

1 Samuel 21:1-22:23
God Protects His People

Introduction

1. Last week we looked at the covenant between David and Jonathan
 - a. We saw that this covenant relationship provided David with certainty in uncertain times
 - b. We saw how it reflected uncommon loyalty
 - c. We also saw that it came with a cost
 - d. Finally, we saw that it provided David with a measure of peace, even though his life was in constant danger from King Saul
2. I find it interesting that immediately on the heels of Jonathan's benediction, "Go in safety (e.g. peace, assurance)" that the author describes five events in David's life that seem the complete opposite of safety or peace:
 - a. Specifically, Jonathan was referring to the assurance David could have knowing that because of the covenant they swore to one another before God there would be peace forever between David and Jonathan, and their descendants
 - b. Could it be that David would need that assurance as he and Jonathan were forced to go their separate ways and David would face additional, ongoing challenges?
 - c. Each of the five events in our passage today have two things in common:
 - 1) One is desperation
 - 2) The second is God's provision

A. The LORD meets David's needs (21:1-9)

1. In the first event David finds himself on the run from King Saul
2. He flees to the small Levite city of Nob where he meets a priest named Ahimelech (1a)
3. At first, Ahimelech is afraid because David is alone (1b; just he and a small number of men):
 - a. he may have heard that Saul was trying to kill David
 - b. He may have feared that Saul would retaliate against him and the other priests if they helped David (as is the case)
4. David concocts a story about why he is in Nob (2):
 - a. It may have been an act of self-preservation (e.g. he didn't want word to get back to Saul)
 - b. It may have been to protect the priests (e.g. no culpability if they didn't know Saul was chasing him)
 - c. The text doesn't give any indication that David's dishonesty was sin
5. We learn that David and his men were hungry so the priest gives them the "**bread of the Presence**" (3-6; or what some call the show bread):
 - a. This was the bread that was consecrated and offered to God
 - b. The Law dictated that only priests were to eat it (Leviticus 24:9)
 - c. However, since there was no "**ordinary bread**" the priest made an exception and gave the consecrated bread to David and his men
 - 1) Jesus references this event in Matthew 12 and justifies David's actions indicating that breaking the Law in this instance was not sin

- 2) This was likely because David and his men needed food and all that the priest had was the show bread, and David's needs outweighed the religious rule
 - 3) This was also the case when Jesus healed on the sabbath (Mark 3), where the need of the individual outweighed the religious rule
 - 4) One might say this is no different than violating the rules against dishonesty or lying in times of war or when trying to protect one's own life or that of his family
6. We also learn that David has no weapon to defend himself so he retrieves Goliath's spear (8-9)
 7. So David was in desperate straits—he is on the run with no food and no weapon—and God provides for both

<p>B. The LORD protects David from the King of Gath (21:10-15)</p>
--

1. In the second event, David flees to an unlikely location—the Philistine city of Gath
 - a. Gath was the home of Goliath
 - b. David may have thought he could find refuge with King Achish because they shared a common enemy, Saul (10)
 - c. However, when the servants of Achish recognized David as an Israelite hero David **“took these words to heart and greatly feared Achish king of Gath”** (11-12; likely believing that Achish would kill him)
 - d. So, David pretended to be insane, and therefore no threat to Achish (13)
 - e. Achish bought the act and spared David's life (14-15)
2. So, again, David was in desperate straits—trying to find refuge among one enemy while fleeing another—and again God protects him

<p>C. The LORD provides safety for David's family (22:1-5)</p>
--

1. In the third event, David is on the run again.
2. First, he flees to a cave in Adullam (1-2)
 - a. His brothers and “all his father's household” hear about it and join him (1)
 - b. Then a remarkable thing happens—another 400 men join him
 - 1) These were men who were desperate, just like David—they were **“in distress...indebt...discontented”** (2)
 - 2) They were looking to David for leadership so he **“became captain over them”**
3. Then, he flees to Mizpah of Moab and seeks protection from the king for his family (3-5)
 - a. The location of Mizpah is unknown
 - b. David may have sought protection for his family there because of his Moabite heritage—his great-grandmother, Ruth, was a Moabite
4. We find here three groups that were desperate—David and his men, David's family, and another 400 men (and likely their families)—and once again, God provides for them

<p>D. The LORD preserves Abiathar, the priest (22:20-23)</p>
--

1. When Saul learns that David was discovered at Nob, he orders Doeg, the Edomite, to kill all the priests (6-19):
 - a. He first accuses his servants of conspiring against him (6-10)
 - b. Doeg the Edomite speaks up and informs Saul that Ahimelech the priest provided help and support to David (9-10)
 - c. Saul orders the killing of not just Ahimelech, but all 85 of the priests
 - d. Doeg takes it a step further and kills all the women, children and livestock

2. Only one man escapes, Abiathar the son of Ahimelech, and he flees to David for protection (20-23)--This is interesting in two regards:
 - a. First, Abiathar is the last living descendent of Eli:
 - 1) Had he been killed it would have fulfilled God's prophecy to cut off Eli's house from the priesthood (1 Samuel 2:31-33)
 - 2) Yet, he goes on to serve as David's priest for his entire 40 year reign
 - 3) It appears he was a faithful and loyal priest until Solomon banished him from the priesthood for supporting his older brother, Adonijah as king (as final fulfillment of God's Word to Eli—of Abiathar Solomon said, **"Go to Anathoth to your own field, for you deserve to die; but I will not put you to death at this time, because you carried the ark of the Lord God before my father David, and because you were afflicted in everything with which my father was afflicted"** (1 Kings 2:26)
 - 4) It appears that God protected Abiathar and allowed him to continue serving as priest because of his loyalty and faithfulness
 - b. A second interesting aspect to this portion of our study is David's response to Saul's wicked murderous act (22-23):
 - 1) He expressed remorse and felt a sense of personal responsibility for Saul's murderous act at Nob
 - 2) He committed himself to protect Abiathar—apparently out of a sense of duty and obligation--and in fact he served as David's priest for all of his reign

3. As in each of the three previous events in our study today, God provides for His people—in this case, the faithful priest Abiathar

E. The LORD delivers Keilah from the Philistines (23:1-5)

1. In our final event, we find the people of Keilah in desperation as they are being plundered by the Philistines
2. When David is told of their plight, he asks the LORD if he should attack the Philistines
3. When LORD assures David (2x) that He will deliver Keilah, David attacks and utterly destroys the Philistines and delivers the people of Keilah

Conclusion

1. At the beginning of our study in 1 Samuel, I mentioned that there were three theological truths or themes that would permeate the book
2. One of those themes is that God protects His people
3. Today we had five examples of this:

- a. He took care of David and his men when they were hungry
 - b. He protected David from the King of Gath when his real identity was discovered (although with a bit of cunning by David!)
 - c. He provided safety and protection to David's family through the King of Moab
 - d. He rescued Abiathar the priest and allowed him to faithfully serve as David's priest, even though God would ultimately fulfill His promise to cut-off Eli's descendents from priestly office
 - e. Finally, he rescued the city of Keilah from their enemies
4. This reminds me of what Paul wrote in Romans 9: **"28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. 35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." 37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."**