

David's Wilderness Experiences (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] Well, let's take our Bibles tonight and open them to 1 Samuel 21, starting with verse 10 through to chapter 22, verse 9.

! Now David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish, the king of Gath. So he changed his behavior before them, pretending madness in their hands, scratched on the doors of the gate, let his saliva fall down on his beard.

Then Achish said to the servants, Look, you see, the man is insane. Why have you brought him to me? Have I need of madmen that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence?

Shall this fellow come into my house? David therefore departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. So when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him.

[1 : 47] And everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him. So he became captain over them.

And there were about 400 men with him. Then David went from there to Mizpah of Moab, and he said to the king of Moab, Please let my father and mother come here with you till I know what God will do for me.

So he brought them before the king of Moab, and they dwelt with him all the time that David was in the stronghold. Now the prophet Gad said to David, Do not stay in the stronghold.

Depart. Go to the land of Judah. So David departed and went into the forest of Harath. I think I'll just stop right there. So just to remind you, and I explained this last Sunday night, We've now kind of launched into a portion of 1 Samuel that will take up nine chapters.

And so this is kind of part two of what we started last week. I don't know how many parts we're going to get, but we're going to take nine chapters. Under this heading, David's wilderness experience.

[3 : 09] And it really is. And I made some comparisons, if you will remember, last week to Israel's wilderness experience after they went into captivity and then were delivered and so forth.

And some interesting parallels there. This is David's kind of wilderness experience before he eventually would become, of course, king of Israel. So David is in exile.

He is a man on the run, on the run from the wrath of King Saul, who wants him dead. So David is a fugitive.

Now he's no longer in the household of Saul, no longer playing his harp to soothe the savage breast. David is Israel's most wanted.

Last week, we looked at the first of several things that I want us to see in really a text that's going to take us all the way into chapter 23 eventually.

[4 : 05] And that is, this is what we looked at last week. David relied upon the devoted. Well, a certain devoted man, and verse 1 begins, Now David came to Nob, remember?

And we talked about Nob, that city, and the significance of Nob, and the presence of many priests in Nob. And David there relied upon, I think he was the high priest at the time, Ahimelech.

The priest, not just Ahimelech, but really all the priests of Nob. And you remember that Ahimelech gave David two things that he very desperately needed.

He's in exile, so he needs provision, needs provision. He needs bread. And Ahimelech gave him the bread that he needed, but also David needed protection.

So provision and protection. And so he gave him, Ahimelech gave David bread, the provision that he needed. And he gave David a sword, a very historic and famous sword.

[5 : 17] I think we can assume that it was a very large sword, because it was the sword that belonged to Goliath. That David, you know, David defeated Goliath and took his sword.

So it really rightfully belonged to David. So he relied upon Ahimelech, the devoted to the Lord. Second, and that brings us up to speed, and so now we want to move forward. David, next, risked the dangerous. He risked the dangerous, and he risked danger in his life at this point for a number of reasons that we'll see here in just a minute. So he risked something very dangerous to him. David is on the run. He's on the run from King Saul. Saul hates David. Saul, of course, is threatened by David. Saul wants to keep his kingship. He knows deep down in his heart that God has chosen David and has rejected Saul. So Saul, what? He desires David's death, his death. [6 : 21] And he has become so obsessed with this that it has absolutely poisoned his life, as we'll see over the next several weeks. All right, so David first runs to Nob and the high priest Ahimelech. But he can't stay there. Can't stay there for long because apparently Saul is in hot pursuit of David because that's how our text, verse 10, begins. He's fleeing from Saul. So Saul is in hot pursuit. And so what does David do? What does he do? Well, essentially, I think we could say that David jumps from the frying pan into the fire. Literally. And it causes us to wonder why he would do what he did next. And so verse 10 says, Then David arose and fled that day from before Saul. So that clues us in that Saul is getting very close. He's almost to Nob. And he's in hot pursuit of David. So he fled from him that very day and went to Achish, Achish, the king of Gath. [7 : 32] And I want to say, are you kidding me? That he would go there. I mean, why? Think about it. And I think, you know, wheels are already turning in your mind. You're thinking, well, this doesn't seem like a very smart move. Think about it. Why would David go there, of all places? Why would he go to the land of the dreaded Philistines, the arch enemies of Israel? And, of all places, why would he go to Gath? Of all places he could flee to in Philistia, why Gath? I mean, Gath was the hometown of the Philistines' champion, right? Who was that? Thank you, Wes. But we all know it, don't we? Goliath of Gath. And Goliath, you know, we found out, yeah, we will find out in 2 Samuel, though Goliath's dead, of course. [8 : 40] I'm sure that didn't make the residents of his hometown happy. But not only that, but Goliath has four living brothers. Little difficult to discover if they're brothers or if they're offspring of Goliath, like sons. But regardless, he has family there. And from the description of some of them that we find in 2 Samuel, I think it's chapter 17, they're pretty big guys, too, all right? So they're still alive. So here's David going to not only into the land of the Philistines, the enemies of Israel, his enemies, but also to Gath, the hometown of Goliath. And to make matters even worse, think about this, and you probably haven't thought of this, whose sword is he carrying? Goliath's, all right? [9 : 42] His famous sword. And it's almost as if David is walking into the town and he's saying to the people, remember me? Now, he's not doing this. I think David is naive here, thinking that he can fool them. But it's like, remember me? I'm the guy who killed your champion. And not only that, but I'm the one who humiliated you. And I'm the one who sent your armies fleeing from the valley of Elah, where we chopped you to pieces. Remember me? So why would he go there? Well, there are some answers to that, some very logical answers. And one of them would be that it was the closest, nearest city of any size, closest to where he was there in Nob. It's the closest place he could have fled to, about 20 miles west, kind of west-southwest of Nob. But also, it was outside of Israelite territory. [10 : 49] So he's getting out of his land, country of Israel. And this, I think, would afford him some level of protection from Saul, right? He's out of Saul's jurisdiction, out of his territory. He's kind of put himself, you know, kind of in the hotbed of the enemy. But also, I think you could say that it was possibly because David wanted to protect his family and friends, those who were close to him, you know, what happens eventually to the priests of Nob, and we're not going to get there tonight, what happens to them, I think, stands as

a testimony to the real danger David's friends and families risked even coming in contact with him. And so it just gets out of Israel altogether. That somewhat makes sense, though still, I think I'd find some secluded place, you know, and certainly not go right into the city of Gath.

But third of all, I think David apparently thought that he would not be recognized, which is inconceivable. He thought they wouldn't know me there. And some scholars have surmised that maybe his intention was to hire himself out as a mercenary soldier there in Gath in the land of the Philistines, which, again, kind of perplexing of choice or decision.

But David, I think, of course, underestimated his legendary status as the one who defeated the champion, the giant, Goliath.

[12:34] And, you know, it was their famous citizen, again, their famous citizen that David killed in battle, the nine-foot giant, Goliath.

And so David was immediately recognized, wasn't he? I mean, that's kind of the sense you get from the passage. He gets there, no sooner does he get there, that the servants of the king, they come to the king, Achish, and say, you know, we know this guy.

I mean, you know, we might think about this. How many red-headed guys carrying around Goliath's sword do you think there might be in that region? So he kind of stands out like a sore thumb.

And so in verse 11, the servants of Achish said to him, said to the king, is this not David, the king of the land? And that's an interesting phrase, interesting thing that they said, king of the land.

You know, I don't know if we should make too much of that, but it seems to me that even Israel's enemies knew that David was the rightful king of Israel. I mean, in fact, in their way of thinking, based upon the stories of David, his legend, how could he be anything other than a king in Israel?

[13:57] So David was a living legend. In fact, what did they say in verse 11? They said, did they, referring to the Israelite women, did they not sing of him to one another in dances?

Saying what? Saul has slain his thousands. David, his ten thousands. We've heard that before, haven't we? That's kind of what got this all started with Saul.

Got his dander up. It was there that Saul began to despise David and suspect him and despise him and have a desire to get rid of him. But it's interesting that these Philistines knew the song.

I mean, isn't that interesting? I mean, this is not Israel. Israel. These are not Jews talking here.

These are Philistines. These are pagans. But they knew about the song.

I guess it had become one of Palestine's, you know, top number one songs on the hit parade or something like that, you know. Maybe Dick Clark was there and he announced that.

[15:02] You remember who Dick Clark was, don't you? Okay. He finally did die, didn't he?

Amazing. I think he must have been 340 years old. I don't know. By the way, I would also mention David had slain his ten thousand.

That's how the song went. He had slain his ten thousand what? Philistines. Philistines, of course.

I mean, the Philistines hated David. You know, you just kind of stack all this evidence up, all these facts up, and you wonder why. I mean, this is a dangerous thing for David to do.

And so the Philistines, of course, all along, ever since that fateful day in the Valley of Elah, when their champion was destroyed by a single rock to the head, by a little shepherd boy, a little ruddy shepherd boy, who threw that rock and felled their champion, their nine-foot giant, ever since that day, of course.

And certainly the people, the citizens of Gath, they would have liked nothing better than to get their hands on him. And so here he is.

[16:16] They've got him. I mean, this is a dangerous business for David, right? And he knows it. At least he knows it now. Because verse 12 says, Now David took these words to heart.

Yeah, like you would. I've been discovered. I've been found out. They know who I am. So he took these words to heart. And was very much afraid of Achish, the king of Gath.

In fact, in Psalm 56, we'll not go there and read it. You can read it sometime. But that psalm, we know from the introduction to it, which is part of the inspired text, that this was written concerning this time, this very time, when he was taken captive there in Gath.

Now, we don't have any details in 1 Samuel about what they did, but we can learn a little bit about that from Psalm 56. So this is a dangerous time for David.

All right, so what does David do? What does he do to protect himself? Well, the same thing you and I would do, if we thought of it.

[17:25] David plays the part of an insane man, a madman. And this is interesting, isn't it?

He's being very deceptive. I don't know if God led him to do this, or, of course, it did work. But this is what he does in verse 13. And so he changed his behavior before them.

The old, kind of old King's English word, feigned madness. They even brought that over into the New King James. That is, he acted insanely.

He acted like a madman in their hands. I mean, they're taking him, dragging him to the king, and the only thing he can think of is to act, act like he's insane. He's crazy.

And so what does he do? He does a couple of things, or describes a couple of things that he did. Scratching on the door of the gate. That is, scribbling, perhaps nonsensical graffiti on the gate.

[18 : 29] He's defacing the property. You know, like he's some crazy man. And then also, in this, culturally, very serious to them.

I mean, it was a, it was a, maybe the clincher for them to believe that he really was insane. Now, it seems rather silly to us, rather minor to us, you know, because I'm looking around, there's only one person in the whole room that has a beard.

But even in our culture, this really would not have necessarily pointed to the insanity of a person. But it did in this culture. He let his saliva, I mean, it's gross.

All right, he let his saliva fall down on his beard. That's a sure sign of madness. At least it was in the culture of their day. They would never do that.

You would never do that. It was a disgrace in their culture for a man to let saliva to go down into his beard. All right, that's the last time I'm going to say it.

[19 : 32] Saliva, you know, no, I'm not going to. All right, so this is what he did. And it worked, didn't it? It worked.

Verse 14 says, Then Achish said to his servants, Look, you see the man is insane. Don't you see that? He's insane. He's a madman. Why have you brought him to me?

Now, why was this such an effective move, wise move on David's part? Well, because, again, of the culture.

In the oriental culture, and to a degree still today, insanity was considered a divine affliction. And those who suffered this affliction were pitied.

And not only that, but they were protected. And according to the culture, you were not to harm them in any way. Very serious.

[20 : 37] In fact, as I was putting this together, it reminded me of one of my favorite movies, old movies, and I like old classic movies. And I like Bing Crosby and Bob Hope's road movies.

Do you like that? Have you seen all those? I've got one hand back there, Wes. You and I, kindred brothers here on these old classics. So, you know, if you can find it on YouTube or buy it or something, watch some of the road movies.

They're good. And it reminded me of one particular road movie. I think it was The Road to Morocco. And I can't be a Bob Hope, but, you know, here they are, Bing Crosby and Bob Hope.

They're in Morocco or some city like that. And they're hungry. I mean, really hungry. They haven't eaten for a long time. And they're walking through the market and they're seeing this food and they don't have any money and they can't buy any food.

How many of you have seen this movie? You recognize what I'm about to say? And so as they are salivating, there's saliva again. I can't get away from that term.

[21 : 45] They're salivating over the food that is out there, but they can't get it because they don't have any money. And then they see, they notice this crazy man who's walking around and he's acting like he's insane.

So, one of those and one of these and one of those and the shopkeepers, they give it to him. They just give him everything he wants because they pity him because of his insanity.

And so, of course, you know, Bob Hope has to try that. Somehow it just didn't work for him. He's too much of a comedian. But this is the idea.

This was the culture. It is today even in some Middle Eastern and Oriental, Far Eastern countries that the insane are to be pitied and they're not to be harmed.

And in many respects, they are to be helped and given what they need. And so, this is what David did and it worked for him.

[22 : 43] Someone has observed that this highlights kind of an important contrast between David and King Saul if you think about it. Especially in this time period in their relationship together and, you know, who David was and who Saul was at this time.

David play-acted insanity to hide his sanity. At the same time, Saul play-acted sanity in order to hide his insanity.

Interesting contrast. It's also interesting how Achish berated his servants. Did you remember that as I read it? Verse 15, he said, Have I need of madmen?

That's kind of an interesting response. He said, Why did you bring this guy here? Everybody can clearly see he's mad. He's insane. He's crazy. Do I need a madman here? In fact, literally, it could read, Do I or we lack madmen here in our city?

Do we lack them? Suggesting, perhaps, that Gath had its fair share of weirdos. And maybe they did.

[23 : 59] He's essentially saying, Is there a shortage of madmen here that you have brought this fellow to act the madman in my presence?

Shall this one come into my house? And again, you know, I guess Gath did have its fair share of freaks. In fact, they did. They had giants.

Nine-foot guys. And, you know, when you get into 2 Samuel chapter 21 and verse 20, we have a reference there to a resident of Gath, an offspring of Goliath who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each feet.

Weird. Right? So, he let him go. He let David go. In chapter 22, verse 1 says, David therefore departed from there. So, it worked.

So, David risked the dangerous. And now, third, and we'll finish with this one and move on next time, but David rallied the discontented.

[25 : 11] He rallied the discontented. David was a natural-born leader. And we're going to discover in the next few verses on into chapter 22, the first five verses of chapter 22, we're going to discover the kind of leadership David had.

He rallied people to him. And so, after leaving Gath, David, according to verse 1 of chapter 22, escaped to the cave of Adullam.

And when his brothers and all his father's house heard of it, they went down there to him. All right?

So, that's how we open up chapter 22. Adullam, this cave, was about 10 miles, best we can surmise, about 10 miles east of Gath toward Bethlehem.

Bethlehem was David's hometown. So, it was near to his hometown, his home territory, because it was actually in the land of the tribe of Judah, David's tribe.

And so, this was David's home country, his territory. And so, that explains why David's family joined him there, right? I mean, that makes sense.

[26 : 24] And yet, not, by the way, just because they loved him. But I think it would be correct in understanding that they did so because they really didn't have any choice for self-preservation.

they had to leave their house and join David at this point. Why? Because of Saul. Because of the danger he posed to them, to his family, to his relatives, to his friends, to the people of Bethlehem, even, who would know David.

But others also joined David there, right? That's what verse 2 tells us, and everyone who was in distress. So there were people who were distressed living in that area, in the area of Judah.

Everyone who was distressed, everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented, discontented. They gathered to him, to David, so he became captain over them.

And there were about 400 men with him. That's not counting women. We know there were women there because his mother was there. We find out here in a little bit. So we can assume that these are families rallying to him.

[27 : 45] 400 of them were men. And, you know, don't necessarily get the idea that these are a bunch of misfits and malcontents and perhaps even criminals, debtors, and such like that, deadbeats.

That's not the idea. I think the idea is that these were people who were mistreated by Saul solely because they lived in Judah. Perhaps most of them from around Bethlehem, the hometown of David.

And so, you know, they were mistreated by Saul, either because of his madness. I mean, he just did crazy things because he was insane.

Insane with hate and anger. Or, again, most likely because of their tribal connection with David, the tribe of Judah. All right, so David became their leader.

Suddenly he has 400 men at his disposal. David rallied these discontented Judahites, and I think we can understand it's implied here that he molded them into his own private army.

[28 : 55] 400 strong. He was a natural-born leader. Did they know that God had chosen him to be king? Not likely at this point. Perhaps some of them did.

Perhaps they guessed that. But he brought them together. Some have even suggested that it was out of these 400 loyal followers of David that they would continue to be loyal to him.

Out of those 400 that perhaps some of David's famed mighty men came. And we'll study more about them later, especially if we get into 2 Samuel.

He'll not sure about that. But his famous mighty men, there were 30 or some say 30, some say 36 or 37, they're named actually in scripture. Who of course figured in very significantly into David's career as king of Israel.

So let's look at verse 3 and following and tell us, these passages will tell us what David did to care for his mother and father. Then David went from there to Mizpah, Mizpah of Moab.

[30 : 07] So he's left Judah, left Israel, moved into the region of Moab. And he said to the king of Moab, please let my father and mother come here with you till I know what God will do for me.

Till this all plays out. Till I know for sure that God has chosen me. so he brought them before the king of Moab and they dwelt with him all the time that David was in the stronghold.

Now, this is not strange. These are the Moabites, right? Not Israelites. And we might think it would be strange that the king of Moab would even have a willingness.

To an extent, Moab, the Moabites were the enemies of Israel. They were certainly the enemies of Saul. Saul. And so it might seem strange that the king of Moab would allow this.

And yet, not so strange when you consider that David had Moabite blood in him. You say, did he really? Remember who David's great grandmother was?

[31 : 19] Ruth. Exactly. Ruth, the Moabite. The Moabite. And while we're thinking about that, remember who David's great great grandmother was.

Anybody know? Rahab. The Canaanite harlot. So, Ruth, the Moabite. Rahab, the Canaanite harlot.

And add to that, that David's mother, very likely, and this is kind of implied in scripture, kind of a guess based upon some things, some genealogies and such that we have, that David's mother had been married previously, before married to Jesse, his father, before having David, her son.

And she was married to a guy by the name of Nahash, who was an Ammonite, the king of Ammon, an Ammonite king. We get that from 2 Samuel 17 and verse 25 when there's mention of David's sister Abigail there, or his half-sister, born of Nahash.

So, I guess I just mentioned that kind of as a side here, to consider how dubious, kind of a dubious bloodline this is for an Israelite king that David would, of course, one day become.

[32 : 44] And really, a testimony to the grace of God. You know, a couple of these ladies, Ruth and Rahab, were mentioned in the genealogy of Christ, right? Because Jesus is of the lineage of David.

So, the same bloodline that David has, same bloodline, humanly speaking, through his mother, that Jesus had. All right, so David, by law, he did not remain in Moab, according to verse 5, and really not according to verse 5, but we have a prophet here, and the prophet Gad said to David, do not stay in the stronghold, depart, and go to the land of Judah.

So David departed and went into the forest of Herath. Herath. He didn't stay in Moab, and why is that? Because it was prohibited according to the Torah, according to the law.

In Deuteronomy chapter 23, in verse 6, the Bible there says that no treaties, no peace agreements, no relationships can be made with the Moabites or the Ammonites.

In fact, the passage says, you shall not seek their peace, Moabites or Ammonites, you shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever.

[34 : 06] So this is behind the prophet Gad's words to David. You must leave here, can't have this kind of relationship with the Moabites, can't have this kind of peace with them because the law prohibits it.

And, you know, the question is, why is that? Now here's another little question to test your knowledge of biblical history. Who were the Moabites and the Ammonites?

Who were they? Where did they come from? From Lot, exactly. From Lot you remember the incestuous relationship between Lot and his two daughters?

Not a real pleasant subject. They got him drunk and they had relationships with their father, had offsprings as a result, and the older daughter had a son named Moab and the younger daughter had a son named, actually I think it was Ben-Amoni, from who came the Ammonites. The Ammonites, Moabites and the Ammonites, so just a little point of history there. Next week we'll look at this terrible, terrible thing that Saul and his armies, under Saul's leadership and his command, terrible thing that is done to the priests of Nob.

[35 : 32] But it's a tragic story, and so we'll look at what I'm going to call David realized the devastation, the devastation of the anger of Saul, the wrath of Saul, and he realized it not personally, but he realized it in Saul's wrath poured out upon the innocent priests of Nob, Ahimelech and the priests, and it's a terrible, terrible story, tragic, and so we'll look at that starting next week.

Bye.