

1 Samuel 21:1-22:5 | “On the Run”

Preached on March 13, 2022 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel 21, as today we will be covering all of chapter 21 and the beginning of chapter 22. *[pause]*

Have you ever watched a show or heard a story that had you ‘on the edge of your seat’?

It’s the kind of story where there’s someone in constant danger, and you’re wondering, “Are they going to make it or get caught?” *[pause]*

Around every corner, danger is lurking.

The potential for getting caught is high, and you don’t know where they will go next to avoid being snatched. *[pause]*

Not only do you worry that they will get caught or killed, but you also worry if they will have what they need to make it through the next day.

Will they have food for energy, shelter for rest, or weapons for self-defense?

Those kinds of stories really make your heart beat faster, and you aren’t even the one on the run! *[pauseeee]*

Well that’s the kind of story that we encounter this morning as David is on the run as a fugitive from king Saul. *[pause]*

Saul has tried numerous times to kill David, and now David is running away, trying to survive making it to even the next day.

And so we pick up what happens at the start of chapter 21, verse 1...[READ VERSES 1-9.]

David didn’t quite know where to turn, so he goes to the tabernacle, where many priests were.

But it was weird that David came alone, and Ahimelech knew it, for David has a high position in the royal court.

And so the priest starts questioning David, and David responds by telling him that he’s on a secret mission from Saul, can’t discuss the mission, and will meet up with others later. *[pauseeee]*

Now there’s disagreement over whether David was wrong to lie here or not.

Some people say that this is a lie, while others say that this was acceptable considering the circumstances, and they even say that David may have been trying to protect the priest.

He may have been thinking that he didn’t want the priest to knowingly be aiding David, and that way the priest could be ignorant of what was really happening. *[pause]*

I'll let you use your judgment on that one, and really, the writer isn't trying to give us the answer, but is simply reporting the story to us. *[pauseeeee]*

David then asks for bread, since he doesn't have any provisions, and the priest tells him that all he has is the holy bread used in the Tabernacle. *[pause]*

Now what's interesting here is that this bread used in the Tabernacle was to be only eaten by the priests,¹ but here the priest allows David to eat it.

Jesus actually refers to this story when he is confronted about his disciples eating on the Sabbath, showing that human need overrides ritual.² *[pauseee]*

So after this, we are given an ominous detail as we are told that one of Saul's servants, Doeg the Edomite is there.

This detail will play a big part later on, so keep it in the back of your mind for next week's story. *[pauseeee]*

David asks for a sword because he says he was in such a hurry that he didn't even bring weapons.

Now just think about this.

Here is David saying that he's on a secret mission from Saul with no food and no weapons to do the mission.

His story certainly has some holes in it, doesn't it?

Nevertheless, the priest mentions that the only weapon laying around is Goliath's sword that David got from killing the giant, and that David can have it. *[pauseeee]*

So in this little section, we saw David starting out his journey 'on the run' with nothing, but now through the help of a priest, he's provided bread and a sword to help him on his way.

That leads me to the first application point for this morning...

I. God provides for our daily needs (21:1-9)

David ran away from Saul and had nothing.

Imagine the feeling of not knowing where your next meal would come from, and not having a weapon to defend yourself.

That's the predicament that David was in. *[pause]*

¹ See Leviticus 24:9.

² See Mark 2:23-28.

When he started out, there were a lot of question marks about what was next, yet God came through for him by providing some small, but essential items. *[pauseeee]*

Bread and a sword - doesn't seem like much, right? Yet to runaway David, it meant a whole lot.

God was providing for David's needs, even when he was under pressure. *[pauseeee]*

You may face pressures at work or at home.

You may face financial pressures, emotional ones, or spiritual ones.

But aren't your daily needs taken care of? *[pause]*

Do you have food to eat and clothing to wear, even if it's not much?

Doesn't God's provisions of small things show us something about God? Or are we too ungrateful to notice? *[pause]*

Surely they tell us something about God!

They tell us that God cares so much about us that He will even care to provide the little things in life, like our daily needs.

He doesn't feel that it's below Him to deal with the little things in our lives.

He's not a God *only* concerned with big, life-altering moments, but He's a God, who even takes time to see, know, and provide for that next meal. *[pauseeee]*

Do you see God at work when your daily needs are met?

Or do you think, "Look at what I've done.?" *[pause]*

Even if you work a job, who is it that gives you the job and gives you the ability to work? *[pauseeee]*

So God provides, even when we are under pressure, but also, God provides sometimes through unlikely sources. *[pause]*

David received the holy bread that the priests usually eat, and he received a sword from the priest.

Who would have thought?

In that day, you wouldn't be looking for a sword around the Tabernacle, and the holy bread wouldn't usually be given to just anyone.

But that's just like God, isn't it?

He can provide things, even in unlikely places. *[pause]*

Have you ever received money from someone who you never thought you would get a gift from?

Or maybe it was God working something out in a surprising way. *[pauseeee]*

A couple years before I went to seminary, I went to a conference held at the church that the seminary was connected to.

While I attended that conference, they had me stay in one of the church family's homes.

Well a couple years later, I was looking for a place to live while I went to seminary there, and all of a sudden I heard from that family whose house I stayed in years before.

They knew of a house where I could live with 4 other seminary guys. *[pause]*

God had provided a place for me to live in a surprising way.

I would have never thought that the family that I had stayed with a couple years before would be the connection to finding a place to live later on. *[pauseeee]*

Sometimes God provides for our daily needs through unlikely sources and in surprising ways - but He always comes through. *[pause]*

Will you trust Him for your daily needs?

Look at all the ways that He has provided in the past, don't you think He will continue to be faithful? *[pauseeee]*

Now maybe you're here and you're somebody who would adamantly say that what David did was wrong in lying to Ahimelech.

And you're wondering, "Why would God still provide David with food and a weapon?" *[pause]*

Well even if you deem what David did as wrong, this simply reminds us that God provides for us even though we don't deserve it! *[pause]*

If God only provided our daily needs when we deserved it, none of us would still be around today.

But praise God that He doesn't provide our daily needs based on what we deserve, but based on His grace.

And it's His grace that is our sustenance, each day, whether we realize it or not. *[pauseeeee]*

So David has fled the priestly city of Nob, and he goes somewhere totally unexpected - he goes to the enemy.

I'll continue reading, starting in verse 10...[READ VERSES 10-15]

Gath is a Philistine city.

Remember that Goliath was from Gath, and now, in comes David, walking into the city of Gath with Goliath's sword. *[pause]*

David possibly thought that they wouldn't recognize him, but he's way too well known among the Philistines to go unrecognized.

For they know that he's the great David, who has killed thousands of their own people. *[pause]*

When David realizes that they recognize him, he becomes fearful and shrewdly comes up with a plan on the spot.

He chooses to act insane, and not just a little insane, but so insane that he makes marks on the doors of the gate and spittle runs down his beard.

Talk about some good acting because even the king of Gath thought that he was genuinely insane, and was like, "I have enough madmen around here, I don't want another."

So because of this, David is able to escape the city of Gath. *[pause]*

Now that's an interesting story, isn't it? But what does it teach us?...

II. God provides deliverance (21:10-15)

So not only does God provide for our daily needs and for small things, but he provides deliverance in big things. *[pause]*

David was in the midst of the enemies of Israel, and he could have been killed on the spot.

I mean, here was the great Israelite warrior, who had killed myriads of Philistines, and he arrives in Gath with the sword of Goliath, whom he killed.

And the people of Gath even recognize him as the Philistine killer!

What are the chances that he makes it out alive?

Yet God delivers him from this grim situation. *[pause]*

Now you may be thinking, "How can you say that God delivered David, when David was the one who came up with the creative plan to act insane?"

Well, did you know that David wrote at least 2 of his psalms as he reflected upon this incident?

It's true! He wrote both Psalm 34 and Psalm 56 based on what happened here.

And in those psalms, what does David say?

Does he point to his amazing ingenuity as the reason for his deliverance?

No, he points to God. *[pause]*

He boasts in God, and says that it's God who delivered him from his fears.³

He even says, "In God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?" and that God had delivered his soul from death.⁴ *[pause]*

How is all of this possible? He says it's because, "God is for me."⁵ *[pauseeee]*

It's so easy to take the credit for the good things that happen to us, isn't it?

We lead someone to Christ, and we think, "Look at what I did."

We narrowly avoid a car crash and we think, "My reaction and skill were just so good." *[pause]*

What things are you trying to take the credit for that ultimately God should get the credit for?
[pause]

Now certainly God works through us, just like he did with David, but when it comes down to it, David had to point upwards as the foundational reason for his life being spared. *[pauseeee]*

And having the whole message of Scripture, a story like this must not keep us only thinking in terms of our physical lives, though.

David's "God is for me" parallels Paul's "if God for us, who can be against us?"⁶

There we see that danger, sword, and death cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.⁷

Our souls are ultimately delivered, even when we face physical death. *[pause]*

So what are we to fear? God is our trust and He delivers!

No matter what big things you face in this life, you can know that God is working it all for good⁸ and He will ultimately deliver. *[pauseeee]*

God is the God who provides deliverance!

May you always believe that and rest in that truth.

What's there to fear when God has the power to deliver?

He's not sitting back thinking, "Oh no, I don't know about this one."

³ See Psalm 34:2,4.

⁴ See Psalm 56:11,13.

⁵ Psalm 56:9.

⁶ Romans 8:31.

⁷ See Romans 8:35-39.

⁸ See Romans 8:28.

But His arm is mighty to save,⁹ and he saves those who call out to Him in faith.¹⁰ *[pause]*

Have you trusted in Jesus Christ, who died to deliver you from your sins and save you from the wrath of God that you deserved? *[pauseeeeeee]*

Let's continue on, seeing where David goes next...

I'll pick up reading in chapter 22, verse 1...*[READ 22:1-4]*

So David goes to this cave to hide out, and his family goes to be with him since their lives were probably at risk with Saul around. *[pause]*

But that's not all who came, for a bunch of people in distress, debt, and bitter in soul come to him.

These are people who are going through hardship, so they find refuge among David, who's sort of an outcast of Saul's kingdom. *[pause]*

So now David has around him this rag-tag group of misfits.

But David doesn't stay in this cave for super long, for he then goes to Moab, where he seeks refuge for his parents.

And what's interesting is that the king of Moab allows his parents to stay there. *[pause]*

That's interesting because Moab and Israel were often enemies in the past.

So then why does the king of Moab allow David and his parents to stay in his stronghold?

Well who was David's great-grandmother? Ruth the Moabite!¹¹

That means that Jesse, David's father, who would stay there in safety, was the grandson of Ruth, and most likely because of that family connection, that's at least one reason why they were allowed to stay. *[pause]*

Once again, what do we see as an application from this section?...

III. God provides refuge (22:1-4)

David was able to be refreshed as God provided him refuge in a cave and then in the stronghold of Moab. *[pause]*

Isn't it great that we have a God who provides refuge and refreshment?

He doesn't say, "Good luck, guys, you're on your own!" But he cares and provides. *[pauseeee]*

⁹ An allusion to Isaiah 59:1.

¹⁰ An allusion to Romans 10:13.

¹¹ See Ruth 4:18-22.

He knew exactly what David needed at that time, and he even brought the encouragement of David's family and others to come alongside him. *[pauseeee]*

God knows exactly what you need.

He will provide in His time and in His way.

Who would have thought that the anointed king David of Israel would be hanging out in the stronghold of Moab?

Yet there he was because there God led him to find refuge. *[pauseeee]*

Trust that God knows what you need.

It may not always look like you envisioned, but it will be what you need.

You might find encouragement and rest in the most unlikely of places, but God will use it in your life. *[pauseeee]*

The prime way that we find refuge is in God Himself.

Have you ever been so worried about something, and then you truly just cast that worry on the Lord,¹² and you feel so much better?

There's this peace that comes upon you as you trust the Lord with the outcome.

That's God providing you refuge in Himself. *[pauseeee]*

“During an earthquake, the inhabitants of a small village were very much alarmed. One old woman, whom they all knew, was surprisingly calm and joyous.

At length, one of them said to her, ‘Mother, are you not afraid?’ ‘No,’ she replied, ‘I rejoice to know that I have a God who can shake the world.’” *[pause]*

That woman found refuge in God, even as the world around her shook. *[pauseeee]*

All of this is why the psalmist can say, “*God* is our refuge and strength,”¹³ and no matter what happens in this life, we can run to Him for help. *[pause]*

And like David became a refuge for outcasts, so Jesus (the better David) is a refuge for struggling sinners like us.

He welcomes all who come to Him, who recognize their distress, spiritual debt, and bitterness of their soul.

¹² An allusion to 1 Peter 5:7.

¹³ Psalm 46:1 (Italics is mine).

He becomes for us a refuge where we, the heavy laden, can lay down our burdens and find rest.¹⁴
[pause]

Go to Christ and find refuge from the craziness of this world!

Go to Him who is able to provide refuge in Himself, and when you humbly and genuinely go to Him, you won't regret it. *[pauseeeee]*

Going back to the story, David is in the stronghold of Moab, but then verse 5 says...

"Then the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not remain in the stronghold; depart, and go into the land of Judah." So David departed and went into the forest of Hereth." *[pause]*

Here we see that even as David was on the run as a fugitive, God was giving him guidance.

And that provides us with one more thing to see by way of application, and it's that...

IV. God provides guidance (22:5)

God didn't leave David on his own.

He provided for his daily needs, for deliverance of his life, and a refuge - but he also provided guidance.

He guided him to the places that He wanted him to be.

And this must have been hard because David had to leave his safe stronghold to go back into harm's way in Judah.

He had to get closer to Saul, yet David willingly and obediently did it. *[pauseeeee]*

We desperately need the guidance of God, and thankfully He gives it to us.

For David, it was through a prophet, but for us, we get God's guidance through Scripture, which is His Word. *[pause]*

Aren't you grateful for the guidance of God?

He doesn't leave us on our own. He doesn't leave us hanging out in Moab, but he leads us as a Shepherd.

And you know what? Sometimes his guidance leads us closer to danger, like it did with David.

But though His guidance takes us to places that seem riskier, His guidance is always perfect and good.

He knows best.

¹⁴ An allusion to Matthew 11:28-30.

God knew that even though David was leaving the stronghold - he would be safe, and David trusts God to take care of him. *[pauseee]*

For us, God tells us to share the Gospel with others, and that may lead to the threat of persecution for our faith.

Think of the many missionaries, who in their endeavor to share the Gospel with the nations, lost so much, even risking their own lives. *[pause]*

Adoniram Judson once wrote to missionary candidates and told them that, “A large proportion of those who come out on a mission to the East die within five years after leaving their native land.”¹⁵

Yet they did it out of obedience to God. *[pauseeee]*

God also teaches us to give generously, and that sometimes stretches us and takes economic risk.

The list could go on. *[pause]*

Following God’s Word often pushes us out of our comfort zone, causing us to take risks for him.

But as you follow God’s Word, you are right where you belong, and in that, you can take comfort.

Staying in the stronghold of Moab seemed safer than God’s way, but the stronghold of God’s will is always stronger than any stronghold that you can imagine. *[pause]*

Will you follow God’s Word, even if it takes you into harm’s way?

Will you trust His guidance or seek the imaginary stronghold of your own wisdom? *[pauseeee]*

David was a man ‘on the run’.

He was “David the fugitive” at this point in his life, but even while being “David the fugitive”, he was protected and provided for by the Lord.

No matter if he was searching for bread and sword at the Tabernacle, in the heart of an enemy city, hunkering down in a cave, or sent by God back into Judah, closer to Saul...

...God protected and provided what David needed all along the way. *[pause]*

So this should lead us to...

Trust God, the great providing One! *[pause]*

I want you to think about your worries and anxieties.

¹⁵ Quoted in John Piper’s book, 21 Servants of Sovereign Joy. Page 571.

What is it that you are worried or anxious about?

Really, take some time right now to think about them. *[pause]*

Now that you have them on your mind, I want you to ask yourself this question...

When you think about those worries and anxieties, what are you trusting in to take care of those things?

Are you trying to look inward to ways that you could solve them all on your own?

Or maybe you don't know where to turn, and that makes you even more worried. *[pauseeee]*

But how often have you laid those worries at the feet of the Savior?

Are you actually trusting God or not? *[pauseeee]*

Most often our worries prove that our trust *isn't* in God.

We don't truly believe that He is the God who provides.

So I want to encourage and challenge you this morning to remember fugitive David. *[pause]*

He had no food and no weapons, yet God provided for his needs.

He faced the threat of death in Gath, but God delivered.

He had no place to stay, yet God provided refuge.

And God didn't leave him without guidance, but guided him through His Word. *[pause]*

We serve the same God!

The same providing God, who cares and who guides and who protects!

Trust Him! *[pauseeee]*

If you think about it, God provided the most important things for us - forgiveness and eternal life.

He provided this through sending His own Son to come to this earth and die for us.

And if He has provided such amazing, eternal things don't you think he cares and can provide for the smaller things of life? *[pause]*

Trust the great providing One, who will always provide in His timing and in His way, but rest assured that it will always be best.