

Welcome to this week's episode of "The Fugitive!"

Summary of David's visit to Nob, where he obtained food and a sword from Ahimelech by lying. David then fled to Gath, a Philistine city, where he narrowly escaped with his life by pretending to be a madman.

Chapter 22

As we join our hero in this week's episode, he is back in Israel in the territory of Judah heading for the hills to seek shelter in a cave. She shows pictures of the cave of Adullam (22:1) and remarks that the area is honeycombed with caves that would have afforded shelter to David & his companions. David has come to a low point in his life; he is forced to live as an outlaw. He has lost his friends, his wife, his home, & his job.

In Ps. 142 David records the feelings of loneliness and despair that overwhelmed him. He cries out to God for help. After pouring out his soul to God, he trusts the Lord to deal bountifully with him. In Ps. 57 David expresses a renewed confidence in the Lord, even in the midst of his difficulties. His circumstances haven't changed, but he has. Though he's still hiding in a cave, his real refuge is God.

David was soon joined by his family, who would have been in great danger from Saul if they had remained at home in Bethlehem. Later he was joined by an interesting assortment of men, eventually totaling 400 (22:2). They were, like David, experiencing great external life pressures (including debt & heart-crushing emotional strain). This state of affairs was probably produced by Saul's oppression. Samuel had warned the people (ch. 8) that these things would happen when they asked for a human king.

v.3—David took his parents to Moab. Touching that he was so concerned for the welfare of his aging parents. Even in the midst of all his own troubles, he took time to find a place of safety for them. This is a good lesson for those of us who are caring for aging parents. Moab was a good choice because David was a direct descendant of Ruth the Moabitess. Also, Saul & Moab were enemies (1 Sam. 14:47).

The location of David's stronghold is uncertain. We know it was outside the territory of Judah.

v.5—The prophet Gad told David to leave the stronghold & go to Judah. David had been waiting in the stronghold to learn what God would do for him (22:3), so God sent him a prophet. This is the first mention of the prophet Gad in Scripture. He became David's seer, counselor, advisor in the same way that Samuel had been for Saul (2 Chr. 29:25). He gave David God's message in the form of a strong command. David obeyed and went into the forest of Hereth.

v.6—Saul heard about David's location & called his military advisors together. They met under a tree on a hill in the tradition of the Judge Deborah. Saul seemed to be engaging in a pity party for himself while holding a spear. "If I were anywhere near King Saul when he had a spear in his hand, I would be very nervous!"—Trudy.

vs.7-8—By this time Saul was so paranoid that he trusted only members of his own clan, and he wasn't completely sure of them! First, he appealed to their loyalty, calling them "Benjamites,"

and then he appealed to their self-interest (like politicians today). Then he played on their sympathy (v.8)—complaining that no one cared about him. Poor Saul! As is common with the emotionally disturbed, Saul imagined that everyone was plotting against him. He accused his men & then his own son of a conspiracy. Interesting, but inconsistent that he called David his servant and blamed his son Jonathan that David was waiting to ambush him. He may have believed at this point that his son (not David) was coveting his throne.

vs.9-10—Doeg the Edomite—Saul’s chief herdsman had been at the temple of Nob “detained before the Lord” when David received help. The Edomites descended from Esau, the twin brother of Jacob. As an Edomite, he was related to the Jews, a “brother” by Hebrew law, eligible to join the congregation of the Hebrews & to join in Temple [Tabernacle] worship (Deut. 23:7-8). He was most likely a convert to Judaism. Ps. 52—David summarized his character: evil, destructive, deceitful, and one who loves devouring words. Doeg was eager to earn Saul’s favor by telling what he knew about David’s visit to Nob. He even added a detail that hadn’t been recorded earlier: Ahimelech had “inquired of the Lord for” David (22:10). This was all that Saul needed to hear. He concluded that since Ahimelech had helped David, Ahimelech must also be a part of David’s conspiracy against Saul.

v.11—Saul summoned all of the priests from Nob.

vs. 12-13—Saul’s accusation of Ahimelech

vs.14-15—Ahimelech’s answer & attitude showed that he wasn’t guilty of anything. He behaved toward David as he always had when David came to him on the king’s business. Any reasonable man would have seen that Ahimelech wasn’t involved in any conspiracy, but Saul wasn’t reasonable.

v.16-17—Saul judged Ahimelech and his fellows to be guilty & condemned them to death. But Ahimelech was completely innocent. How could he have revealed to Saul what he did not know? Remember that David had lied to the priest.

v.17—2nd time in 1 Sam. that Saul’s men refused to carry out one of his foolish orders. (Remember when Jonathan ate the honey & was condemned to die?) The priests might have survived had it not been for the presence of Doeg.

vs.18-19—Doeg murdered 85 priests & then went to Nob & killed all the men, women, children, babies, and animals. This slaughter must have been ordered by Saul, but Doeg carried it out all too willingly.

An unspeakable horror occurred because of sin. Whose sin was to blame?

v.22—David blamed himself.

Was David to blame because of his lie, or was Saul, in his rebellion against God & his hatred of David, the one who was responsible? Was it Doeg, acting with an evil heart and selfish ambition? The answer is YES to all three. They were all guilty and accountable to God for what they had done.

One other element to consider is God's judgment on the house of Eli. Remember the prophecy of the man of God in 1 Sam. 2:33? "And all the increase of your house will die in the prime of life." Although it is difficult to accept this horrible massacre as a fulfillment of divine judgment, Trudy believes this is exactly what it was. To learn more about God's using the sinfulness of men to judge His people, study the prophet Habakkuk.

We've learned about God's justice. Now let's learn about His mercy.

vs.20-23—God's mercy in sparing Abiathar & David's accepting the blame for what happened, something Saul would never have done. David also made a promise to keep Abiathar safe.

Chapter 23

David is still in the forest of Hereth.

23:1—The Philistines were still causing trouble. They were stealing the freshly harvested grain.

vs.2-4—David's instinct was to go to the aid of his fellow tribesmen, but first he wanted to determine the will of God. David wasn't afraid of the enemy, but for the sake of his men, he inquired of the Lord a second time. God graciously answered again and promised victory.

v.5—The people of Keilah must have been rejoicing. David & his men may have hoped they had found a refuge.

v.6—Abiathar arrived with the ephod. Probably refers back to 1 Sam. 22:20 ("Abiathar escaped and fled after David."). This verse seems to explain where & when the priest finally caught up to David—at Keilah after the battle. God has now provided David with a priest & an ephod.

The ephod was the outer garment of the high priest. It had a pouch attached to it that contained the Urim & the Thummim, two stones that, in some mysterious way, allowed the high priest to determine the will of God. {See handout with picture of the high priest's garments.}

vs. 7-8—The story again shifts to Saul, who is clearly still obsessed with killing David. When he hears that David has won a victory, all he can think about is that his enemy is holed up in a walled city, where he would have difficulty escaping. He didn't care about David's victory or about the people of Keilah; all Saul cared about was seeking revenge on David, whose victory may have fueled Saul's jealousy even further. Saul decided to besiege Keilah to capture David. Oddly enough, Saul believed that God had arranged it all!

vs. 9-12—David heard that Saul was coming to destroy Keilah because he and his men were there, so he called for Abiathar to bring the ephod so that he could ask God two questions: (1) Will Saul come down, and (2) will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men to Saul? God's answer to both questions was "Yes." David must have been very disappointed and disheartened to learn that those he had rescued were willing to turn him over to Saul, but he would have understood their fear of Saul after what had happened at Nob.

vs.13-14—David & his men left Keilah and moved to the wilderness of Ziph. {See the map that accompanied last week's lesson. It includes the events of this week's lesson as well.} When Saul heard this news, "he gave up the pursuit," but his obsession with killing David only intensified. Saul sought David all day every day, but God continued to protect David.

vs.15-16—Even in the wilderness David wasn't safe from Saul's pursuit. He must have cried out to God for some encouragement. It came in the form of Jonathan (Saul's own son and David's best friend), who "encouraged him in God." It must have meant a great deal to David to have Jonathan risk his life to come in person. The warmth of a friend has the power to overcome the chill of discouragement.

vs. 17-18—Jonathan gave David true encouragement, based upon the promises of God. Jonathan knew that God would make David king someday; thus, David had nothing to fear from Saul. Jonathan's words made it clear that Saul knew this truth as well. After making a covenant before the Lord, the two friends parted.

vs. 19-20—David faced a trial of a different kind from the Ziphites. These residents of Judah were apparently loyal to Saul and decided to help the king by telling him where David was hiding. David called them "strangers" and "violent men" who did "not set God before them" (Ps. 54:3).

v.21—"Saul said, 'May you be blessed of the LORD, for you have had compassion on me.'" Trudy says, "When Saul has the nerve to bless someone in the name of the Lord, I can't help feeling that the devil is smiling."

vs.22-26—Saul told the Ziphites to find out where David was hiding and to report back to him. They did so, and Saul pursued David into the wilderness of Maon, where the two troops of men were on opposite sides of a mountain and Saul's men were close to capturing David and his men.

If this were a TV series, this would be the perfect place to say, "Tune in next week and find out what happens to our hero."

vs.27-29—But God doesn't keep us in suspense. He shows his sovereign care of David this time by using the Philistines. Saul and his army must go to fight the raiding Philistines. The mountain became known as "the Rock of Escape." David went next to the strongholds of Engedi.

LESSONS:

Our lives will probably reach a point where circumstances make us feel isolated and alone (as David did in the caves). We may not feel able to handle our lives outside the cave, but David gives us some tips in Ps. 142 and Ps. 57.

1. Tell God your feelings. Don't hold anything back. Tell Him your complaints & problems and ask Him to take care of them. Then trust Him to do it, and don't forget to thank Him.

2. Seek God's will before making a decision—as David did before he made a move.
 - a. First check Scripture. Don't do anything forbidden by God's Word.
 - b. Pray to God to reveal His will to you. Ask Him to make it really clear. Look for open and closed doors.
 - c. Seek counsel from godly Christians.
 - d. Be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.
3. Learn how to be an encourager (like Jonathan).
 - a. Be sensitive to a friend's need for encouragement.
 - b. If possible, go in person to do the encouraging. Letters, phone calls, and cards are good, but they can't take the place of a shoulder to cry on or a hug from a friend.
 - c. Encourage in the Lord. No, don't *preach* to them, but when they're ready, they may ask you for advice. When you give it, make sure that it is Scripturally accurate. Give them something they can count on in the Word of God.
 - d. Let them know that you'll be there for them in the future.
4. Just as God provided for David, He will provide for us. Here are just a few of God's blessings:
 - a. God gave David a king—Himself. God ruled David's life.
 - b. God gave David a priest to make sacrifices and give spiritual guidance.
 - c. God gave David a prophet to tell him God's Word.
 - d. God gave David a friend when he needed one most.
 - e. God gives us Christians all of these in one Person—the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. The fulfillment of prophecy gives us hope and a warning. Every time we see a prophecy fulfilled in minute detail, we realize the truth of God's Word—that He will do what He says He will do. We base all of our hopes on the truth of the Word of God. It increases our faith. We have confidence that prophecies yet to be fulfilled WILL come to pass. We know that Jesus *will* come for His church and that we *will* be with Him for eternity. We also know that He will judge unbelievers as He said. Have you taken care of your eternal destiny? Have you accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior?