

Sunday, April 12, 2026 pm

JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE (51)

The United Kingdom of Israel – 5

David Flees From Saul

1 Samuel 21-26

We are continuing our journey through the Bible. Currently we are examining the 9th period of Bible history, the United Kingdom. In our last lesson we noted how David defeated Goliath and began to serve in Saul's army as a leader. The people loved David which provoked Saul to jealousy. Saul wanted to kill David because he knows that David is the one who YHWH has chosen to be king since he was rejected by Him. We also discussed the friendship between David and Jonathan. We concluded by noting that Saul's intent made it clear that David could not return to his post. This lesson will address some of the events associated with David as a refugee.

I. The Text

- a. 1 Samuel 21 – David goes to Nob to Ahimelech the High priest. Ahimelech is concerned but David deceives him saying he is on urgent business from king Saul. David and his men are given old showbread (bread dedicated for the priests) and the sword of Goliath.
- b. NOTE: This event is addressed in the New Testament in Matthew 12:1-8 (also Mark & Luke) as Jesus and His disciples are criticized for plucking grain on the Sabbath. The point Jesus was making, they were condemning them for an act of compassion which they declared as violating traditions, BUT they ignored the violation of David eating bread dedicated to the priests as an act of compassion. The LOM made provisions (exceptions) for emergencies and out of compassion (e.g., considering the poor and hungry). Bob Waldron notes that it would have been BEYOND the scope of the LOM had Ahimelech refused to help David during his time of need.
- c. 21:10-15 – David then flees to Gath, a city of the Philistines. When David is found and goes before Achish, king of Gath. When the people express concerns because of David's success, David started acting crazy – foaming at the mouth, scratching on doors, etc. Achish has him removed from his sight.
- d. 22:1-5 – David then returns to Southern Judah, to a cave – Adullam. There he is joined by his family (who are likely now also in trouble because of Saul's obsession). David begins to amass a following of about 400 men – all who were discontented (likely because of Saul). Out of fear he takes his family to Moab (Mizpah) (Recall that his great-grandmother was Ruth the Moabitess). Being instructed by the prophet Gad, he leaves there and dwells in the forest of Hereth.
- e. 22:6-23 – Doeg, an Edomite loyal to Saul tells him that David went to Nob. Saul goes there and asks Ahimelech why he helped David. He was innocent but Saul orders him and 85 priests with him executed. The men with Saul refuse, but Doeg does it. They also utterly destroy the city of Nob killing everyone and everything. But one of Ahimelech's sons, Abiathar escapes and finds David and tells him about this. David feels guilty believing his lie was responsible for their deaths. He also offers to protect Abiathar.
- f. 23:1-13 - Next David hears that a city of Judah, Keilah was attacked by the Philistines. He inquires of YHWH (likely via the Urim and Thummim found in the HP ephod – vs. 9) and is told they would succeed. They deliver the city. However, Saul is told that David is in Keilah. David again inquires of YHWH, will the men of Keilah turn me over to Saul. The answer was yes, so David fled from there, now about 600 men.
- g. 23:14-29 David is wandering around in the wilderness of Ziph while Saul sought everywhere for him (he was obsessed and neglecting his kingly duties and Israel). David meets Jonathan for the last time. Jonathan reaffirms their friendship and made a covenant before YHWH. David would not harm the

- house of Saul. The Ziphites tell Saul where David is hiding. Saul blesses them in the Lord for having compassion on him (this demonstrates how deluded Saul was). In the wilderness of Maon Saul is closing in on David, he is on one side of the mountain and Saul is on the other. But a messenger comes to Saul that the Philistines were attacking the land. Saul had to postpone his obsession with capturing David. David praises YHWH.
- h. 24:1 –22 - Saul resumes his pursuit of David hearing he is now in the wilderness of En Gedi. Saul takes 3000 men to pursue David's 600. David's men were hiding in caves. Saul goes in a cave to "cover his feet" (i.e., relieve himself). David has opportunity to kill him but does not because he was not going to be the one to kill the Lord's anointed. However, he cut off a section of Saul's robe. But even that bothered him. As Saul leaves the cave, David reveals himself and notes that he intended no ill harm against Saul. He holds up the piece of Saul's robe to show he could have killed him but did not. David tries to remind Saul that he (David) is really nothing (a flea, a dead dog). Let YHWH judge between us and plead my case. Saul comes to his senses and acknowledges David and weeps. Note vs. 17-21 where Saul acknowledges David will be the next king and he asks David to not destroy his name or wipe out his descendants. David swore to Saul he would not do that. They parted ways as Saul went home.
 - i. 25:1 – Samuel dies! Israel gathers and laments for him.
 - j. 25:2-44 we are here introduced to Nabal and Abigail. While in the wilderness. He was a descendant of Caleb but a harsh, wealthy man. While his servants were shearing their sheep in the wilderness, David and his men protected them and took care of them. 10 of Nabal's servants were sent to him requesting that he help David and his men. But Nabal refused. When David hears of it he prepares to attack Nabal and his house. Abigail is told what Nabal did. She hastily prepares provisions for David and his men and meets him as he is headed to Nabal's property. She bows before David and pleads with him to not carry out his actions. She also provides them with provisions. NOTE vs. 28-31 – she does not want this act of vengeance to be held against him when he becomes king. David relents and praises Abigail for what she did. Meanwhile, Nabal was getting drunk as he held a feast. The next morning Abigail tells him what she did. He had what is likely a heart attack. 10 days later he dies. So David proposes to Abigail and takes her as his wife. He also marries Ahinoam of Jezreel – 2 wives. Vs. 44 notes that Saul had given Michal to another man (more on that later).
 - k. 26:1- again the Ziphites report to Saul where David is hiding. Saul again pursues David in the Wilderness of Ziph. David is watching where Saul and his men were camped. Abner his general is with Saul. David and Abishai go down into the camp. All are sleeping. Abishai is ready to kill Saul, but again David stops him. Vs. 9-11 – David leaves Saul's fate in the hands of God. Instead he takes Saul's spear and a jug of water that was by his head. The LORD had caused a deep sleep in the camp. The next morning, David from a distance, calls out to Abner asking why he had not protected the king. He presents the spear and jug. Saul again knows it is David's voice. David again declares that he is innocent. Vs. 21, again Saul declares that David is innocent and even admits, "I have sinned" After further discussion, Saul returns to his home. David will flee to the land of the Philistines, but we will address that in our next lesson.

II. Lessons

- a. Trusting God – this is a generic application, but as we find David fleeing in the wilderness, it is worth repeating. Related to this, there are at least 4 psalms directly related to the events in this lesson.
 - i. Psalms 34 and 56 – are keyed to when he was captured and taken to Gath where he feigned madness. You find in these psalms David trusting God and praising Him for his deliverance. Of significance, Psalm 34:12-16 is recorded in 1 Peter 3:10-12.
 - ii. Psalm 142 was penned when David was in a cave (we have 2 occasions in our text)
 - iii. Psalm 52 when Doeg, the Edomite betrayed him and acted cruelly.

- iv. Proverbs 3:5-6, *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.*
- b. The importance of honesty – even in trying times. David, in fear lied to Ahimelech. Recall the consequences of his deceit on that occasion, regardless of how good his cause or whether they were unintended. Colossians 3:9 calls for us to not lie to one another since we have put off the old man with his deeds. Also Ephesians 4:25.
- c. Help may come from unlikely sources. David amassed a loyal following. They were not the elite of society, but rather outcasts and the discontented. David was one they trusted. We are simply reminded to be careful before we judge who is worthy of help or consideration. 1 Corinthians 1:27, *But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;*
- d. Saul's continued downward spiral – when man becomes fearful and paranoid, it never takes you to a good place. But that is exactly what we find in Saul.
- e. God is able to provide for us even in times of difficulty –
- f. Will you seek God's guidance before you act? David consistently inquired of YHWH. We too must seek Him and His word for direction in our lives.
- g. God's plans will prevail – everything Saul did to try and derail God's plans for David did not work. Proverbs 19:21, *There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the LORD's counsel—that will stand.* Romans 8:28 – all things work together for good..
- h. Will you help others in times of trouble? David came to the rescue of Keilah against the Philistines. Are we there for each other when needed. This is true even when the other party is not as loyal as they ought to be.
- i. What is your view toward your government? Our government seems to be becoming more and more hostile against our faith and God's moral standards. But that does not change that we are commanded to submit to governing authorities – Romans 13:1-7, 1 Peter 2:13-15.
- j. Let God take vengeance – twice David refused to kill Saul. He left it up to God to take care of Saul. Consider Romans 12:18-21.- let God take just vengeance and repay. He will – 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8.
- k. We also see David's integrity as he faces Saul – we need integrity in our lives.
- l. Understanding true repentance – Saul after David confronted him both times admitted he had sinned. But his conduct was short lived. True repentance lasts and leads to complete change. 2 Corinthians 7:8-11.
- m. Pride goes before a fall – we know this applies to Saul but consider it also with Nabal, whom God judged because of His selfishness.
- n. True wisdom demonstrated – Abigail showed wisdom in many ways as she saved Nabal and their household. Wisdom is about what you say and do, not who you are. This shows that all people, regardless of gender, social status or ethnicity, can and should apply wisdom. Solomon spoke of poor man who delivered a city but was forgotten – Ecclesiastes 9:14-16. The point - true wisdom is to be remembered, regardless of who presents it. Proverbs 2:10-11 notes, *When wisdom enters your heart, And knowledge is pleasant to your soul, Discretion will preserve you; Understanding will keep you,*

Truly, the history of God's people is filled with lessons for us to consider. In this lesson, David is continuing to build his trust in God as he goes through some of the darkest times in his life. And thorough it all he does not give up. Similarly, as we face life with whatever it gives, whether good times or bad, let us learn to trust God and let what happens to us make us stronger and draw us closer to Him. Do you trust God like David did? Think about it!