

1 Samuel 21 & 22

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 February 2014

Preacher: Rev Iver Martin

[0 : 00] We've just read two chapters. The first chapter focuses on a man on the run.

And yet, despite all the fear and all the uncertainty and whatever things look like on the outside, this man, Aloy, appears to be desperate, and he feels desperate, and he is desperate.

He is the most secure man in all the world. The second chapter that we read about gives every appearance of a man who's in the driving seat.

The power is in his hand. He's the king. And he's the man who's chasing the first man. He's determined to kill him. And he's got a host of army, an army, who have all the authority and all the power in the world.

And yet, although he thinks he's in the driving seat, he's not. He's in a runaway car that's heading for destruction.

[1 : 17] He is the least secure man in all the world. And that's the way this story goes. There's what appears to be on the outside and what actually is on the inside.

That's what the Bible is all about. That's the theme of the life of David. From the very beginning, when David sent Samuel into his house to anoint him king, God said to him, Do not look at the outside.

For God does not look at outward appearances. He judges by the heart. He looks at our hearts. When it comes to a relationship with God, it begins in our hearts, not with what we are on the outside.

It's what we are on the inside that determines what we are on the outside. And whatever there is in our outward behavior and practices and habits and conduct, if it's not grounded on the rock, like Jesus said, if our house is not built on the rock, we are destined to destruction.

Just like Saul. And what really makes it such a sad story for Saul is that he had all the privileges under the sun. God had anointed him king.

[2 : 34] He had given him the very best, the most privileged position in all the world at that time was to be the king of his covenant people. It ought to have been the most secure position in the world.

And yet because of his foolishness, because he decided to take his eyes away off God and reject him and disobey him and put himself first, that's what we saw last week, that Saul's whole behavior was surrounding, it was surrounded himself.

And that, of course, is what sin is. It's when we replace God with me. So I want us to look then in two parts. First of all, at David, who is the man on the run and who is yet is learning to trust in God. Some people might read the story that we just read in chapter 21 and we may ask, from the comfort of our warm church this evening, was David right in everything that he did?

Was he right to say to Ahimelech the priest that he was on a mission by Saul? And you know perfectly well that he wasn't sent on a mission by Saul. We might ask, was he right to go into Gath, which was enemy territory?

[3 : 57] What right did he have? To cross over the enemy lines and to take refuge with a man who was a sworn enemy. Was he right? Well, maybe he wasn't.

Maybe he, we don't know. The problem is, it's easy for us to ask these kind of questions from where we are. But, and I'm quite sure that there were many times when David failed, that we know that there were times when David failed the test that God were putting in front of him.

And yet, nevertheless, God was with him every step of the way, teaching him through his various experiences how to trust the Lord.

This was his preparation for when he would one day become king. God was in David. He was with him. And God forgives when we stumble and when we fall and when we go astray from time to time.

And he brings us back into the way, just like we were singing in Psalm 23. My wandering steps, he brings back in the way. And David is a great example of how a child of God, in the course of his ordinary life, and a very difficult life at this time, can easily get it wrong.

[5 : 18] But it's not for us. I'm not going to judge David. I'm just going to look at what we can see from this chapter. And it's interesting, isn't it, that speaking in David's favor, he never once acted against the king who he regards as God's anointed.

He recognized that although one day God promised that he would be king, that there was already a king on the throne. And for him to rise up, it would have been the easiest thing in the world because he was by far the more popular leader with the people.

He could have manipulated that. And he could have gathered people around him and risen, and he could have staged a coup against the king. But he knew that although that was possible, it would have been wrong in the eyes of God.

And that's where David shines. He puts God first. That's what it means to be a man after God's own heart, to live by God's principles, and to love the Lord with all our heart and mind and soul.

That's what a Christian is. A Christian operates in love for God. That's the driving force that leads us and guides us in all of what we do.

[6 : 31] So he had no option. When Jonathan was unable to argue in his defense, David knew that the only option was to run from Saul and to run from place to place.

But where was he going to go? There was no place. There appeared to be no place left. He had a wife. But we've already seen that his wife wasn't able to defend him.

Then there was Samuel. He wasn't able to defend him. There were his parents. They weren't able to defend him. Jonathan wasn't able to defend him. The only option he had was to run to other places in order to secure what he needed for himself and the few men that were with him.

And of course, the first provision that he needed was food. And then he needed to be able to defend himself. It's obvious that he didn't have a sword even to defend him. He had to run so quickly that he had no armor on.

And so he first of all went to this place called Nob, to Ahimelech, the priest, the place where God's priests dwelt and where they worked. Desperate for bread.

[7 : 39] That's the first thing anyone needs when they're on the run. If you don't have bread, you don't have anything. And of course, the first thing we read about is how he spoke to Ahimelech and how the only bread that was there was the bread of the presence.

Remember, that was in the tabernacle. The table of showbread was one of the items of furniture in the tabernacle. And the priests put fresh bread there every day.

But it was holy bread. It was there not to be eaten by anyone. It was to be on the table, the special table that was in the holy place in the temple or the tabernacle as it was at that time.

But it's interesting that an exception was made for that particular purpose. Even although it was not lawful by the law of Moses for any ordinary person to eat that special holy bread, an exception was made in the eye of Ahimelech for David's needs.

David was desperate. He was hungry. His men were hungry. And if it wasn't for the bread or the bread, that was the only option they had. There was nothing other than that. It was either that or starvation.

[8 : 57] And an exception was made. Now, that's a very interesting exception. It shows that God is not a slave to his own rules.

Now, I want to prove that to you. Because in the New Testament, there was an occasion when Jesus and his disciples walked through the cornfields on the Sabbath day.

Because they were hungry, they picked up the ears of corn and they began to eat them. Now, in the eyes of the Pharisees, that was a breaking of the law. They were doing work, which they should not have been doing on the Sabbath day.

And Jesus confronted them. When they confronted him, he confronted them. And he said, Remember David, when he and his men were hungry, how they ran to Nob and they went to Ahimelech, the priest, and the only bread that was available to them was the holy bread, the bread that was unlawful for them to eat.

Now, what point was Jesus making? He was making the point that God is not a slave to what he himself determined as being the technicalities of the law, but God desires mercy and not sacrifice.

[10:13] Jesus' whole point was that the Sabbath was made for man, for human beings, for men and women, in order to rest and enjoy the Lord. And on that occasion, that meant him and his disciples freely going through the cornfields and eating the corn, which was to hand.

On this occasion, it meant David and his men eating the bread, which technically wasn't lawful, but because God is God, the God of mercy, the God of grace, then God makes exceptions to his own law.

These exceptions, of course, were not recognized by the scribes and the Pharisees who took great pride in keeping every single one of them, or so they thought.

But the Old Testament looked forward to Jesus and they broke the law in the very point, in the very place where they should have recognized the Son of God. They refused to recognize him. Instead, they were so obsessed with ears of corn and what you did and what you didn't on the Sabbath day that they refused to recognize Jesus.

You know, our religion can become like that as well, can become just a series of do's and don'ts and technicalities and what you do at this time and what you do at that time and so on.

[11:31] That's not what the gospel is. If that's what it is to you, then you haven't started yet. The gospel is about Jesus. It starts there. It's about the discovery of the God of grace and the God who forgives sins, who saves sinners.

And then, once your life is transformed, you serve the Lord by obeying him. Our obedience must never be a slavish obedience.

That's not what being a Christian is. Being a Christian is a loving obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, doing his will because we want to and because he is everything to us.

So that was David. He went to Ahimelech, the priest, and the priest gave him the bread of the present, even although technically it wasn't lawful for him to have that. And, of course, this is expanded for us by the Lord Jesus himself.

Then he went to Gath. And, of course, he got the sword of Goliath at Nob, the place where Ahimelech was. He needed a sword, so there was only one sword available.

[12:40] That was Goliath's sword. And then, almost amusingly, isn't it? It's actually quite amusing. He that sits in heaven shall laugh. There are so many parts of the Bible where there are paradoxes and where there are items that you don't...

Can you imagine this? Close your eyes for a moment and picture David strolling into Gath. Now, I know that perhaps you could argue we should never have gone there, but there's something really quite ironic about this, isn't it?

Here he is, and he is strolling into Gath, and on his belt is the sword of Goliath. Where did Goliath come from? He came from Gath. That was the hero.

And David had killed him. He had killed him with an... Now, not a long time afterwards, here is the same man who kills the Gathian... That's what they call him, the Gathian hero, and he strolls into Gath wearing Goliath's sword.

It doesn't even seem that anybody noticed. I don't know if they did or not. But I can't help notice. I'm sure you can't either. How God is in control, and God has his way of turning things upside down.

[13:55] So if you think that you're in a position where you can fight against God, and that's what Goliath thought, remember we saw how he relied on his own strength, you're wrong.

He was wrong, disastrously wrong. So are we. He's got this way of turning things back on themselves. So don't ever think we can pull a fast one on the Lord.

We can't. So David, the next place that David went to after he left Nob was Gath. Gath. Probably quite, I suppose there's logic to it.

That's the last place that you would ever chase your enemy. Saul would never come to Gath. But in actual fact, there were places in the world which were worse than where Saul might be, and one of them was Gath.

Because whatever danger Saul was to David, at least they were Israelites, and they were his own people, and there was a possibility of safety, whereas Gath was filled with pagans.

[14:59] And whilst it may have been appealing to David to think he could take refuge there, at first sight, he quickly realized that this was the most dangerous place in the world.

He was surrounded by people who would hate him even more than his own people, because they realized very quickly who he was. Saul has struck down his thousands, David has tens of thousands. He had to think quickly.

He had to think cleverly. He was desperate, so he pretended to be insane. You give great detail there, Achish said to his servants, and he changed his behavior before them and pretended to be insane in their hands and made marks on the doors of the gate and let his spittle run down his beard.

How desperate can a man get where he almost assumes animal-like behavior in order to preserve his life. I can't imagine the fear that David must have experienced at this time when he didn't know what a day or an hour may bring and where he had to think on his feet all the time, what am I going to do now?

What's the latest threat that's going to stand in front of me and how am I going to get out of this? I can't imagine how he must have felt at that time. And yet, the Bible tells us that he survived by learning to trust in God.

[16:25] And this was God's way. Yes, it was dark. And yes, it appeared to be meaningless. And it appeared to be endless.

There appeared to be no sight, no feeling of God, no vision of God, no word from God. He was in darkness trying to feel his way around, trying to make sense of what was happening around him. And yet, all the time, God was working a way in his heart, teaching him to trust in the Lord. Do you know that there are two Psalms that were written by David precisely at this time?

We're told that. Psalm 34 and Psalm 56. You can go home and read them later. Countless numbers of Christians have found these Psalms to be so incredibly helpful to times when we are in darkness trying to feel our way around us, trying to make sense of what's going on.

I sought the Lord, says David. Doesn't look like it on the outside. On the outside, he's pretending to be insane. On the inside, he's crying to the Lord.

[17:38] I sought the Lord. Psalm 34, verse 4. And he answered me and he delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant and their faces shall never be ashamed.

This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and delivers them.

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Reading about this, you would never imagine that these were the words that were going through his heart. But that's what was going through his heart. I'm not saying it was easy. It was desperate. It was one of the most difficult times that David has ever experienced. And yet, that's what God showed him. Because God works all things together for good to those who love him and who are called according to his purpose.

And the good that comes out of this is not only David is a strengthened man having learned perhaps from things where he stumbled, I don't know, but having learned all along because God is leading him and guiding him through all the various experiences.

[18:48] And he's learned to say, oh, taste and see that God is good. Fear the Lord, his saints, for those who fear him have no lack.

My enemies trample on me all day long, he says, for many attack me proudly. But then, he says, when I am afraid, I will trust in you.

Psalm 56, written at exactly the same time. That's what comes out of a man after God's own heart being pursued relentlessly. In God I trust. I shall not be afraid.

What can man do to me? I must perform my vow by vows to you, oh God. I will render thanks offering to you, for you have delivered my soul from death, yet my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.

What marvelous, what a marvelous account of what God was doing on the inside. And so, David goes from place to place.

[19:48] He feigns insanity. He pretends insanity for the king of Gath. Then he goes to the cave of Adullam. And there he is surrounded by a whole bunch of men and women and families who were distressed.

In verse 2 in chapter 22, it appears that he became a magnet for the discontents in Israel. Everyone who was in debt and everyone who was bitter in soul gathered to him.

And he became captain over them. and they were with him for about 400 about 400 men. What does that remind you of? What do these people remind you of?

I'll tell you what they remind me of. They remind me of Jesus and the kind of company he kept. The kind of people that found refuge in Jesus. Publicans and sinners. Tax collectors.

People who were who were written off by the rest of the world and rest of society. Prostitutes. people who were who were marginalized in the world at that time.

[20 : 55] Who people wouldn't give the time of day to. And they found the refuge in Jesus because Jesus gave them hope. David gave these men hope. They couldn't get it anywhere else.

Everyone else had written them off. But somehow or other they knew in David that there was a man they could relate to and they could connect with just like the common people connected with Jesus. They heard him gladly. He spoke their language. They saw within him a reality that they never saw in Saul. They saw in Jesus a reality that they never seen in anyone else ever before.

And so have we. No one else is going to solve the problem of sin in our hearts. The corruption in my heart. No one else is going to take away my guilt except Jesus.

No one else is going to take away your guilt except Jesus the son of David. And there's a bunch of discontents who gather around him and a bunch of who knows who they were.

[22 : 01] The people perhaps who Saul had discounted long, long time ago and yet David had time for them. There was something natural and common about David and again the Lord was showing him.

he was training him because if he can rule over this bunch of guys he can rule over the whole kingdom. He can rule over anyone. Training him and preparing him and guiding him every step of the way.

So that was him in the cave of Adullam. And then he went from there to Mizpah of Moab. Moab was outside of Israel. Moab again were the sworn enemies of Israel although not that many wars between Moab and Israel at that time.

But he went to the king of Moab and he said please let my father and my mother stay with you till I know what God will do for me. Now what's the difference between going to Moab and going to Gath?

Well it's a big difference. I'll tell you why. You probably worked this out already. Moab, David. What's the relationship between Moab and David? David was partly Moabite.

[23 : 09] his ancestry was Moabite. Remember his great-grandfather was Boaz. He married Ruth. What was she?

She was a Moabite. She had come from Moab. Everyone knew that David had Moab blood in him. So when he went back to Moab on this occasion he has credibility.

The king of Moab knows who he is. Probably even related to him in some way. His father was related to him. And so there's an instant connection. And so when there's blood of course involved when there's blood relationships involved then it becomes a family matter.

And so it's perhaps not surprising that he left his father and mother with the king of Moab to give them security and safety. And then comes the turning. Then is the point that it's going to make all the difference for David.

All of a sudden in all the darkness and the seeming meaninglessness of the whole thing God appears in verse 5. And he's a prophet.

[24 : 16] He's got the word of the Lord. This is the first time that God has spoken to David. But he has spoken to him. And that marks the difference between David and Saul.

Whatever position of strength Saul was in God never spoke to him because all the time God was withdrawing himself further and further away from Saul. And yet with David he was bringing David nearer and nearer to himself.

That's what the difference was. And the prophet Gad said to David don't remain in the stronghold depart going to the land of Judah which of course was his own land. From then on it's a different story isn't it because the focus is on a different scene altogether.

An ugly ugly scene. Here is Saul and he is by now he has become even more obsessed than he ever was. He's also become more insecure than he ever was.

This rant that he comes out with. Here now people of Benjamin will the son of Jesse give everyone to you fields and vineyards? Will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds that you have conspired against me?

[25 : 28] All of you you're all against me. No one tells me where my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse. None of you is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me.

You know in many ways what we're looking at here tonight is David and how secure he can be.

He is the safe man. Because God is his safety he becomes safe for everyone else. But Saul is the most dangerous man in the world.

Because he has separated himself from God. He hasn't got his life right with God. Have you ever stopped to wonder?

Have you ever asked yourself this question? It really is quite frightening because it's no use me saying ah yes but that was Saul. There was something wrong with him. There wasn't something wrong with him.

[26 : 28] If there had been something wrong with him God would never have made him king in the first place. To say that there was something wrong with him is just passing the buck and it's not dealing with the real issue.

The real issue was Saul. Because he has moved away from where he should be he becomes less and less and less secure in his own mind.

And the insecure person have you ever noticed that with Saul he's never wrong. He can't possibly be wrong. He can't countenance the possibility that he is ever wrong in anything and which means that everyone else is against him.

That's the classic sign of someone who is insecure. Who can never be wrong about anything. You know if I was to read this honestly I'd be asking myself is there anything of Saul in me?

Because what this describes to me is the way in which the human heart can become if allowed to. Saul is obsessed with David.

[27 : 33] He's jealous of him. And David becomes one focus of attention and the more that that happens the less secure that Saul becomes and the more right he has to be because he has to prove himself all the time.

When is the last time that you have ever admitted to being wrong? Perhaps you're saying well I don't know what you're talking about.

I've never had to admit that I'm wrong. I rest my case. See the question is too big for us or too big for the person who can't cope with being wrong but the real secure person, listen to this, the really secure person is secure in his being wrong.

he's secure enough to admit and confess that he is wrong. But the insecure person is the person who, because he is the center of his very being, cannot cope in a time of conflict with the possibility that actually he's not right.

because to him it's a sign of weakness. But in actual fact it's a sign of strength. And as the Lord's people tonight, if you've come to Christ, you've already been at that point where you have admitted your bankruptcy before God.

[29 : 18] God. So there should be no problem for a Christian to confess and admit when we go wrong and we do, time and time again.

The Christian life is full of our having to confess our own faults, not just to God, but to one another. And it's only as we do so that we grow in the security that our salvation rests and all that we are rests in God and in his grace and in his forgiveness.

So the mark of a Christian is a person who confesses to his being wrong, whether it's before God or whether it's before my brother or sister or whether it's before my wife or whether it's before my children or whether it's before my boss.

The mark of a Christian is his willingness to be wrong and to tell and to confess when we go wrong. And only then are we secure, not in ourselves but in the Lord Jesus Christ, not like Saul. You can see how it gets worse and worse and worse. His rant here, he tries to manipulate his own people by telling them.

[30 : 49] The mark of an insecure person is a person who tries to manipulate other people. You get it here. Do you think David's going to give you fields and riches and power as if he was? But he's trying to poison the minds of those he saw were supporting them and he gets more and more destructive all the time because at last this Doeg the Edomite who had been present at Nob when David had come and had showed himself to Ahimelech, Doeg was there taking note of what was happening and he tells Saul that he saw David.

So when Saul summoned Ahimelech and when Ahimelech confessed or admitted that David was there, Ahimelech acted in innocence.

David had not been quite truthful with him. We've already seen that. Which meant that Ahimelech actually was being honest with Saul.

This is what he told me. Ahimelech was entirely innocent of any wrongdoing whatsoever. And Saul was at that point where he himself is so desperately, desperately trying to prove to himself his own position that he had the priests put to death.

death. This chapter is one of the most horrific atrocities in the Bible. Here was this entirely, entirely unsuspecting town and every one of them, men, women and children, was put to death by Saul.

[32 : 27] Once again we ask the question, well, God allowed this to happen. Yes, he allows every atrocity to happen. But it's not his doing.

It is Saul's doing. Saul is entirely responsible for his own actions. So I leave you tonight with this horrific question.

Have you ever stopped to consider how utterly dangerous you are? And have I? We may not have the power of Saul but each one of us is in a place of some authority or influence and each one of us can either by believing and trusting in Jesus Christ make sure that we are in the right place tonight or we can follow our own passions and our own obsessions and allow ourselves to become enslaved by our own insecurity and who knows what the result of that would be.

Each one of us is an incredibly dangerous person. Given the right circumstances make sure that you are in the safe place which is the son of David the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Our Father in heaven we thank you once again for these solemn truths that come to us in the scriptures and by which we learn about ourselves and what we are capable of.

[34 : 31] We pray our Father that our lives will be given to you to your service to loving obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ so that we are oriented to the image of God which you have placed in each one of us and so that that image functions as it should to love the Lord our God with all our mind and heart and soul and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

So we pray that you will place yourself on the throne of our hearts and forgive our sins in Jesus name. Amen.