

# **The Life of David**

## **David's Growing Confidence in the Lord**

*1 Samuel 22:1-23*

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# David's Growing Confidence in the Lord

## Scripture

David was now a fugitive on the run from King Saul. Initially, David's faith in the Lord was superseded by his fear of Saul. As a result of his fear, he made a number of mistakes. He went to Ahimelech, the priest at Nob, and lied to him. Then he left Ahimelech and fled to Achish, the king of Gath, in Philistine territory. In order to escape from the Philistines, David pretended to be a lunatic. Apparently, these two episodes in David's life enabled him to realize that in spite of his fear, the Lord was still sovereignly watching over him and protecting him. So, from this point on we see David's growing confidence in the Lord.

Let's read about David's growing confidence in the Lord in 1 Samuel 22:1-23:

**<sup>1</sup>David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. And when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him. <sup>2</sup>And everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul, gathered to him. And he became commander over them. And there were with him about four hundred men.**

**<sup>3</sup>And David went from there to Mizpeh of Moab. And he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and my mother stay with you, till I know what God will do for me."**

**<sup>4</sup>And he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold.**

**<sup>5</sup>Then the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not remain in the stronghold; depart, and go into the land of Judah." So David departed and went into the forest of Hereth.**

**<sup>6</sup>Now Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men who were with him. Saul was sitting at Gibeah under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand,**

and all his servants were standing about him. <sup>7</sup> And Saul said to his servants who stood about him, "Hear now, people of Benjamin; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, <sup>8</sup> that all of you have conspired against me? No one discloses to me when 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, to lie in wait, as at this day." <sup>9</sup> Then answered Doeg the Edomite, who stood by the servants of Saul, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, <sup>10</sup> and he inquired of the Lord for him and gave him provisions and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

<sup>11</sup> Then the king sent to summon Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests who were at Nob, and all of them came to the king. <sup>12</sup> And Saul said, "Hear now, son of Ahitub." And he answered, "Here I am, my lord." <sup>13</sup> And Saul said to him, "Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, in that you have given him bread and a sword and have inquired of God for him, so that he has risen against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?" <sup>14</sup> Then Ahimelech answered the king, "And who among all your servants is so faithful as David, who is the king's son-in-law, and captain over your bodyguard, and honored in your house? <sup>15</sup> Is today the first time that I have inquired of God for him? No! Let not the king impute anything to his servant or to all the house of my father, for your servant has known nothing of all this, much or little." <sup>16</sup> And the king said, "You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's house." <sup>17</sup> And the king said to the guard who stood about him, "Turn and kill the priests of the Lord, because their hand also is with David, and they knew that he fled and did not disclose it to me." But the servants of the king would not put out their hand to strike the priests of the Lord. <sup>18</sup> Then the king said to Doeg, "You turn and strike the priests." And Doeg the Edomite turned and struck down the priests, and he killed on that day eighty-five persons who wore the linen ephod. <sup>19</sup> And Nob, the city of the priests, he

put to the sword; both man and woman, child and infant, ox, donkey and sheep, he put to the sword.

<sup>20</sup> But one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David. <sup>21</sup> And Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the Lord. <sup>22</sup> And David said to Abiathar, “I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have occasioned the death of all the persons of your father’s house. <sup>23</sup> Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life. With me you shall be in safekeeping.” (1 Samuel 22:1-23)

## Introduction

Theologian Dale Bruner writes, “The best parable of trust we have in our home is our cat, Clement of Alexandria....When our cat goes outside, he lives in terror. He looks around as though it’s a jungle, and he is terrified. But when he comes in the house, he lies on the floor right between the kitchen and the dining room—where we walk most frequently—and falls asleep in total trust. [My wife] Kathy or I could squash Clement’s head, but he trusts us.”<sup>1</sup>

After David learned that King Saul really did intend to have him killed, David fled from him. He was fugitive on the run from King Saul. He was like Clement the cat, living in terror when he was outside. While on the run from Saul, David made a number of foolish mistakes—all because of his fear of Saul.

Thankfully, however, David, like Clement the cat, returned to “the house,” as it were, and his trust in the Lord grew.

## Lesson

First Samuel 22:1-23 shows us how to trust the Lord in difficult circumstances.

Let’s use the following outline:

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2000/april/12373.html>.

1. David's Preparation (22:1-5)
2. David's Predicament (22:6-23)

## I. David's Preparation (22:1-5)

First, let's look at David's preparation.

Let's look at three aspects regarding David's preparation.

### A. *The Place of David's Preparation (22:1a)*

First, note the place of David's preparation.

Once David realized in Gath of Philistia that he was in trouble, he feigned madness. Achish the king of Gath did not want any more madmen in his presence. Apparently, Achish let David leave him and Gath. Verse 1a of our text says that **David departed from there** (that is, from Gath) **and escaped to the cave of Adullam**, which was about ten miles southeast of Gath.

We don't know how long David spent in **the cave of Adullam**, but it was during this period that David's confidence in the Lord grew again. He wrote two psalms during this period, Psalms 57 and 142. The title of Psalm 57, which is part of the inspired psalm, says, "To the choirmaster: according to Do Not Destroy. A Miktam of David, when he fled from Saul, in the cave." And similarly the title of Psalm 142 says, "A Maskil of David, when he was in the cave. A Prayer." Although both psalms are laments, they nevertheless also express a growing confidence in the Lord.

You may be going through a difficult time. Let me urge you to take time with the Lord. Read his word. Speak to him in prayer. Meditate on his faithfulness to you. God will revive you.

### B. *The People During David's Preparation (22:1b-4)*

Second, let's look at the people during David's preparation.

After some time (as I said earlier, we don't know how long), **when David's brothers and all his father's house heard** that he was in the cave of Adullam, **they went down there to him** (22:1b). It is likely that they feared that Saul would try to kill them since kings regularly killed family members of "rival" kings.

But, in addition to David's family, **everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul, gathered to him** (22:2a). These were the dregs of Israel's society in the sense that they were the people feeling the oppression of King Saul's rule over them. They finally decided that they were no longer willing to live under Saul's despotism. **And David became commander over them. And there were with him about four hundred men** (22:2b). Richard Phillips notes, "This band of four hundred formed the nucleus of what would become David's kingdom, and it is noteworthy that in the providence of God it was Saul's injustice toward David that marked the younger man out as the leader for the faithful in Israel."<sup>2</sup>

As the band of people rallying to David's side grew, he became concerned about his aging parents. So, **David went from there to Mizpeh of Moab. And he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and my mother stay with you, till I know what God will do for me"** (22:3). You may recall that David's great-grandmother was Ruth, and she was from Moab. Because of that, and also because Saul had been at war with Moab, David believed that Moab would be a safe place for his parents. Therefore, **David left his parents with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold** (22:4).

David and the **four hundred men**, along with wives and children, stayed **in the stronghold**, which is the cave of Adullam.

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<sup>2</sup> Richard D. Phillips, *1 Samuel*, ed. Philip Graham Ryken and Richard D. Phillips, Duguid Iain M., 1st ed., Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012), 375.

C. *The Prophet During David's Preparation (22:5)*

And third, observe the prophet during David's preparation.

Earlier I mentioned that while David was in the cave of Adullam, he wrote Psalm 57. David wrote in Psalm 57:3, "He [The Lord] will send from heaven and save me; he will put to shame him who tramples on me. *Selah*. God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness!" By his kind providence, the Lord sent a prophet named Gad to David, while he was in the stronghold. **Then the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not remain in the stronghold; depart, and go into the land of Judah"** (22:5a). During this period of preparation, David's confidence in the Lord grew. We know this because of David's immediate obedience to the word of God from the prophet Gad. **So David departed and went into the forest of Hereth** (22:5b), which was back in Israel, **in the land of Judah**. Richard Phillips writes:

This kind of ready obedience to God's Word is the mark of true and living faith. If we are to profess faith in David's God, then we must be willing to obey as David did when the Bible speaks clearly to our lives. In the arrival of Gad the prophet to his refuge at Adullam, David must have seen a return of God's favor for him. We likewise should treat God's Word as the surest sign of his will for our blessing, so that we prize the Scriptures and eagerly believe and obey them.<sup>3</sup>

So, David's growing confidence in the Lord involved a season of preparation.

## II. **David's Predicament (22:6-23)**

And second, let's examine David's predicament.

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<sup>3</sup> Richard D. Phillips, *1 Samuel*, 377.

I would like to examine two facets of David's predicament.

*A. The Slaughter by Saul (22:6-19)*

First, notice the slaughter by Saul.

Apparently, **Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men who were with him** (22:6a). Presumably, someone told Saul about David's whereabouts. **Saul was sitting at Gibeah under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him** (22:6b). One picture the despotic Saul sitting under a tree with all his servants standing about him, quivering in fear of him. Then he demanded to know from his servants what was going on with David. But not one servant would say a word to Saul.

Finally, **Doeg the Edomite, who stood by the servants of Saul**, said, **"I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, and he inquired of the Lord for him and gave him provisions and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine"** (22:9-10). Doeg misstated what he had witnessed because David did not inquire of the Lord at Nob. Furthermore, Doeg implied that Ahimelech conspired with David against Saul, when in fact Ahimelech did no such thing.

Then Saul summoned Ahimelech and all the priests at Nob to come and see him, which they did. Saul demanded from Ahimelech, **"Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, in that you have given him bread and a sword and have inquired of God for him, so that he has risen against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?"** (22:13). Ahimelech answered Saul that he knew about no such conspiracy. Furthermore, he affirmed David as the most faithful of Saul's servants.

But Saul would not hear of it. He said to Ahimelech, **"You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's house"** (22:16). Then Saul ordered the guard to kill Ahimelech and all the



priests. **But the servants of the king would not put out their hand to strike the priests of the Lord** (22:17b).

Because none of Saul's servants would kill the priests, Saul turned and said to **Doeg, "You turn and strike the priests."** **And Doeg the Edomite**, probably because he was not an Israelite and had no commitment to the people of God, **turned and struck down the priests, and he killed on that day eighty-five persons** (22:18). Then he travelled to **Nob, the city of the priests**, and **he put to the sword; both man and woman, child and infant, ox, donkey and sheep, he put to the sword** (22:19).

In my previous sermon I mentioned that David's lies to Ahimelech at Nob eventually resulted in the death of Ahimelech and all the priests at Nob, as we see now. Moral failure has consequences, sometimes disastrous consequences.

Let us be vigilant daily. Let us never shade the truth. Let us always be people of honesty and integrity. Let us trust always God.

*B. The Sorrow of David (22:20-23)*

And second, observe the sorrow of David.

David was now in the forest of Hereth, along with all those who were with him. He did not know about Saul's deeds through Doeg in Gibeah and Nob. **But one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David** (22:20). How **Abiathar** knew that David was located in the forest of Hereth, we are not told. **And Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the Lord. And David said to Abiathar, "I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there (when David spoke with Ahimelech the priest at Nob), that he would surely tell Saul. I have occasioned the death of all the persons of your father's house"** (22:21-22).

It may be of interest to you to know that God had actually foreordained the death of the priests. When Eli was priest in Israel,

he had two wicked sons, Hophni and Phinehas. God said to Eli in 1 Samuel 2:31, “Behold, the days are coming when I will cut off your strength and the strength of your father’s house, so that there will not be an old man in your house.” Moreover, God went on to say, “The only one of you whom I shall not cut off from my altar shall be spared to weep his eyes out to grieve his heart [**Abiathar** was that man], and all the descendants of your house shall die by the sword of men [that is, by Doeg]” (2:33).

The Lord always carries out his sovereign purposes, sometimes using the sin of people to accomplish those purposes. David’s sin accomplished God’s promise that he would punish the descendants of Eli with their destruction, save for one only.

Commentator John Woodhouse writes, “Whatever reasonable criticisms we might have of David’s conduct at Nob, we cannot miss the contrast between the way he here takes responsibility for what had happened (in the sense that he should have foreseen it and somehow dealt with Doeg) and the utter lack of responsibility we have seen in Saul. David now took responsibility for the safety of Abiathar.”<sup>4</sup> David said to Abiathar, **“Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life. With me you shall be in safekeeping”** (22:23).

Saul was vehemently opposed to David. He wanted him—and all those with him—destroyed. In a similar way, Satan is opposed to Christ. He wants Christ—and all those with him—destroyed. But, for all those who turn to Christ, there is refuge in him. With Christ you shall be in safekeeping.

## Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the incident of David’s growing confidence in the Lord as set forth in 1 Samuel 22:1-23, we should

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<sup>4</sup> John Woodhouse, *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 441.

trust the Lord in every difficult circumstance.

The life of David points us to his greater son, Jesus. There are a number of ways in which our present story points us to Jesus.

For example, the dregs in Israel left Saul and joined David. Rick Phillips notes, "Under David's influence, however, these followers formed the initial nucleus of what would become a great and glorious kingdom, the legacy of which will literally last forever."<sup>5</sup> In a similar way, Jesus gathered a band of followers that were described as the dregs of society. Phillips adds, "Led by God's Son, Jesus, and empowered by the Holy Spirit he sends from heaven, Christ's followers are a dynamic influence in the world, despite their lowly appearance and worldly weakness."<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, as we noted already, David was hated by Saul who wanted him and his followers destroyed. Similarly, Jesus is hated by Satan who wants him and his followers destroyed.

Finally, David was concerned for all who came to him for safekeeping. He took care of his family, as well as his followers. Similarly, Jesus is concerned for all who come to him for safekeeping. We remember Jesus on the cross, taking care of his mother, when he said to his disciple John, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home (John 19:27). And regarding all those who come to him, Jesus said, "Whoever comes to me I will never cast out" (John 6:37b).

David was God's chosen one, that is, the Christ. Those who believed in him went to him. They left Saul and joined David, God's chosen one, the Christ.

The good news of the gospel is that Jesus is God's anointed one, the Christ. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). So, let us trust in Christ and be saved. And let us trust the Lord in every difficult circumstance. Amen.

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<sup>5</sup> Richard D. Phillips, *1 Samuel*, 375.

<sup>6</sup> Richard D. Phillips, *1 Samuel*, 375.

# Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church  
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and membership in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike maturity,  
equip them for their ministry in the church  
and life mission in the world,  
in order to magnify God's name.*

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