

Whose side are you on?

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[0:00] It's controversial, these two. Bring us back together a bit more. It's breakfast time. Are you going to go for cereal or toast?!

Both, Steve says. I had both yesterday, definitely. What about this one? Ketchup or HP sauce? Any fans of HP sauce here? There's a few, that's good. That's good. I was worried I might be the only one. Final one.

Well, sort of two more. Dairy Milk or Galaxy? Heard a few both. Who's Dairy Milk? Good for you. Galaxy? Oh, there are. Yeah, wow. Cool. Back to our passage.

[1:00] Team David or Team Saul? You don't have to answer that out loud right now. But Team David or Team Saul?

Whose side are you on? We've seen so far in 1 Samuel, we've seen King Saul take to the throne. But we've seen him not rule as God would want a king to rule.

And so God has said, I'm rejecting you and your line. We've got a cross there on Team Saul. God has rejected him and his line.

But Saul is still very much the king. And he is chanting. Saul has killed his thousands. And David, his tens of thousands.

You see, there's a new anointed king, King David. And he's slain down Goliath the giant. He's slain down many thousands.

[2:02] And Saul has grown rather jealous of David and wants him out the way. He wants him dead. We've seen Saul with spears and hurling them at David.

And so David, as we reach 1 Samuel 22, we find him continuing to be on the run from the dangerous King Saul.

He's the king's most wanted man, is King David. And in this chapter, we see both Saul and David. David, I think, is asking us the passage, are we on Team David or on Team Saul?

So we're going to look at Team David first in our first half together. Team David. David has just escaped from being amongst the Philistines.

[3:06] The Lord provided escape for him when David pretended to be a madman. It was quite the scenario to have a read of that later this afternoon or listen back to the sermon if you weren't here.

And now, David, we find himself finding safety in the cave. And I've got another question for you. Do chat with someone around you or some people around you for the next minute.

Where do you feel the safest in life? Where do you feel the safest? Have a chat. You have permission. To chat with people. Thank you. It's good to see you answering that question with people around you.

Where do you feel the safest? Do you come back together? I'm intrigued. Can we hear a few answers? Where do you feel the safest?

Gracie? At home. Nice. Is there a particular bit of your home you feel safe in? Maybe shut up in my bedroom. Your bedroom. Nice.

[4:36] Go on, Oscar. No, Otis. Otis. Sorry. No. America. Cool. Why do you feel safe in America? Because it's really nice.

It's really nice. And all the time for the food is really nice. Because I went to... Great. It's got on. And it was like... So, America for Otis.

Wonderful. Who else has got a hand up? Samuel? Away from the Marseille fans. Away from the Marseille fans. If you don't understand that, chat to Samuel later.

Nice. And any others want to say... Daniel, go on. In your bed. Or under your bed. Under your bed.

Cool. Nice. In your bed. Under your bed. In your bedroom. David, in this passage, finds safety in a cave.

[5:37] That's what we see. First of all, in this passage, have a look at verse 1. David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam.

When his brothers and his father's household heard about it, they went down to him there. David is on the run, fearing for his life, and he finds shelter in this cave.

Caves certainly are, can be a safe place. He's covered and protected and a place to hide. If you're playing hide and seek and you saw a cave, maybe you'd be tempted to go in it.

But caves are also dark and cold. And David is there and he's fearing for his life. I'm sure he'd be afraid too there in the cave. But that's where he finds his safe place for now.

As he's on the run. But we're going to see, we're going to see three specific things about Team David in these next few verses.

[6:44] And we see, first of all, that David draws in the unlikely. He draws in the unlikely. We see first in that first verse that his family come down to join him.

But then we see that others come. Have a look at verse 2. David draws in the unlikely.

David draws in the unlikely. He draws in those who are in distress, those who are in debt, and those who are discontented. I want to tell you about a film I watched just before Christmas in the cinema.

I'm not going to tell you too many details because you may want to go and see it yourself. But it's the film *Wonka*. We've got some fans. Amazing.

I'm a big fan of this film too. Let's tell you about *Wonka* if you don't know. The film *Wonka* shows us the kind of backstory of the big famous chocolatier in the film or book, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

[8:04] And it shows us that at an early age he lost his mum. But his mum was a big fan of chocolate. She loved chocolate.

And Willy Wonka loved the chocolate that his mum would feed to him. And so Willy Wonka went around the world discovering the best tasting chocolate he could.

And then he turns up at a place and starts setting up his own business. But very quickly, by some big, well-known chocolatiers, they create lots of problems for him.

But Willy Wonka, stuck in a hotel, owing lots of money, finds himself the most unlikely team of people who draw alongside him and help him in his quest to set himself up as this big chocolatier. And there's a couple of them on the screen. There's Noodle, the little orphan girl. And there's an Oompa Loompa who's like a tinier than normal Oompa Loompa, who's rejected by his people.

[9:17] And they draw alongside Willy Wonka to help him. He draws in an unlikely crowd. People in debt. People who are in distress.

People who are discontented. And David does that in this passage. He draws in people in distress. People going through difficult times.

People who are in debt. Who owe money or other things to people. He draws in people who feel discontented. Maybe with the way things are under the rule of King Saul.

And it's not just a few people he draws in, but 400 men. Why though? Why follow David? David's hiding in a cave and his life is being threatened.

Saul wants to hurl a spear at him and kill him. Why would you follow David? He doesn't sound like a good, safe person to follow, does he? Well, as he is on the run.

[10:19] As he's uprooted from his home and runs around from place to place. Other people find in him someone they can identify with.

They find in him someone who is himself in distress. As someone who knows what it's like to be mistreated. As someone who knows what it's like to beg for bread as he did last week.

He knows what it's like to feel unsatisfied with the way things are. People see that David is a king who understands what it's like to be them.

Now we spoke a few minutes ago about places we feel safe. But perhaps there's also people we feel particularly safe with. Maybe we feel safe at home with our mums and dads.

A really close friend, a husband or a wife. Our pets, pet dog, pet cat. We feel safe with them. People found David to be someone they could find safety in.

[11:30] We see secondly about team David. He cares for his family. He cares for his family. So his family go and join him in the cave.

And then he's particularly concerned about his mum and dad. So hear this in verse 3. From there, David went to Mizpah in Moab and said to the king of Moab, Would you let my father and mother come and stay with you until I learn what God will do for me?

David is particularly concerned about his parents, Jesse, his father, and his mother. David's life is under threat. And probably so too are those who are around him.

And he wants his mum and dad to be safe. And so he honours them by going to find them a place of safety. And he goes to Moab, which if you know your Bibles well, you'll know that that's where David's great-grandmother Ruth was from.

Now I enjoy taking a trip back to where I used to live in Hurstwood Point, just up the road. I see places I used to run around in.

[12:46] Primary school I went to. The place my nana used to live. The place I used to live. The church I grew up in. It feels like a safe place to be. And David sees that the current place he finds him and his family in isn't terribly safe.

Saul wants to kill him. And so he goes back to where his great-grandma's from. Back to Moab. And it's a safe place.

It says in verse 4, there's a word saying stronghold. It's a very, very safe place is Moab. And so he asks the king if his parents can stay there.

David cares for his family. And I think, as we've seen these two points, he draws in the unlikely and he cares for his family.

I think being on Team David is rather like being on Team Jesus. You see, David is someone who understands what it's like to be human.

[13:58] He cares for his family. And I think Jesus does that too. Jesus is someone who draws in the unlikely. Think of the crowd of people that he called around him.

Those 12 disciples that Jesus called around him. Not the greats in this world, but despised tax collectors, poor fishermen.

And not only that, but the poor, the blind, the lame, the sick, the demon-possessed. They were attracted to Jesus. And Jesus would have mercy on them.

Jesus himself understands what it's like to be human. He understands what it's like to go through awful pain. He knows what it's like to lose a friend to death.

He knows what it's like to be betrayed by a friend. He knows what it's like to have his life threatened by others. People wanted to kill Jesus.

[15:04] And he's someone who, when he was dying on the cross, even asked his friend, his disciple, John, to look after his mother. He cares for his family.

And so know this this morning, that in the Lord Jesus, says you have a savior who understands and cares for you. And that's really good news for us.

One final thing. David listens to the Lord. We see that in these few verses. So in verse 3, David, when he went to the king of Moab, said, would you let my father and mother come and stay with you until I learn what God will do for me?

And later on, in verse 5, as David says, I want to know what God will do for me. The prophet, we see in verse 5, comes to David and says, do not stay in the stronghold.

Go into the land of Judah. So David left and went to the forest of Herod. The prophet comes with God's word to him. God signed to him to move on.

[16:19] David was willing to listen to the Lord. David wants to follow God and his word. And here we see that he does just that.

And you know what? When he was hiding in that safe place in the cave, we discover, if we read the Psalms, that he wrote a song there.

Psalms 57. And just one verse from that Psalm, it says, David was looking to the Lord.

He wanted to listen to the Lord. And he knew that in the Lord, he was safe. He might have felt safe in the cave, but he knew really that his safety was ultimately found in God's.

God was keeping him safe. It describes in these verses, I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings. We've got a picture here of a bird covering their chicks with their wings.

[17:39] And that's an image of the safety we can find in God. And he describes God as a refuge, a complete place of safety.

David knows, as he's on the run, as he's fearing for his life, that he must listen to the Lord, that he must look to the Lord for his safety.

And so perhaps for you, the safest place that you may find, maybe at home, maybe with mum and dad, that's good.

And we can be thankful for the safe places and the safe people we can find in our lives. But actually, as I said, being on Team David is a bit like being on Team Jesus.

But even better. Because Jesus is the safest place and the safest person to be with. And we're going to see more of that a bit later.

[18:45] But first, we're going to sing this song. On Team David, and we'll come back a little bit to David towards the end. But now we need to see what it's like to be on Team Saul.

See, compared with David, Saul very much looks the part in 1 Samuel. He's a big, tall, handsome fellow.

When I think of him, I always think of this guy. Does anyone know who this is? The Rock. The Rock. Excellent. This is The Rock.

A big former wrestler, now an actor. I always think of him when I think of Team Saul, when I think of Saul. And Saul continues to look the part as we think, he's king.

He's got the crown. And he's got a spear which he hurls at people and has no fear of hurling at people.

[19:47] He is king. He looks the part. Team Saul. Would you like to be on Team Saul? Well, we're going to see a few things about being on Team Saul in this passage.

And firstly, we see that he hates David. He really hates David. Have a look there in verse 7.

He said to people, Listen, Men of Benjamin, Will the son of Jesse give all of you fields and vineyards?

Will he make all of you commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds? Is that why you've all conspired against me? No one tells me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse.

None of you is concerned about me or tells me that my son has incited my servant to lie in wait for me as he does today. Saul even is saying to his followers, Will David really give you these things?

[20:57] Will he do what I've done for you? Is David any good? And look what he calls David here because he doesn't say David's name at all.

What does he say? He says, Son of Jesse. Imagine if I said, Will the son of who's here, Jerome Pearson, do this?

Why can't I say Isaac's name? It's not very nice, is it? He has a name. And David has a name. But Saul can't even bring himself to say David's name.

He really hates David. He can't even say his own son's name. See that in verse 8? No one tells me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse.

He hates David. Secondly, we see that he doesn't trust anybody. He doesn't think anybody is there for him on his side.

[22:04] He thinks everybody is against him. Have a look again at verse 8. Is that why you've all conspired against me? No one tells me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse.

None of you is concerned about me or tells me that my son has incited my servant to lie and wait for me as he does today. No one cares about me. No one cares about me.

No one cares about me, he says. Poor little old me. No one cares about me. Nobody's on my side. Everybody seems to be hating me and plotting against me.

Poor old Saul. Poor old Saul. The whole world feels against him, he feels. But there is someone on his side.

And last week I described him, when we caught a very brief glimpse of him, as a pantomime villain. If you go to a pantomime and you see a villain, maybe if you were watching Peter Pan and you saw Captain Hook on the stage, what would you do when you see them?

[23:14] You'd go, boo. Or you'd say that, he's behind you. You'd definitely go, boo. Put your thumb down and go, boo.

And that's what we can do when we read of this next guy in verse 9. He's called Doeg the Edomite. And he's a real villain in this story that we can go, boo.

So have a look at him in verse 9. But Doeg the Edomite, who was standing with Saul's officials, said, I saw the son of Jesse come to Ahimelech, son of Ahitab at Nob.

Ahimelech inquired of the Lord for him. He also gave him provisions and the sword of Goliath the Philistine. Now what I think Doeg the Edomite is doing here is a bit like what I would have done when I was younger about my brother.

I would have told tales on him because I want to get him into trouble. So I would go, mum, James has stolen my sweets.

[24:25] Or dad, James has ruined my Lego. And a bit of that's going on here. Doeg the Edomite was spying on David last week and sees his opportunity to get David in trouble and sees his opportunity to get in Saul's good books.

Doeg wants to be on Team Saul. And so that's why he explains to him what happened last week in verse 9.

And if you weren't here, what happened? What's he referring to? Well, last week as David was on the run, he went to a priest called Ahimelech and he asked him for some bread and for a sword. But when he asked him that, he was lying to him. David said to Ahimelech, I'm on the king's secret mission. Which isn't true.

Saul and David hate each other. They're not working together at all. And so Doeg the Edomite saw all that going on and saw that Ahimelech was taking sides with David even though David had lied.

[25:43] All very complicated. And Doeg the Edomite wants to get David and anybody on his side into trouble. And so sure enough, in verse 11, Saul, the king, calls for the priest.

But not just Ahimelech, the priest. He calls for his entire family to come before him. That's what it says. The king sent for the priest Ahimelech, son of Ahitab, and all the men of his family who were the priests at Nob.

And they all came to the king. It was just Ahimelech who gave David bread and a sword. But note, Saul thinks, well, let's call the entire family along.

So the entire family go along to see the king. And the king starts questioning him there. Look at verse 13. Saul said to him, why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, giving him bread and a sword and inquiring of God for him so that he has rebelled against me and lies in wait for me as he does today?

He starts questioning him. And to be fair to Ahimelech here, David had lied and made him think he was actually on Saul's side.

[27:04] And Ahimelech could explain that to Saul. But actually, he doesn't. Verse 14. Ahimelech answered the king, Who of all your servants is as loyal as David, the king's son-in-law, captain of your bodyguard, and highly respected in your household?

Saul, wait a moment. David is a good guy. He's so loyal. He's highly respected. He's your own son-in-law.

Why do you want to get him in trouble? What's the problem with this? I'm looking after him. He's captain of your bodyguards.

Why are you so against him? Why are you anti him? Why do you hate him? But Saul says this in verse 16.

The king said, You shall surely die, Ahimelech. You and your whole family. That seems a bit unreasonable for Ahimelech and his whole family to die just because they gave David some bread and a sword.

[28:26] Saul doesn't trust anyone. Doesn't trust anyone on David's side. He hates David and hates him so much that he will kill anybody who is siding with team David.

And so Saul orders his men to go and kill him, kill them. Verse 17. Then the king ordered the guards at his side, Turn and kill the priests of the Lord because they too have sided with David.

They knew he was fleeing, yet they did not tell me. He orders Ahimelech and his family to all die. Orders his men carry out the death sentence.

Would you want to be on Saul's side? And you know what? The king's men don't even want to be on his side in this.

They have a conscience. They know what's good and know what's bad and they think, Killing the priests and their family? No, we're not going to do that. Have a look at the end of verse 17. But the king's officials were unwilling to raise a hand to strike the priests of the Lord.

[29:37] They're not doing it. But there is someone who is going to do it. Can anybody guess who that might be? Doeg the Edomite.

I heard a few, someone shout out, good job, Doeg the Edomite. We go boo to him. He's a panto villain, except he's real. He's a real villain in this story.

Have a look at verse 18. The king then ordered Doeg, you turn and strike down the priests. And so Doeg the Edomite turned and struck them down.

That day he killed 85 men who wore the linen ephods. He went and killed the priests. He was faithful to King Saul and his team.

He was firmly on his team and the only one who obeyed his orders. And why not? Saul looks big and strong.

[30:41] He's the one wearing the crown. He's the one with the spear. Why not follow him? But maybe we ourselves do this kind of thing as well.

We look to those who seem strong and powerful, who are actually anti the Lord Jesus. Maybe we'll look at people on social media who are encouraging us away from Jesus.

They seem strong and popular. Why don't we follow them? Maybe they're actually leading us into some sort of sin instead of leading us to the Lord Jesus.

Challenge for us. Just to note, some of us have been going through 1 Samuel for quite some time. Way back at the beginning of 1 Samuel in chapter 2, we read these words.

And these are kind of being carried out today in the death of these priests. So just for us to note this. Therefore, the Lord, the God of Israel declares, I promise that members of your family, now he's speaking to Eli, he was a priest, would minister before me forever.

[32:05] But now the Lord declares, far be it from me. Those who honor me, I will honor. But those who despise me will be disdained. Eli, the priest, if you don't know the story, his sons were complete scoundrels and were doing awful things in the temple.

And so the Lord says, the time is coming when I will cut short your strength so that the strength of your priestly house so that no one in it will reach old age.

And you will see distress in my dwelling, although good will be done to Israel. No one in your family line will ever reach old age. And so the Lord is kind of being committed to his word in this event, even though he's using the hands of evil people to fulfill this.

Just something for us to note, God's justice being done. But God was very merciful to the priestly line of Eli. They carried on.

More people were born in that family. More people served as priests and had chances to honor the Lord's.

[33:19] Ahitab was the grandson of Eli, the priest. Ahimelech is the great-grandson of Eli the priest. And the great-great-grandson of Eli the priest is Abiathar.

And we read about him in verse 20 because something interesting happens to him. One son of Ahimelech, son of Ahitab, named Abiathar, escaped and fled to join David.

He managed to find a way to escape and he went to join David and he went to David and said this in verse 21. He told David that Saul had killed the priests of the Lord.

Then David said to Abiathar, that day when Doeg the Edomite was there, I knew he would be sure to tell Saul, I am responsible for the death of your whole family.

You know, last week when he lied, David is owning up here to his sin. He's being honest about his mistakes here. But nonetheless, this has now happened.

[34:31] But Abiathar has managed to find David and with David, he finds a person and a place of safety. Have a look at what David says in verse 22.

He said that day, no, verse 23, stay with me, don't be afraid. The man who wants to kill you is trying to kill me too.

You will be safe with me. Abiathar should have died along with the rest of the priests. He was sentenced to death.

But David provides salvation from death, safety from death. And this morning we come back to Team Jesus.

Because being on Team David is a bit like being on Team Jesus, but being on Team Jesus is even better. To the Lord Jesus, who cares so deeply for his people that he would give up his life for them.

[35:40] See, all of us deserve to face death, like the priests faced here. But in Jesus, we find someone who keeps us safe from death.

Someone who will forgive us each and every one of our sins, and who will give us life forever with him, even beyond the grave.

And David and Abiathar, this situation, there's a picture of Jesus and the safety we find with him.

And for the souls of this world, for those who live in paranoia, who feel like the whole world is against them, and maybe you're here this morning and you're feeling that.

You know what? There's another soul in the Bible, someone else who sought to kill anybody who would follow the Lord Jesus. And he went out to kill them, but we see a remarkable story where God stops Saul on his tracks and saved him by his grace.

And God changed his name to Paul. Maybe we know his name better as Paul. And Paul wrote these words, which we'll finish with. What then shall we say in response to these things?

[37:08] If God is for us, who can be against us? For David, as he was hiding in the cave, as Saul was against him, even King David could say this. If God is for us, who can be against us?

For I'm convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

In Jesus, we find a place of safety, safety from death. In Jesus, we are so, so safe through all of life here and beyond the grave as we live life forever with him.

And so whose side are you on? Forget Team David and Team Saul now. Are you on Jesus' side or are you not? Let's sing a song in Christ alone.