, Psalms are written!

- i. Psalm 34:4, 6, 15-22
- ii. David is especially joyful because the Lord got him out of a mess that David himself made. God's amazing goodness is shown when He delivers us when we don't really deserve it.

Conclusion:

- Through this desperation, nevertheless there is praise!
- Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.