

Message #52

I Samuel 21:1-9

There are some well-meaning people and believers who really believe it is wrong to stand up for yourself, protect yourself and defend yourself. There are certain groups of pacifists who think the really spiritual thing to do is never stand up for anything. They just drift along in life and whatever happens to them they believe is the will of God, so que sera sera.

One person who took that position was challenged if you really think this, then why do you bother to lock your doors at night?

It seems to me that part of the problem here is a failure to take into consideration the whole counsel of God. Certainly you can build a case for turning the other cheek, but you can also build a case for defending and protecting yourself and your family from those who are evil.

People who take such a conscientious objection position to any form of warfare apparently don't carefully consider the ramifications of the life and story of David.

David was a young man who loved God. In fact, when he found himself hated and hounded by Saul, he was only about age 20. He was forced to leave Saul's palace and he was driven to hide out in the wilderness areas of Judea. It was there where he lived a "Robin Hood" type of existence for about ten years of his life. David won't actually become King until he is 30 years old (II Sam. 5:4).

While the rest of the young men were working and enjoying life, David spent ten years as a fugitive on the run. This was all part of the sovereign plan of God and it is right here where his fugitive years begin.

God was in the process of using these years to prepare a great king and leader. All of this was designed to develop David. All of this was sovereignly orchestrated by God. What we see here, what David did here is critical. The lesson to learn is this:

WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF IN THREATENING SITUATIONS, YOU MUST DO WHAT YOU ARE ABLE TO DO TO SURVIVE AND THEN TRUST GOD TO DO WHAT YOU CANNOT DO.

God's sovereignty in our lives does not replace our human responsibility. God will always provide for us and protect us; however, we have a responsibility to do what we humanly can do in life.

For example, when you drive your car, God protects you, but you still have the responsibility to buckle your seatbelt.

This is a very important text and there are some key historical facts to see and lessons to learn:

HISTORICAL FACT #1 – David first flees to Nob. **21:1a**

The first thing to observe is that Jonathan cannot protect David from Saul, Samuel cannot protect David from Saul, so David must take matters into his own hands and go on the run.

When David departed from Jonathan, he went to Nob. Nob was a city of Aaronic priests (22:19). It was located about one-two miles north of Jerusalem. It was the place where the tabernacle was located. It was not a Levitical city, but it was a city where many Aaronic priests lived. In fact, it was called the “city of the priests” (22:19).

David was initially drawn to this city for at least three reasons:

- 1) To inquire about the word and will of God, specifically regarding his own future.
The ark of the covenant was there (7:1). You would think some priest would be tuned into the will of God and would be a place where David could find some direction.
- 2) To get some food. David had no food to eat and he needed some.
- 3) To secure a weapon. David had no weapon to protect himself and he needed one.

This is quite humiliating when you think about it. Here is God’s choice servant who is doing God’s will in life and he has to ask for food. There will be times, when you are serving God and doing His will that you will find yourself in circumstances that seem to be humiliating and embarrassing. But when this happens God’s servants can know, God will do some wonderful things and provide in some wonderful ways.

Years ago a pastor friend of mine was asked to minister at one of the great churches in the east. This was a very affluent church. This church was interested in him becoming the interim pastor. After a service he and his wife and four children were taken out to eat and they wanted him and his family to stay in a truck camper. They wanted him, his wife and children to live in a truck camper while he ministered.

That is humiliating and that is Davidic. How about our Lord? For years, he had no place to lay his head.

HISTORICAL FACT #2 – David meets Ahimelech the priest. **21:1b**

The first person David meets was Ahimelech, who was “the priest” meaning he was the High Priest. He was the son of Ahitub, who was Ichabod’s brother, the son of Eli’s son Phinehas. So he was the great-grandson of Eli (I Sam. 14:3). So many years after the death of Eli and his sons (4:17-18), his great-grandchildren were still part of the priestly work. Ahimelech is also referred to as Ahijah (14:3) and Jesus Christ referred to him by the name Abiathar (Mark 2:26).

Ahimelech had obviously heard about some issues between Saul and David. When he came to meet David, there are two observations we may make:

Observation #1 - He was afraid of David. **21:1c**

John Woodhouse said Ahimelech “was not overjoyed” to see David (*I Samuel*, p. 406). The text says he came “trembling.” He had an overwhelming sense of fear and terror of David to the point he was shaking. This Hebrew word “chared” means to be so afraid and terrified that you literally are shaking and trembling (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 303).

Now a question worth asking is why would Ahimelech be afraid of David? David was a man who loved God and loved God’s word. David was a man who pursued the will of God. You would naturally think that a High Priest would be honored to have David in his presence. But he came trembling. Why? Well one possibility is that Ahimelech was a priest who was not right with God. We may substantiate this by virtue of the fact God permitted this entire group of priests to be destroyed (I Sam. 22:18), and David was responsible for it (I Sam. 22:22).

When one who is right with God is in the presence of one who is not, there is an intimidation factor.

Observation #2 - He wanted to know why David was alone. **21:1d**

Not real sure of the motive of this. It is obviously designed to get some information and perspective of David’s situation. He certainly could be functioning as some priestly spy.

HISTORICAL FACT #3 – David does not trust Ahimelech or tell him the truth. **21:2-3**

It is clear that David was very suspicious of Ahimelech. He did not think he could trust him with the truth so he somewhat throws him off track with his answer. So David told him that he was on a secret mission from the king and he had directed him and some young men to a certain spot.

Now there are some who take the position that David is lying here. Some say he is alone and he is not on a mission from the king. In fact, some go on some diatribe against lying. They read this verse and then write page after page against lying.

But there are three points worth considering here:

Point #1 - David does not mention the King’s name. **21:2a**

Notice that David does not say who the King is here. In fact, in the Hebrew text there is an article “the” before the noun King. It literally reads “the King.” The King could very well be a reference to God who was directing David. The King is Jehovah (I Sam. 8:7). The King is the Lord God (I Sam. 12:12)

The King also could be David himself, because he was the next appointed king. David is criticized for lying, but it would only be lying if he said “Saul” sent me on a secret mission. The fact is it was God who sent David on this mission and David is the king who is running for his life.

Point #2 - David did assemble a small band of young men to go with him. **21:2b**

In fact, when Jesus Christ spoke of this event, He said David gave the bread to “those who were with him” (Mark 2:26).

Point #3 - David needed food for himself and his men and he is doing what he can to get it. **21:3**

God will provide for His people, but His people must do what they can humanly do in the process. He requested five loaves of bread or whatever else was there.

HISTORICAL FACT #4 – Ahimelech informs David that the only food is consecrated bread.
21:4

According to Ahimelech, the only food on hand was consecrated bread at the Tabernacle and the only people who were supposed to eat it were the priests who were ceremonially clean and pure while they served at the Tabernacle. The bread was made every week and it was kept from Sabbath to Sabbath and was eaten by the priests (Lev. 24:5-9).

This was part of the Levitical purity code and it was important that he not have been with a woman (Lev. 15:18) or he would be unclean for his priestly work.

There is no question that Ahimelech knew the importance of sexual purity concerning life in tabernacle service because his own relatives (Eli's sons) had been removed from the priesthood because of their sexual immorality.

It is somewhat strange that Ahimelech would bring this up. If he or his men had been with a woman, then they would be ceremonially unclean. He seems to have a suspicious mind.

HISTORICAL FACT #5 – David verifies that he and his men are pure. **21:5**

David basically says we are pure. We were pure and holy when we went on ordinary assignments and we are certainly pure when we are in this unusual situation.

David and his men were not out looking to pick up women. They were doing a work for God.

There is a point to be gleaned here. If we want God to powerfully direct us, use us and bless us, we must keep ourselves clean and pure. We must be clean and pure in ordinary situations and then we will be entrusted with greater situations.

HISTORICAL FACT #6 – David is given the consecrated bread by the priest. **21:6**

It is fascinating that Jesus Christ used this very act to illustrate how he replaced the O.T. law (Mark 2:26 ff.).

Ahimelech gave David and his men the bread that was available. This is something that Jesus Christ said was the right thing to do (Mark 2:23-28).

I think this is so important to see because this is not the same thing as “situation ethics,” which says God’s word and will may be disobeyed if the circumstances or situation demands it.

David and his men were pure. They were serving God. They were dedicated to God and they did have a need and that need could be met by the tangible provisions of the Tabernacle.

There are times when faithful servants of God need some help and there is nothing wrong with them reaching out to the church or the leaders for the help. David was after the will of God and he goes through proper channels of authority to meet the need.

HISTORICAL FACT #7 – David is discovered by a leader of David’s enemy. **21:7**

Make absolutely no mistake about this, when you are doing the will of God, Satan will have some enemy planted in your world, no matter where you are or how isolated you think you are. There will always be some agent of Satan.

You could take off and go to some remote spot just trying to get a break from the pressure and your enemy will have someone there. That is clear here.

Doeg was one of Saul’s leading shepherds. He was, as Dr. McGee said, the Judas Iscariot at the Tabernacle. No one knows for sure why he had been detained. The text does not say. It could have been some vow, or some purification matter or even some leprosy isolation. Whatever the reason, he was there and he learned David was there.

Satan had him there, but even at this, God is still sovereign. If you don’t realize God is sovereign, you can become bizarre. God was protecting David even when enemy spies were around him. David just went about his business to get the food and God did the rest.

Satan uses people as his agents. Don’t forget this. These people may seem to just be there, but they are Satanically planted. They may not even know why they are there but they are. Their goal is to get you and trap you. Always remember, God is protecting you.

HISTORICAL FACT #8 – David asks for a weapon. **21:8**

David realized that Doeg was a real threat and he needed some protective weapon so he asked Ahimelech for a sword. He literally had been on the run without any weapon.

HISTORICAL FACT #9 – David is given the sword of Goliath. **21:9**

Hidden away in a safe and secure spot was the sword David had taken off Goliath. He has used that very sword to cut off the head of Goliath and now he needed it again.

What irony this is. The very weapon that he used to bring honor to Israel was the weapon he would now have to use to defend himself against Israel.

But whenever David would look at this sword, he could remember how God providentially protected him and preserved him. It would have been a great support to his faith.

PRACTICAL LESSONS:

- 1) Doing God's will does not mean freedom from hardships.**
- 2) God's sovereignty does not negate human responsibility.**
- 3) When you are pure and clean, go about your business with confidence that God is protecting you.**