

Introduction: One of God's gifts of grace to people is that, with time, the mistakes and sins of our youth can be understood, reflected on, and repented of by us. They can then become the basis for the strengthening of our trust in the always faithful God. *** God is full of truth and love, mercy and justice. These characteristics of God, and more like them, can help all people to be re-made more into God's image: all those who are fully and whole-heartedly IN Jesus Christ. *** Our passages in the Prophets and the Psalms show us how this happened for David. *** In his early twenties as he fled for his life alone because Jonathan had warned him Saul would kill him, David fell deeper and deeper into sin and the fear of man. First, he lied to the high priest. Then he sought shelter with the enemies of God and His people. He was in danger of being killed by them, but did not seek God. *** But, decades later he wrote a psalm song about this very chapter of his life! In it, he describes being oppressed by evil men but that it helped him to learn to trust in his Covenant God. This trust has now led to thanksgiving for deliverance by Him, even before it happens. *** It is my hope that we will learn from these two times in David's life that we need to always press in closer to God: Father-Son-Spirit – even when enemies seem to have the upper hand: especially when!

I. David lies to the priest Ahimelech and receives consecrated bread for his men who have kept from women;

he flees to a Philistine city and is exposed as a killer of ten thousands, then he fears men and feigns insanity. (*1 Samuel 21:1-15*)

A. David meets the priest Ahimelech and lies about his mission as he requests food, he says his men may eat the consecrated bread; as he takes Goliath's sword, one of Saul's men observes him. (*Verses 1-9*)

1. David came to Nōb to Ahimelech the priest; and Ahimelech came trembling to meet David and said:

Why (are) you alone and no man with you? (*Verse 1*)

Ahimelech at Nob: Nōb was a priestly city on a hill near the southern border of Benjamin, Saul's tribe.

Apparently David has only gone a few miles at this time. We will learn more about the priest later.

2. David said to Ahimelech: The king commanded me (on a) matter, and said to me: no man will know anything about what (I am) sending thee; and (my) young men I appointed to such a place; now, what is at hand? Thou must give me five loaves of bread, or what (you) find. (*Verses 2-3*)

Secretive: David withholds the truth of being a fugitive from Saul, suggesting he is on a secret mission.

3. The priest answered: No common bread is at hand, but there is consecrated bread if the young men have kept themselves from women; David answered: Surely women have been kept from us three days, when I go the vessels of the young men are consecrated, even on a common journey: how much more today, will their vessels be consecrated. (*Verses 4-5*)

Priest's answer: Ahimelech says he only has consecrated showbread from the tabernacle.

Consecrated bread: Only priests were supposed to eat this (*Leviticus 24:5-9*).

Jesus later used Ahimelech's action to sanction helping those in need on the Sabbath (*Matthew 12:4*).

Yes, men are holy: David confirms his men are consecrated (in compliance with the Torah) using a euphemism for sexual union. Had some time passed and David's men had come to him? Or, is this just part of his half-truth?

Paul used the same euphemism concerning husbands and wives in his letter to the church in Thessalonica (4:3-5).

4. So the priest gave him the consecrated bread because there was no bread but the bread of the Presence which is removed from before Yahweh to put hot bread on the day it is taken. (*Verse 6*)

Gift of bread: Ahimelech made a gracious gift to David of the bread symbolizing the Presence of God.

A millennium later, Jesus identified Himself as the Bread of Life from God (*John 6:35-51*).

5. A servant of Saul was there, being restrained before Yahweh; his name was Doeg of Edom, Saul's mightiest shepherd. (*Verse 7*)

Doeg of Saul: Saul appointed men from nations cursed by Yahweh (Obadiah) to key positions.

Edom and Israel were longtime enemies (*Psalm 137:6*) and God said He would cast them out (*Psalm 60:8*)

6. David said: Is there not here a spear or sword? Because my spear, sword or weapons I have not brought because the king's matter was hastened (on me). (*Verse 8*)

Weapon: David asks the priest for a weapon. He is not on an assignment from Saul, another lie.

7. The priest said the sword of Goliath ... Behold! It has been wrapped in a cloth ... if thou will take it, thou must take it, for there (is no other weapon here); David said: There (is) none like it; thou must give it to me. (*Verse 9*)

Goliath's sword: David now departs from Ahimelech with food and Goliath's sword;

but, spoiler alert, Saul's henchman from Edom has observed everything.

B. Then David flees to a Philistine city and the servants of its king identify him as a killer of Philistines, David fears the pagan king and feigns insanity. (*Verses 10-15*)

1. Then David rose and fled that day from before Saul; then he went to Achish, king of Gath. (*Verse 30*)

Gath: Gath was one of five Philistine cities (*Joshua 13:3*), twenty miles west of Nōb and fifteen miles east of the Great Sea. They were one of the Canaanite peoples that led Israel astray with idols. David is being faithless to Yahweh, distancing himself in his fear of Saul.

Fleeing from human enemies can also distance from God

Application: Let us learn from David's bad example that we must not flee to God's enemies when our rulers are seeking our lives, but instead we should press into God and stand in Him.

2. Achish's servants said to him: Is not this David, king of the land? Did not they sing of him in dances: Saul has slain his thousands / and David his ten thousands? (*Verse 11*)

Servants: With rhetorical questions the king's servants remind him the David is deadly to them!

3. David set these words in his heart, and he was very afraid of Achish, king of Gath. (*Verse 12*)

Wrong fear: When David feared Yahweh in faith, he slew Goliath and thousands of Philistines.

However, he is now fearing Saul, and very much fearing Achish. He is far from God, both physically and spiritually.

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- He changed his behavior before their eyes, acting like a madman; he made marks on the (two) gate doors, and he made his spittle run down his beard. (*Verse 13*)

Behavior and pretense: David changes his behavior to that of a maniac, the opposite of a powerful and valiant soldier of Yahweh. He is trusting in his (flawed) human reasoning (Proverbs 3:5-6). Further evidence of the great distance between him and God.

Fleeing from human enemies can also distance from God

- Achish said to his servants: Behold! Will you all see this man is mad! Why did you bring him to me? (Am) I lacking madmen that you all brought this one to act so mad in my presence? Will this (one) come into my house? (*Verses 14-15*)

Poor witness: David is being a horrible witness to heathens. He is blaspheming the Name of his God before the nations (Isaiah 52:5; Ezekiel 36:22; Romans 2:24).

II. David trusts God in fearful oppressions and petitions God to save his life; he trusts that because God knows him, his prayer will be answered, then he praises and thanks God. (*Psalm 56:1-13*)

Header-introduction: To the chief musician, according to: the silent far-off dove, to David: *mitkam*, when the Philistines held him in Gath. [Most important, David wrote this Psalm about the story we just discussed that happened to him in his early twenties. He became king at age thirty and ruled forty years. It is likely he composed this as a man mature in his faith in his forties.]

- David is oppressed by proud men and trusts God in his fear, and petitions God to put down those wanting to kill him. (*Verses 1-7*)

- Thou must be gracious to me God (Elohim), for men have trampled me / all day (long) fighting (men) will oppress me // my enemies have trampled all day (long) / for many are fighting against me proudly. (*Verses 1-2*)

Trampled: Twice David says enemy men have trampled on him fighting and oppressing him.

By proud: These enemies are motivated by high (haughty) pride.

- In the day I will fear / I (indeed) I will trust in Thee // In God, I will praise His Word / in God, I will trust // I will not fear / what can flesh do to me? (*Verses 3-4*)

Faith: David has indeed had his faith strengthened between the event he is recounting and the time he composed this psalm. His faith in God is overflowing. When he could be afraid, he says he will no longer have any fear of any flesh and blood human. Faith has delivered him from fear of men!

When enemies oppress, trust in God delivers from fear

Application: May we all, like David, learn from sins of our youth so our faith in God will be increased so we now respond to His testing in faithful obedience.

- All day, they distort my words / all their thoughts (are) against me for evil // they will gather together, they will lurk / they will watch my steps / as they have waited (to take) my life (soul). (*Verses 5-6*)

Evil people: These oppressors twist his words, are plotting evil against him, and they wait for an opportune moment to take his life!

- By iniquity, will they escape? / In wrath, God, Thou must cast down the people. (*Verse 7*)

Petition: Starting with a rhetorical question, David now petitions God to cast down his evil oppressors.

- David knows God knows him, will answer his prayer and turn back his enemies; he praises and thanks God for deliverance. (*Verses 8-13*)

- My wanderings, Thou (even) Thou have counted / Thou must put my tears in Thy bottle / Are they not in Thy book // Then my enemies will be turned back in the day I will call / This I have known: that God is for me! (*Verses 8-9*)

Faith in trials: David is sure God has been with him in all his trials, and knows all about him. And he has faith because God is for him.

- In God, I will praise (His) Word / In Yahweh, I will praise (His) Word // In God, I have trusted. I will not fear / what can man do to me? (*Verses 10-11*)

Praise and trust: Expanding on an earlier line by adding Yahweh, the covenant name of God, David says because he is IN God he has faith, so he will not fear men, even evil enemies!

When enemies oppress, trust in God delivers from fear

- Upon me God, are Thy vows / I will render thank offerings to Thee. (*Verses 12*)

Thanksgiving: David now recalls God's vow to him through the prophet Nathan that the Messiah would be his descendant (2 Samuel 7:8-16). He received that vow in his forties, so this was written at least twenty years later.

- Because Thou delivered my life (soul) from death / indeed (if not) my feet from falling // (for me) to walk before God / in the light of life. (*Verse 13*)

Deliverance: The final result of David's mature faith: no matter what oppressive enemies may threaten, he is assured he will walk in the light of life. We know Jesus is that Light (John 8:12).

When enemies oppress, trust in God delivers from fear

Application: We must learn to pray in faith when we are oppressed and thank God for His deliverance, now fully revealed in His Son, the Savior Jesus: David's 'son', the eternal King of kings.

Conclusion: David lies to the priest Ahimelech and receives consecrated bread for his men who have kept from women.

Then he flees to a Philistine city and is exposed as a killer of ten thousands. So he fears men and feigns insanity.

A more mature David trusts God in fearful oppressions and petitions God to save his life.

He now trusts that because God knows him, his prayer will be answered, and he praises and thanks God.

Fleeing from human enemies can also distance from God