

BIBLE SERIES: *"EXPLORING OUR AWESOME BIBLE"*

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1 SAMUEL 19-24 DAVID FLEES FROM SAUL AND SPARES HIS LIFE



Because of David's military successes and the constant praise of the people, Saul's paranoia against David becomes obsessive (paranoia is defined as "a psychosis characterized by systematized delusions of persecution or grandeur and marked by an unfounded suspicion and distrust".)

Twice Saul had tried to kill David with a spear, and now, when he challenged David to kill 100 Philistines for the hand of his daughter, thinking he would surely die, David went ahead and for good measure, instead killed 200! Saul had to reluctantly give his daughter Michal to David.

The Bible says, "Now Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David; but Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted greatly in David" (1 Samuel 19:1). So Jonathan warned David of the plot against his life. He also finally persuades his father to desist from killing David and Saul agrees to accept him. But then, when the Philistines attack Israel, David again becomes the hero. "And there was war again, and David went out and fought with the Philistines, and struck them with a mighty blow, and they fled from him" (19:8).

When David returns triumphantly, Saul becomes insanely jealous, and when David plays for him, he again tries to skewer him to the wall with a spear but David escapes. That night, Saul sends assassins to kill David, but Michal warns David and lets him down from a window. She then disguises an image as a person and places it on the bed, so when the assassins come, they discover the trick. Saul was very upset with Michal, but she lies, saying David had threatened her life and she was forced to do it.

David then flees to Ramah where Samuel the prophet lives but Saul finds out and sends his men to kill David. Yet God intervenes thrice and the soldiers are filled with God's spirit and begin to speak in oracles. Frustrated, Saul goes there and he also falls into the same state and this allows David to escape from Saul's hand.

Next, he goes to his trusted friend, Jonathan and asks him what he has done wrong. Jonathan assures him that it isn't his fault and vows to protect him since Saul confides everything to him. They then set up a test to see if Saul still wants to kill David. Since David would not be at the king's table for dinner, if the king reacted favorably to Jonathan's explanation that David was at Bethlehem at a sacrifice with his

family, all would be well. But if Saul became angry, it meant he still wanted to kill David. Saul does react violently when Jonathan tells him he has given David permission to go. When Jonathan tries to defend David, Saul attempts to kill his own son with a spear. So Jonathan has to send the signal to David that Saul still wants to kill him. He comforted David and they hugged each other, reaffirming their vow to be loyal and to protect their children from harm.

David now leaves for good and becomes a renegade. He first flees to Nob, the chief priestly town. There he asks for help, claiming he was on a secret mission. Abimelech, the priest, gave him the only bread they had available, the sacred bread of presence, which Christ would later use as an example of a genuine emergency—hunger—as meriting superseding the ritual law. It's similar to another emergency clause He would use about the ox falling in the ditch on the Sabbath. Abimelech also gives him Goliath's sword, that had been consecrated there. Unfortunately, one of Saul's men, the Edomite Doeg, witnesses all of this and would later tell Saul

Then David flees to Philistine territory, since Saul's spies are everywhere. He presents himself to Achish, the king of Gath, probably as a formidable mercenary to serve the king. But when David finds out the king's servants knew how many Philistines he had killed, he has to change tactics, and pretends to be mad—something frightening at that time since it was equated with being possessed by a god. So the king expels him from his land, which was precisely what David wanted.

Next, David flees to the Judean wilderness, and made the cave of Adullam his home. His family even visits him, and he begins to gather a renegade band of about 400 men. Saul's spies are everywhere and he decides to flee to Moab, where the king grants his parents exile, for they are also in danger. He returns to a stronghold, probably around Masada. Then a prophet warns him God had said to leave the stronghold, for he was in mortal danger, and he does.

David flees with his men to the forest of Hereth but was soon discovered by Saul's spies. Notice Saul growing paranoia in the following scene, "Then Saul said to his servants who stood about him, 'Hear now, you Benjamites! Will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands and captains of hundreds? All

of you have conspired against me, and there is no one who reveals to me that my son has made a covenant with the son of Jesse; and there is not one of you who is sorry for me or reveals to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as it is this day. Then answered Doeg the Edomite, who was set over the servants of Saul, and said, 'I saw the son of Jesse going to Nob, to Abimelech the son of Ahitub. And he inquired of the Lord for him, gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine'" (22:7-10).

Of course, Doeg fails to tell Saul that Abimelech didn't know David was now considered an enemy of the state and so had innocently helped him. But Saul, in his paranoia, saw this as treason. When Abimelech insists before Saul that he thought David was still a loyal officer, Saul doesn't believe him.

In his madness, he orders his men to kill all the priests, but they refuse to obey. Only Doeg the Edomite and a few others are willing to do it and they cold-bloodedly kill all 85 priests, and then massacre the entire town, including the animals! It was a sin that Saul would pay dearly. Only one of the sons of Abimelech manages to escape, Abiathar. He flees to David's hideout and David is heartbroken, feeling somewhat responsible, although he was really not to blame, and told Abiathar to stay with him. One day he would pay Doeg back for this heinous crime.

Abiathar had brought the priestly ephod with him (23:6) and David inquires of God what should be done. God tells him to go down to the town of Keilah and free the Israelites from a Philistine invasion. David defeats the Philistines and becomes the great hero there. But after consulting the ephod, God tells David that Saul is planning on trapping him inside the town, and so he flees before Saul can arrive.

David now spends his time hiding in the wilderness of Judah, which probably as a shepherd, he knew quite well. He now has some 600 men with him and his tender treatment of them makes them very loyal to him. Saul is still obsessed with trying to kill David and "sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand. So David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. And David was in the Wilderness of Ziph in a forest. Then Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God. And said, 'Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you.

Even my father Saul knows that. So the two of them made a covenant before the Lord" (23:14-17).

The inhabitants of Ziph inform Saul that David was somewhere in their territory. Saul praises them and asks them to pinpoint where he is hiding. But when they try to find him, David had moved to the wilderness of Maon. Saul then goes there, and incredibly, as they go across one side of the mountain, David and his men are on the other side. Just as Saul is about to find David, he hears distressing news that the Philistines have again attacked Israel, and so he turns around and David escapes. "So they called the place the Rock of Escape. Then David went up from there and dwelt in strongholds at En Gedi" (23:28-29).

After Saul chases the Philistines out of the territory, he finds out David is in the wilderness of En Gedi and takes 3,000 men with him. Saul decides to go to relieve himself in one of the caves and David and his 600 men are hiding inside. "Then the men of David said to him, 'This is the day of which the Lord said to you, 'Behold, I will deliver your enemy into your hand...And David arose and secretly cut off a corner of Saul's robe. Now it happened afterward that David's heart troubled him because he had cut Saul's robe. And he said to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord. So David restrained his servants with these words, and did not allow them to rise against Saul. And Saul got up from the cave and went on his way. David also arose afterward, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, saying, 'My lord the king!' (24:4-8).

David then explains to Saul he could have killed him, but instead spared him. Saul is so impressed that he repents of wanting to kill David. Then he said to David, 'You are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil...now I know indeed that you shall surely be king...Therefore swear now to me by the Lord that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and you will not destroy my name from my father's house. So David swore to Saul. And Saul went home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold (24:17-22).