Session 8 David’s Trouble in Nob and Gath (1 Sam. 21; Ps. 34)

1. David was helped by the priests at the city of Nob (1 Sam. 21:1-9)

David asked the priests in the city of Nob to give him supplies (21:1-4). David lied to the high priest Ahimelech, telling him that he was on a secret mission for the king (21:1-2).

1Now David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. And Ahimelech was afraid when he met David, and said to him, “Why are you alone, and no one is with you?” 2So David said to Ahimelech the priest, “The king has ordered me on some business, and said to me, ‘Do not let anyone know anything about the business on which I send you, or what I have commanded you.’ And I have directed my young men to such and such a place.” (1 Sam. 21:1-2)

*The cities that we are going to highlight tonight are the city of Nob and the city of Gath. Now what happens in these two cities and actually for the next couple of chapters, is we see David is struggling with fear. And fear takes a place in his life. I don’t want to say fear dominates him—that is too strong of a word—but fear gets the upper hand, and David makes some really foolish decisions, but he gets the victory. Then he walks free from it. He walks no longer under its influence, but then a little bit later it hits him again. That is really how the Christian life goes. These next ten chapters of David’s life are not one unbroken string of victory after victory, but it is advance, some setback, some advance, some really noble choices, then some bad choices, then a recovery, then noble choices. That is why I can relate to David’s life so well. I know what it means to go forward, then have some setbacks and make some wrong choices, and then recover in the grace of God and make good choices after that and know the Lord’s pleasure and the Lord’s blessing upon your life.*

* 1. ***Why David went to Nob***:David asked the high priest for food and weapons as well as to inquire of the Lord that he might receive prophetic direction from the Lord (22:10). The high priest had a garment called the *ephod* (14:3) with pockets carrying two stones called the *Urim* and the *Thummim*(Ex. 28:30). It seems they could ask a “yes or no” question and receive insight on the spot.

3Ahijah…the Lord’s priest in Shiloh, was wearing an ephod. (1 Sam. 14:3)

30And you shall put in the breastplate…the Urim and the Thummim… (Ex. 28:30)

*We will look at 1 Samuel 21. “Now David came to the city of Nob.” That is only about three miles south of Gibeah. It is only three miles away. Remember where we left David–weeping in the embrace of his best friend Jonathan, knowing they might not see each other for many years. Little did they know they would only see each other one more time. They both probably assumed it would be a little while and then they would be together the rest of their life, but it never happened that way.*

*So David fled three miles, and he was very sad. He was grieving. He was disappointed that his life in Gibeah, the governmental capital, was all gone: the money, the friends, the promotion, the routine that he was so enjoying. So many disappointments. Fear was beginning to play a role in his life like it had never before. Plus, now he was alone.*

*Let me give you just a good common sense warning. When you are sad and then you are disappointed—which are not always the same thing, because circumstances took a negative turn, and he was sad over the relational break. Then circumstances took a really negative turn so he was disappointed plus sad over the relationship. And he had fear because a man was trying to kill him and destroy him. He had fear of loss of his life, but loss of everything too. Here he is alone. So sad, disappointed, fearful,* ***and*** *alone–that is trouble—if you are sad and disappointed, and fear is getting an upper hand,* ***get with believers****. Whatever you do, do not retreat. The enemy want you to retreat: to retreat in shame, to retreat in melancholy. No, run the other way. Run to the Body of Christ. Be with people who are loving Jesus. I don’t mean just t do a lot of socializing, although socializing has its place in the kingdom that is really good. I mean to get with godly people who are going to inspire you in the Lord, and do not retreat.*

*Well, David came to the city of Nob, and he came to Ahimelech the priest. Ahimelech was the high priest. Again it was only three miles away, and Ahimelech was afraid when he saw David. Here was the king’s son-in-law, the most popular man in the nation, the war hero, and he was all alone. Ahimelech looked at him and said, “Why are you alone and nobody is with you?” The reason that the high priest was troubled was because there were so many raids of the Philistines into Israel’s territory. Life was very dangerous there. A military man, particularly a man of high stature, did not travel alone. Now he technically had a couple of aides with him, but that is not what Ahimelech meant when he said alone. He meant that there were no other top government people, no other seasoned soldiers with him. “Why are you alone?” This is dangerous. This is not right.*

*Verse 2, David told Ahimelech a lie. Now he had told Jonathan to tell his dad, Saul, a lie, remember, in the last chapter. 1 Samuel 20, “Tell your dad I went to Bethlehem,” when really David was just hiding in that field. Now he was telling another lie. He said to Ahimelech, “Well, the king has ordered me on really special business, and he told me very specifically, ‘Do not let anybody know anything. It is top secret, a highest priority of secrecy. I am commanding you to go on this private secret mission.’”*

*Ahimelech said, “Well, where are the soldiers with you?”*

*He answered, “Well, good question. I directed those young men to go to such and such a place.” That is, the soldiers who would naturally be with, as David went to the city of Nob regularly because the city of Nob was the spiritual capital. It was where the tabernacle was. It was where the high priest was, and it was kind of the epicenter, the spiritual center. It was only three miles from Gibeah, the governmental center. What would happen was that when the soldiers would go on a military excursion or assignment—David being a very primary example—they would go first and dedicate themselves to the Lord and offer offerings to the Lord. There was a spiritual dimension for which they would go to Nob.*

*So David knew the high priest, and Ahimelech knew him. He was saying, “This is weird, David. You’ve never been alone. I don’t get what is going on.”*

*David replied, “Top secret. The young men”—the group of soldiers—“that normally would be in my battalion,” he said, “I told them to go to such and such a place.” That is a second lie.*

* 1. ***The city of Nob***: This was a national religious center about three miles south of Gibeah. Saul thought David was in Bethlehem with his family celebrating the New Moon festival (20:18).

*Now why did David go to that city, Nob? Because remember he was sad, he was disappointed, and he was filled with fear. Saul was hot after him. It says it clearly in 1 Samuel 22:10 where Doeg gives the three reasons why. We will not get to that passage until next week.*

*David went there for food, because remember he had been in that field hiding for three days, because when he met with Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20 Jonathan had said, “Well, here is the good news: you are going to go into hiding. The bad news is you have to go into hiding starting right now, even though you do not have your little kit with you and your little bags. Start hiding right now because the whole nation is watching you.” So David was a little bit hungry now.*

*He went there for weapons because David was going to go on the run. He was not going to go back to Gibeah; he never went back to Gibeah again. He was on the run for the next six or seven years. He was a fugitive. He was an outlaw. Saul was chasing him from cave to cave, town to town, trying to execute him. So he needed weapons as he had just taken off from that field in 1 Samuel 20. He had nothing. He did not have all the things you need if you are going to go on a trip for six months or six years. It ended up about six years. You would pack a few bags.*

*He wanted to inquire of the Lord. That is a phrase in the Old Testament that is used quite a few times. “To inquire of the Lord” was a phrase that meant to get direction, prophetic direction, from the high priest. The idea was that if you received direction from the Lord, then God would not only direct you but would bless you in that direction. That is why David would go there to inquire of the Lord sometimes before he went on a military assignment.*

*Now how did you inquire of the Lord? I will just take a minute because it is kind of an interesting activity that happened in the Old Testament. The high priest had a garment called an ephod, just a garment they would put on. This ephod had pockets, and in the pockets were these two stones called the Urim and the Thummim. Say Urim and Thummim. See, okay. The Urim and the Thummim show up a few times in the Old Testament.*

*Nobody really knows for sure how it operated. There are a couple of theories, but I am giving you the most common one, the one I have read about most often. This interpretation has been given for centuries. The best idea that scholars come up with is that the Urim and the Thummim were two stones. They would take these stones and it seems one side of each stone was white and one side black, or one stone would be black, and one stone would be white. We do not know exactly how it works.*

*The high priest would take the stones and someone, like the king, would ask the Lord the question in the presence of the high priest. Not everybody could do this. The idea was you had to be somebody involved in the business of the nation, doing God’s will. They would take these stones and cast them like casting lots or something. Nobody knows exactly how, but they would do something with the stones and then if the two stones would turn this way it meant “yes” or that way it meant “no.” It was just really clear–a yes or a no. They could get an instant answer. They would go to the high priest say, “Does God say go here or is God saying to go there?” The high priest would do something with those stones, like a cast-the-lots-type thing. The black stone would do something or it would go on this side or that side. Anyway, I do not know how it happened, and there are different theories, but the idea is there would be a very certain “yes” or “no.” That is how they inquired of the Lord in that way. Now they also had prophets that heard from God directly, but this was quite a special blessing that the high priest and the king in relationship to the high priest could use.*

* 1. ***Why are you alone***: Ahimelech was unsettled seeing David alone. The king’s son-in-law arriving without an escort seemed unusual when there were so many raiding bands of the Philistines. Saul’s anger was well known. Perhaps Ahimelech was aware of recent events at Ramah when Saul sent soldiers in pursuit of David (19:19-24). Ahimelech was not comfortable with David being there.

*I already mentioned that the city of Nob was only three miles from Gibeah. It was the national spiritual center. It was where the tabernacle was and was where many of the top priests of the nation lived.*

*Now Saul thought David was in Bethlehem because remember Jonathan said that David asked permission to go to Bethlehem. This was like only a day later; it is only three miles away. Saul thought he was in Bethlehem celebrating the feast, the festival, with his family.*

*So the priest asked, “Why are you alone?” I have given different reasons here. You do not have an escort and there are many raiding bands of the Philistines. That is odd, David. You are a top government leader and you do not have body guards and military men with you, though it is a very dangerous area.*

*Perhaps Ahimelech was also aware of the recent events. I mean Ramah was not far away and that was where the Spirit fell on Saul. Maybe the word got back to the high priest. Saul had gone up there to kill David. I mean the word was spreading around; everybody knew. Saul was well known in the nation as having an anger problem. It was very possible Ahimelech had heard the story already. Saul went up there because the Spirit immobilized the first group of soldiers by falling on them. The second group, the third group the same happened and then it happened to Saul. Saul was trying to kill David.*

*Maybe Ahimelech thought, “I don’t really know the whole story, David, but this is odd that you are here without anybody else; that just leaves me unsettled.” Maybe he heard about the feast where it had just happened in 1 Samuel 20 that Saul threw the spear at his firstborn son, the heir to the throne, and said, “I am going to kill David, and I am going to kill you if you try to protect him.” Maybe there was a rumor. It was only three miles away, and he was the high priest. He probably had quite an information network so he could be up on what is happening. So David was telling a very, very dangerous lie right there.*

* 1. ***The king ordered me on business***: David told a lie about Saul sending him on a private mission.
  2. David asked the priests for food (21:3-4). He had been in a field for three days and was hungry.

3Now therefore, what have you on hand? Give me five loaves of bread in my hand, or whatever can be found.” 4And the priest answered David and said, “There is no common bread on hand; but there is holy bread, if the young men have at least kept themselves from women.”   
(1 Sam. 21:3-4)

*David asked, verse 3, “Do you have any food?” He said, “I am really on the run; I have not had a chance to get my supplies. The matter was very urgent. The king said, ‘Top priority. You have to leave today.’ Have you got any food on hand?” Remember David had been out in that field in 1 Samuel 20 for three days.*

*Verse 4, the priest said, “Well, there is no common bread”—no regular bread like everybody has their home when they make the bread—“ but there is holy bread.” There is consecrated bread is another way to say it. There is bread that went through a ritual and could only be used by the priests. David, you are not a priest.*

*David said, “I am on the king’s urgent mission.”*

*Well, David was lying, but Ahimelech did not know that. He said, “Well, I guess could give you the bread that has ritually gone through this particular process and was set aside only for the priest. Okay.”*

* 1. David assured Ahimelech that he and his men were ceremonially clean (21:5-6).

5Then David answered the priest, and said to him, “Truly, women have been kept from us about three days since I came out. And the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in effect common, even though it was consecrated in the vessel this day.” 6So the priest gave him holy bread; for there was no bread there but the showbread which had been taken from before the Lord, in order to put hot bread in its place on the day when it was taken away. (1 Sam. 21:5-6)

*He asked, “Hey, are the guys ceremonially clean? Have you done the right things that priest do prescribed by the Law of Moses before you take this consecrated holy bread?” After all God made these rules.*

*David says, “Well, sort of. We did not keep them all, but we are starving.”*

*“Huh, okay. Well, we will make an exception for you. You can take them.”*

* 1. Jesus validated David eating this. When healing on the Sabbath, Jesus used this as an example of keeping the spirit of the law when not keeping its exact letter in a literal way (Mt. 12:3-4).

*Incidentally, Jesus used this story right here. Remember when he healed the man on the Sabbath, Matthew 12? The Pharisees said, “How dare You on the Sabbath!”*

*He said, “Didn’t even David eat the consecrated bread though he was not a priest?” The idea that Jesus was saying is that God wants us to keep the spirit of the law—the point for which a rule is given—so that love would be enhanced, that life would go forward. We do not keep a law for a law; we keep the precepts of God because they enhance the will of God and the blessing of God.*

*So Jesus actually used this passage with the Pharisees. He said, “Do not keep the letter of the law and let some poor guy die on the Sabbath because it is a Sabbath day. God created the Sabbath day to bless your life; that is the point.” The Pharisees could not see that. Anyway, that is a well-known passage. It is from this passage here that Jesus drew on.*

1. David acquired Goliath’s sword (21:7-9)
   1. ***Goliath’s sword***: The sword of Goliath the Philistine was in the sanctuary at Nob as a memorial of defeating a strong enemy. David put his trust in a sword that could not protect Goliath. Goliath had said, “I come to you with my sword!” and David had replied, “But I come in the name of the Lord!”

7Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the Lord. And his name was Doeg, an Edomite, the chief of the herdsmen who belonged to Saul. 8And David said to Ahimelech, “Is there not here on hand a spear or a sword? For I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king’s business required haste.” 9So the priest said, “The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the Valley of Elah, there it is, wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you will take that, take it. For there is no other except that one here.” And David said, “There is none like it; give it to me.” (1 Sam. 21:7-9)

*In verse 7, we see there was a certain man there at the city of Nob who was hearing this whole conversation. He was a very prominent man. That is, he was a servant of Saul, and a very prominent servant of Saul. He was involved in the king’s court. He and David knew each other well. They both worked right there, together. His name was Doeg the Edomite. Now I can tell you, do not name anybody Doeg, okay? Do not call them Doeg the Edomite, how is that?*

*He was the chief of the herdsmen. Now chief of the herdsmen was a big position. That meant he was over all of the king’s livestock, the king’s herds, sheep, everything. It was a massive position controlling wealth and power. In today’s economy it would be like millions and millions of dollars were under his authority and care.*

*David saw Doeg and might have thought, “Oh man, he is really loyal to Saul!” The fact that Doeg was an Edomite was not good because characteristically the Edomites throughout Old Testament history were archenemies of Israel. So why an Edomite is in Saul’s court is another issue for another day. An Edomite was not to be in the government; they were enemies of God’s people all throughout the Old Testament. The narrative is letting us know about him. It is a foreshadowing of a bad guy is in the drama. This is going to get intense.*

*Verse 8, David said to the high priest Ahimelech, “Thank you for the food and thank you for slightly overlooking some of the ritual rules. We kept a few of the rituals, but not technically all of them, so thank you for that. Hey, do you have any weapons?” Doeg hears this too. Weapons? “Yeah, a spear or a sword, anything?” He added, “Because I was in a hurry, I did not have food and I did not have weapons with me, but I mean I am sent by the king.” You know it’s like, okay the king sent you but you did not stop to take weapons?*

*Verse 9, Ahimelech says, “Here in the main sanctuary in the tabernacle we have the sword of Goliath.” Again Nob is the top spiritual center, so they had the sword of Goliath there. Think of it as in a trophy case or as a memorial. I mean it was Israel’s greatest victory in recent days. The power of God broke in, and so it was there in the spiritual center in the sanctuary like, wow, a testimony, look at God’s commitment to us.*

*David went and looked at the sword. Ahimelech said, “Remember the Philistine you killed in the valley of Elah with it? There it is, right there in the trophy case. If you want to take it, take it, for there is no other sword here. We do not have any other weapons. It is the only weapon we have.”*

*David looked at the sword. David said, “Ooh, man!” He picked it up, “There is none like it! I will take it.” Now I think the sword was a little bit big for David because Goliath was about ten feet tall almost. David was a lot smaller in statute. This sword was a heavy sword. David said, “It is great! Yeah, let’s do it.” You know I can imagine David thinking, “Man, I do not remember it being this big, whoa!”*

*Even that sword should have been a good remembrance in that setting. I could imagine the Lord whispering in David’s heart, “Remember when you were not afraid? Remember the exploits of how I was true to you and used you? Why are you going the other way now?” So even that was the Lord’s kindness.*

*It is interesting that David put his trust in a sword that could not protect Goliath. Goliath had said, “I come to you with my sword,” and David had replied, “I come to you in the name of the Lord, not with a sword.” Now he has the very sword of Goliath on which he is now going to rely. I mean things are not good for David. This was not that vibrant clear faith and thinking that he had just even a couple of years ago.*

* 1. ***Doeg, an Edomite***: Doeg was Saul’s chief herdsman, over his livestock, mules, sheep, and the many herds that comprised Saul’s great wealth. A chief herdsman would be a person of importance and one of Saul’s top officials over much of his personal wealth.
  2. In Bible symbolism, an Edomite (or Amalekite or Agagite) spoke of the principle of flesh that was at enmity against God’s purpose. The Edomites were hostile to Israel throughout biblical history.
  3. David surely felt panic when he saw Doeg, knowing that he would go back and tell Saul (22:22). They knew each other from working in the royal court in Saul’s government.

*I am sure when David saw Doeg he felt a little bit of panic. Again remember it was only three miles from Gibeah. He must have been thinking, “Oh man, this is one of Saul’s top money guys!” He was over Saul’s personal wealth, so he was really loyal to Saul. He did not care about what the prophets of Israel said or about the covenant. He was an Edomite, so he was against all that stuff. He was a non-religious, an a-religious, whatever. They knew each other from working in the court. I think that considering the presence of Doeg in the court, David thought, “It is just a minute from now that Saul will be right here. I better get out of here.”*

* 1. David’s lie resulted in the tragic massacre of the priests and their families in Nob (22:18-19). After Saul heard that David’s location had been discovered in the city of Nob, Doeg told him the story of how the high priest had given David supplies.

6When Saul heard that David and the men who were with him had been discovered…7Saul said to his servants…8All 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…” 9Then answered Doeg the Edomite… “I saw the son of Jesse going to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. (1 Sam. 22:6-9)

*We are going to look ahead of this chapter just to pick this story up. I am going to look at this for just a brief moment because we are going to look at it in detail next week. David’s lie in telling the priest, “I am on the king’s business,” and Doeg hearing the lie and telling the king created a tremendous disaster. It ended up leading to an entire city, the city of Nob, this priestly city, eighty-five priests and all their families, all being slaughtered and killed.*

*Saul was so angry because he thought Ahimelech had betrayed him. He said, “You gave my enemy a sword?”*

*The high priest said, “Your enemy is your son-in-law? Are you kidding me? What do you mean, your enemy?”*

*“You gave him a sword, and you prayed to God for him and gave him prophetic ministry and direction? You gave him food? My arch enemy?”*

*Ahimelech must have been thinking, “I do not know what is going on here.” King Saul was so infuriated here, I have it right here in the passage.*

*So Doeg said, “I saw it, king. This high priest did all of that, I was there. I saw it with my own eyes.”*

* 1. Saul commissioned Doeg to kill 85 priests in the city of Nob for helping David (22:18-19). Abiathar, the only surviving son of Ahimelech, joined David and became the new high priest.

18And the king said to Doeg, “You turn and kill the priests!” So Doeg the Edomite…struck the priests, and killed on that day eighty-five men who wore a linen ephod…20Now one of the sons of Ahimelech…named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David...22David said to Abiathar, “I knew that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have caused the death of all the persons of your father’s house. (1 Sam. 22:18-22)

*The king said to Doeg, “Kill all the priests then. Kill them all. Treason! Teach them never, ever to betray me and to betray Israel.” Of course that was all King Saul’s mixed-up, convoluted thinking.*

*So Doeg—we are not actually studying 1 Samuel 22; that is more for next week—killed all eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod. That is another phrase for a priest because “to wear the linen ephod” was a priest. One of the sons of Ahimelech, Abiathar escaped. Only one out of the eighty-five escaped, the high priest’s son.*

*He escaped, verse 20, and he went to David. He found David. David was on the run in the next place. Abiathar found him and said, “David, do you know what happened after you left? Doeg told on you. We didn’t know you were lying. My entire family was wiped out.”*

*Verse 22, David said, “I knew it. I knew when Doeg was there. I knew this was trouble.” He went on, “I have caused the death of everyone in your family,” which he did.*

*Abiathar became a loyal subject to David, which is so interesting. Abiathar said, “I know the Lord is with you. You caused a disaster, but I am going with God’s purpose. Just don’t do that again.” He stayed with David for years and became the new high priest. You would think he would be really mad at David, but somehow he said, “I know the Lord is with you and the Lord is not with Saul. I do not want to go in his direction; I am going with you.” He went with David through all the wilderness years. Again, that is for next week.*

* 1. Being led by fear was a new experience for David. To trust God while overcoming pressures is one thing, but to trust Him when the pressures do not go away quickly is another matter.

*The interesting thing I want to point out is that when we are led by fear we make really bad decisions. Now David was sad because of an interrupted relationship. He was fearful because he was about to suffer loss. He was disappointed because he had lost his former position and his possessions and he was about to lose his life, or it looked that way. So, fear had really gotten the upper hand in his life. Being led by fear was a new experience for David. A lot of the psalms are written out of this, and they are written for our benefit because if a mighty man anointed like this who knew God so well could struggle with fear, then we are not so strange, we are not so different when we struggle with fear. That is the message.*

*You know it is one thing to trust God when we are overcoming all the pressures. When we are seeing change, the money is there, the negative things are changing, the blessing is there, the victory is there, we trust God. How about when the changes do not come, you cannot see the blessing like you did before, and the victory is not there?*

*Can David still trust God? I mean it is easy to trust God when it is all happening, all the blessings are flowing. The truth is David stumbled, but it was not a stumble unto spiritual death. It was a stumble. He recovered every time, and he ended up learning and then recommitting himself. He had the knowledge of his own weakness, and his humility was born in that. I do not mean to go sin so you can be more humble. One guy said, “Well, I will sin more if it makes me more humble.”*

*I say, “No, no. Pray concerning your pride then.” Don’t try to get into sin more so you get more humble is the point.*

*Crisis moments reveal us. When crisis moments come—whether it is a simple disappointment or a major setback or everything in between—they reveal us. They reveal what we believe about God, and what we believe about ourselves. They reveal who we really are, meaning the choices we make. I don’t mean one crisis moment and one bad choice, but when we look back over a series of crisis moments, disappointments, and setbacks and the choices we made. The big choice is not a scandalous sin; that is not what I am talking about. The big choice the enemy wants us to make is just to draw back and quit. That is the big choice. In the crisis a lot of people draw back. They quit pressing into God. They quit believing God for the fullness. They quit engaging to serve and help others. They draw back, and they let down and say, “I am just going to coast and live for me.” That is quitting. That is a choice many people make in a crisis.*

* 1. David was learning to trust in God in really tough times, not just the good times. The Lord asks us if we can trust Him in the challenging times. God wants us to be reliable, stable, and strong in our faith in all seasons of life. The Lord was building stability and confidence in David’s life.

*Crisis moments reveal us, but they also strengthened us. If we make some wrong choices but we recover, God overrides it and overrules it and causes it to work together for our good. God wanted David to be stable and reliable as a king. So it is like He is saying, “David, I am going to let you see your weakness, and I am going to let you find My mercy. I am going to let you recover, then I am going to let you do it again. I am not going to make you do it, but I am going to let you see this so that you end up reliable and steady, so you are humble and you are leaning on Me when you have all the power in the nation, great wealth, and authority. I want you to have these things settled in your life so that you are humble and you do not trust yourself. You do not put yourself in these situations. And so when everything is looking bad you know God will break through sooner or later. I am going to give you that history in God, David. That is what I am doing in your life.”*

1. Gath: David sought safety by going to the Philistines (1 Sam. 21:10-15)
   1. In a panic, perhaps after seeing Doeg, David fled to Gath seeking to be safe from Saul (21:10-15). David’s rationale was that Saul, a coward who was afraid of war, would never cross the national boundary line. The only thing greater than Saul’s hatred of David was his fear of the Philistines. So in despair David went into the land of Israel’s enemies, the Philistines, to escape Saul.

10Then David arose and fled that day from before Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath. 11The servants of Achish said to him, “Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of him to one another…saying: ‘Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands’?”   
(1 Sam. 21:10-11)

*Well, so David had this crisis experience as the whole city was massacred because of his lie. Again he is sad, he is fearful, and he is weary too. Undoubtedly he is hungry and he is weary. Put weariness into that too. You get sad, afraid, disappointed, and tired, and you put them all in together with a real devil, I am telling you that you should run to the Body of Christ, run to radical believers, and stay in the middle of them. Do not get alone and just do your best. Get in the midst of the people of God.*

*Well, he fled. I think the reason he fled was because he saw Doeg. Again he was only three miles away from Saul. He thought, “It is only a matter of time.” Saul did go and kill those priests, and Saul was coming after David.*

*Here was the strangest turn of events, unthinkable. Here his fear was going to be manifested again, but in a very different way. David was getting schooled in how weak and fearful he really was, but also how faithful God would be to deliver him time and time again. Again that history in God was building in him where he was trusting in God’s mercy and he was even learning the way to how to avoid these pitfalls as well. What happened in verse 10 was that, in his panic after seeing Doeg, he fled to Gath. Now Gath was about twenty-five miles away. It was on the Mediterranean seacoast on the west. Gath was a city of the Philistines. So David left Israel, and he went to the Philistine city.*

*I think his rationale was that he thought Saul was a coward who was in such a bad place with God and a bad place spiritually that, though he was bold to kill David, he would not go fight any wars. David had been fighting all Saul’s wars. Saul did not want to get into the battles; he was kind of laying back. Saul was filled with fear and a wrong spirit and depression. David thought, “You know what? If I go over the national boundary line”—the state line so to speak—“if I go over there, Saul will not come chase me. I will go to Gath. That is what I will do; I will just go to Gath. I know Saul hates me, but Saul is more afraid of the Philistines than he has hatred for me.”*

*So in his despair he ran twenty-five miles over to the Philistine city. David, David what are you thinking? You are in Gath! That was the city of Goliath, and you have Goliath’s sword in your hand going to Goliath’s city. David, wake up! Beloved, when we get fears driving us, our whole view gets distorted. Whatever you do, do not go to Gath and do not bring Goliath’s sword to his hometown. Goliath was the champion of Gath, and David is wearing his team’s jersey into the other team’s town. Well, that is a bad example, but you know what I am saying.*

*Verse 10, David arose. He fled before Saul. He went to Achish, king of Gath. David was kind of hoping he could slip in, you know kind of hide, you know go over the national border line. It is kind of like getting a job over in the corner, you know somewhere, stay out of the limelight. Achish’s servants—the guys in the royal court—instantly recognized him and said, Hey, hey, hey! That is David!”*

*David was thinking, “What?”*

*I mean they did not have Facebook back then, but they knew David by face. “That is the guy who was in the battle against Goliath a couple of years ago. We know about him. They sing the song about him all over the land, the women do. ‘Saul has slain his thousands, David his ten thousands.’”*

*David though, “Oh no! That song is coming back up again. That song got me in so much trouble in Israel”—because that song made him very famous and created so much jealousy in Saul—“I want to get rid of that song! They are singing it over in the Philistine nation too. I have got to get rid of this song somehow!”*

* 1. ***Gath***: There were five main Philistine cities to the west of Israel on the seacoast.
  2. Forsaking the land of Israel, he went armed with Goliath’s sword hoping to establish an alliance with the Philistines, the long-time enemies of Israel. Nothing was more improbable than that David, the Lord’s anointed who had defeated Goliath, would be seeking refuge with the Philistines.

*Let’s just get a picture of what David was doing. He was forsaking the land of Israel. He was fleeing the covenant land. He was armed with Goliath’s sword, and he was going to Achish, the king of the city. It was a city-state, not a nation, but Achish was the king of a city. David was going to make an alliance with God’s enemies. Nothing was more improbable than David, the anointed of the Lord who killed Goliath, finding refuge in Goliath’s town with people who are against God.*

*Beloved, do you ever hear somebody who does something, you know a man of God or a woman of God who had been devoted to the Lord, and you hear they do something not right. You think, “I would never do that.” You just don’t even know how bizarre life can get when fear mixes with sadness, and then fear and sadness get together with disappointment. Now throw some fatigue in and be alone.*

*Paul said it best in 1 Corinthians 10:12, “Take heed, if you think you stand.”*

*You think you are not vulnerable and you can look down the way and say, “Oh, I am never like that.” You had better say, “By the grace of God, by the grace of God, I do not go that way, only by his grace.” Because when things get weird, clear choices can be hard to make.*

*That is why over my forty years of ministry when I see men and women of God make poor choices under pressure, whether in the ministry or in the marketplace which is the ministry by the way, whatever, all the roles, I feel sympathy. I do not look at them and say, “How could they?” I say, “Oh Lord! Life is rough out there.” We want to understand them and not imagine that we are above and beyond. I look at David here and I think, “What on earth?”*

*The Lord would say, “Well, maybe in his situation you would not do much better. Maybe you would do a lot worse.”*

* 1. ***Is this not David***: They recognized him by face (21:11). David hoped to slip into their city without being recognized. The fearful, timid Christian conceals his colors, hoping he will not be recognized as a follower of the Lord Jesus.
     1. Achish’s attendants were aware of David’s status as a folk hero celebrated in song.
     2. He was immediately spotted and reported to Achish. His reputation throughout the countryside as Israel’s leader had filtered down among the Philistines
     3. David had been the chief nemesis of the Philistines for years after having killed Goliath (17:4) and having led various military excursions against the Philistines.

*Well, as I just mentioned, they recognized David by face. “Who is this guy?” He was a folk hero, and they spotted him instantly.*

* 1. Why didn’t Achish kill David? Perhaps David relieved him of a powerful rival for his kingdom in cutting off the head of Goliath. He knew that David was guilty of desertion from the military in Israel and so assumed that he had burned his bridge with Israel. Maybe he was a bigger trophy for them alive and acting insane than he was in being killed
  2. David was afraid of Achish and pretended to be insane when brought before him (21:12-15).

12Now David took these words to heart, and was very much afraid of Achish the king of Gath. 13So he changed his behavior before them, pretended madness in their hands, scratched on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva fall down on his beard. 14Then Achish said to his servants, “Look, you see the man is insane. Why have you brought him to me? 15Have I need of madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?” (1 Sam. 21:12-15)

*When they said, “They sing of him all over the land that he kills ten thousand,” ten thousand who? Ten thousand Philistines is who they are singing about! So the Philistines are thinking, “Ten thousand of us!”*

*David must have been thinking, “That song, I hate that song. I never liked that song. I always turned it off when I heard it on the radio.”*

*So verse 12, “David took these words to heart.” He took the words to heart because it was ten thousand Philistines they were singing about that David was killed. He was very much afraid now. He thought, “Oh no, this is backfiring! I fled Saul, but now I am in the king’s court in another nation, trapped in his court.” I mean when you are in the king’s court there are not a lot of escape hatches, you know. You are there surrounded by all the Philistine soldiers and the body guards and all those.*

*So David kicked into another idea. Verse 13, he changed his behavior. He thought, “I know what I will do. I will fake being insane.” Now I think that was insane for him to fake being insane. When fear is driving you, even the best man or woman can do some really wrong, crazy things. So David pretended madness. He scratched on the door, “Roar!” Saliva on his beard, “Roar!” Please do not grab a little soundbite here and put it out there!*

*Verse 14, Achish interrupted it. David was slobbering with saliva rolling down, “Roar!” The anointed of God there, he was filled with fear. Goliath’s sword in Goliath’s home town, leaving Israel, life could not be worse for David right there! It was a miracle that Achish did not kill him. I mean because David not only had killed Goliath, but remember in military excursion, one after another, David would go out and kill the Philistines. I mean the dowry, the 200 men, the Philistines know all about that too, that David killed those 200 men just to become Saul’s son-in-law, to marry his daughter.*

*Achish said, “Look! You see the man is insane. Why have you brought him to me? Do I need another mad man in my midst? He went on, “You brought this fellow in my presence. Now here is the crux of the matter: shall this fellow come into my house?” That is the question.*

*See, they brought him to Achish when they found David when he came to Gath. He did not run into the king just on the street. They brought him to the king. They were saying, “Hey, think about this, Achish! He left his nation. He is a defector from the military. He cannot go back.” I mean you cannot leave the military and your nation, you cannot defect and go back to get your status. “He cannot really go back. He is bitter at Saul probably, and he is really a good soldier as we know firsthand. What if we turned him on Saul? He cannot go back anyway because he defected from the army.” You cannot just leave a military position like that because that has the penalty of death. “What if we use this guy? Make a public relations deal about how that he saw the truth of how bad Israel is and how good the Philistines are? He is really good. What do you think? Maybe he should join your house, your staff, your team? We have heard great stories about how gifted he is.”*

*Achish was thinking, “Well, you know, it makes sense sort of because he has burned his bridges and cannot go back,* ***but*** *he is slobbering and doing this.” He said, “Get him out of here! Get this crazy man out of here!”*

* 1. Launching into a tirade against David, Achish questioned why they allowed him into the palace.

1. Psalm 34: David’s victory over fear after His trouble in Nob and Gath
   1. The superscription to Psalm 34 says it was written when David feigned madness before Achish. Abimelech was probably his royal name and Achish his family name. Some kings had many names.

*We will look at Psalm 34 for the next two or three minutes, and then we are going to pray over you. Here is the interesting thing: David wrote Psalm 34 right in this experience. After his lie at the city of Nob, his sadness over Jonathan, the slaughter of all the priests at Nob, running in fear to Gath, standing in front of the king where they were trying to get the king to buy into David because “Maybe we could really use this guy. This could be helpful. He is young, and he might really buy into us.” David had abdicated completely from Israel. Then he was doing all of this crazy, insane acting. And then he wrote Psalm 34.*

*I want you to read Psalm 34. This is his recovery. Then we find in the next verse of 1 Samuel 22, which we will look at next week, that he escaped out of Gath. It does not tell us how, but he finally found a way out. He escaped with his life and got free. In the process he wrote Psalm 34.*

* 1. In this psalm we can see how David felt and acted in gaining victory over his fears. Psalm 34 could be called “David facing his fears and finding the Lord.” David had unusual confidence in the mercy of the Lord—that is what made him a worshiper. One of the defining qualities in David’s life was his confidence in God’s mercy—he knew he could come back to God time after time after failing.

*In the psalm we see how David felt and acted in getting victory over the fear of Achish and also the shame of what he did with his lie in the city of Nob, as well as the sadness that he had related to the separation of a very dear relationship. Psalm 34 could be called David facing his fears. It could be David facing his shame, or David finding the Lord with a very troubled heart.*

*Now one of David’s main defining qualities in his life, and it comes out here in Psalm 34, was his confidence in mercy. David had this tremendous understanding that God’s heart was so big that no matter what he did, if he was genuine in repenting, God would fully forgive him and restore him. David had this tremendous insight into God’s heart.*

* 1. David was personally committed to blessing God continually instead of giving in to fear, complaint, and condemnation (34:1-3). He intentionally renewed his mind and confessed the truth of God’s promises and power.

1I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth…3Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. (Ps. 34:1-3)

*We are just going to look at a little bit of this. I am leaving this more for you to look at. We will look at Psalm 34 in an entire session because it is really practical concerning how to face fear and shame. It is a very well-known psalm. He starts off, “I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall be continually in my mouth. I will magnify the Lord, exalt His name together.”*

*Now that is a great psalm, a great worship service, but when you think that he was in Gath after that great disaster at Nob and he is saying, “I will praise the Lord at all times,” you might ask, “What?”*

*What David was saying is, “I am going to lay down fear, shame, bitterness, condemnation—which is shame—complaint, all of those things, and I am going to line my mouth up with the truth that God is magnified. God, it feels like You have forsaken me. I am in the worse condition of my life, but you are God. You love me. You are powerful. Your purposes are perfect. Your leadership is perfect. I will magnify you.” He began to say with his mouth to bring his heart back in alignment. He said, “I will say it all day. I do not care what my eye sees; I am going to declare what is true. I will magnify the promise of God, the truth of God. God, Your leadership has always been good. It does not look good right now, but You know what? I am wrong. You are right. I am wrong. You are right.”*

*You see, the devil wants us to magnify our bitterness and our shame, “Woe is me! I am so bad, I will just quit,” or magnify our complaint, “Life is so hard! Where are You, God?” The devil wants us to say those other things with our mouth continually.*

* 1. David told *what he did* and *what God did*. David sought, cried out to, and feared the Lord (34:4-7).

4I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears…6This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. 7The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them. (Ps. 34:4-7)

*We see the things that David did, and we see what God did. David said, “I sought the Lord. I cried out to the Lord. I set my heart to fear the Lord,” which means I want to obey Him and I am committed to His leadership. Then he tells what God did, “God heard me. In God’s own timing He delivered me.” Now David escaped from Gath. We do not know how, but he did. “God saved me. God sends angels to help me.” This is all related to this experience at Nob and Gath.*

* 1. David told us what he taught the “children”—his curriculum in teaching the fear of God (34:11-14).

11Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord …13Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. 14Depart from evil and do good. (Ps. 34:11-14)

*Look at David, verse 11. Again, he was only twenty-five, twenty-six years old, and he was not fully out of the funk he has been in, because we find out in 1 Samuel 27 that he stumbled back into it again because it is ebb and flow. It is not just one unbroken victory after the other, but it is a series of victories after some setbacks. The composite story is a glorious story, but it is not a perfect story with no setbacks or failure in it.*

*He said in verse 11, “Come, you children, listen to me.” So who was he talking to? The kids at the children’s church at Gath? I mean who were the children he as talking to? He was in Gath and he was talking to just a few of the young ones around him, some of these attendants. He said, “I am going to teach you the fear of the Lord. The first thing I am going to tell you”—verse 13—“keep your lips from evil and from deceit. My lies got the city of Nob destroyed. My lies got me into trouble. It was my deceit. I am done with it. I am done with this. I am going to go the other direction.”*

* 1. We see David’s key to getting free from fear and his life message (34:18). The mercy of God was one of David’s life messages—that God enjoys His people, even when they are immature, if they will be honest about their sin and brokenness with a “yes to His leadership” in their spirit.

18The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.   
(Ps. 34:17-18)

*Now here is the mercy verse. He went on, “Here is what I know for a fact.” This is what we are going to pray over you in a moment. This is David’s classic life revelation. It is not the only one he had, but it is a major life message. “God will be near if you are brokenhearted.” I do not mean if you are just sad. Brokenhearted does not mean sad, like I am heart-broken over a relationship. No, brokenhearted means I am sad at my failure. I own my failure. I am not okay with my failure. I am not rationalizing my failure. I love You and I do not like what I do, but I know You will bring me near if I own it and call on Your leadership.*

*God will save the contrite. A contrite spirit is humble. Brokenhearted and contrite, that is really the same thing. It means, I am going to go to war against the areas of my life that are not under Your leadership. I am not okay with them anymore. I am going to call them sin. I am going to call it unbelief, and I am going to commit myself because I know You will forgive me and You will save me and deliver me. I am going to have confidence in this.*

* + 1. The Lord saves any who admit their sin to Him and cry out against it with confidence that He will be near to them and save them from the negative emotions that trouble their hearts.
    2. Many believers feel they are condemned failures, accepting lies about what God is like and what He thinks about them. God differentiates between rebellion and spiritual immaturity.
    3. David was one of the first to emphasize this truth that makes a distinction between the rebellious and the immature. This is one of the great doctrines in the grace of God.
  1. After David committed adultery with Bathsheba and killed her husband (2 Sam. 11), he responded in a way that he knew God wanted—with a broken and contrite heart (Ps. 51:17).

17The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise. (Ps. 51:17)

*You know it was years later, many years later, probably twenty years later—I do not have the math in my mind right now—when David committed sin with Bathsheba and had her husband killed to cover up the adultery. He committed adultery in 2 Samuel 11 with Bathsheba and—most of you know the story—had the husband killed. David went back to Psalm 34; it is quoted in Psalm 51, which he wrote at that time.*

*He said, “I know You will not despise a broken, contrite heart. I know that truth I learned back in Gath. I know it is true. I have decades proving it. If I will come with sincerity and truth, I will recover. No situation is bigger than recovery with God. No sin is bigger. I can get it all back.” I don’t mean the situation, but I can get my relationship with God back. I can. Some situations will not reverse because they are in the past, but I can get my walk back. I can get back that dynamic that I had before because God will not despise a broken and a contrite heart, which means He will not turn away, He will not look down on a broken and a contrite heart, but He will draw near. David said in Psalm 34, “He will save. He will deliver.” He will reverse it all. That is one of the great messages that David penned in the crisis of struggling with his fear in that day.*

*I want to go with David. I want to say, “Lord, if that is true for David, it is true for me.”*

*Amen and amen. Let’s stand before the Lord. Well, we all need this prayer. I need it. You need it. There is no one in this room who does not need to pray, “Lord, I want to be nearer, closer to You. This area of my life, I want You to save it.”—meaning recover it; restore it is the idea of saving it—“Deliver me from the negative, dark emotion,” that is what he means. I want to be delivered from the dark emotion, the lust, the fear, the shame, the condemnation, the bitterness, whatever that dark emotion is. We all are tempted with those emotions. Some people are entrapped. Others, the enemy is just trying to lure you into that emotion and get it to be a stronghold.*

*If you would like prayer, come up front, because we all need prayer for this. If you would just say, “Hey, yeah, I want to be like David. I want to have the confidence He will draw near to me. He will deliver. He will save me. He will reverse this thing. My heart will recover fully,” I want to invite you to come up. We are going to ask the Lord to draw near to anyone in the room—again I need it, you need it, they need it, everybody needs this.*

*David’s life message: God will draw near to the broken and contrite of heart. To the man or woman who admits their need, does not rationalize it, does not deny it, cries out for mercy, the Lord says, “I will help you. I will help you.”*

*So Lord, here we are before You, like David even. We trust You. Lord, if he could be in the disaster at the city of Nob and the craziness of Gath, and yet You would deliver him from those dark emotions that we all know about, Lord, how much more would You deliver us in the new covenant through the blood of Jesus? How much more would You deliver us? Holy Spirit, I ask You for a new beginning tonight. I ask for a new beginning tonight. I ask for a recovery tonight, a process that begins tonight in a new way.*

*Now just speak to the Lord about that area. Say, “Lord, I am going to admit it. I am going to say that I am bitter. It is not a stronghold yet, but it is working on me. I am disappointed. I have lost my thankfulness. Where I am stuck in this, whatever it is, you know what it is…”*

*Lord, I ask You to wash right now, to wash us, wash us, Lord. Returning from that way, we lay our fear down to Your leadership. We do not trust in our own way, Lord. I do not have a chance to do this thing right without Your help. I turn unto You, Lord, in the situation, the circumstance, the dark emotion. Lord, I turn to You now. For You say, “I will draw near to the contrite heart. I draw near, I will save you.” So I will confess that I will bless You and magnify and exalt You, Lord. I trust Your leadership. Lord, release Your presence right now. Release Your glory in this room.*

*I want to invite about fifty of you, anyone from the room whether you are a visitor or you live here, come up and pray for folks. The Holy Spirit does more when the saints pray for the saints. We lay hands on people. Just say, “Lord, touch their heart.” You do not have to have the details. Just say, “Lord, touch them. Release Your manifest glory on their heart.”*