

David's Escape

Key Verse:

“When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another.”

Matthew 10:23a

Level 5 lesson 25

Extra: Summarise God's protection of David, and the reasons.

Read: 1 Samuel 19:1-24

Further: Psalm 144

SAUL'S EVIL PURPOSES King Saul's opposition finally became so fierce that David had no option but to run away. Having failed to kill David with his own javelin and seeing him escape death at the hands of the Philistines, Saul was even more determined to get rid of him. He ordered Jonathan and all his servants to kill David at the first opportunity.

However, the servants loved David and refused to commit such a crime, while Jonathan would never have done such a thing to his best friend. Instead, Jonathan told David the serious news, and to hide himself until the morning, in a secret place in a field where Saul often went. Jonathan had a plan to bring his father Saul to the field, speak with him there about his intentions towards David and then relay the information to David. (v3)

JONATHAN'S PLEA The plan was carried out, exactly as Jonathan planned; David hid, and Jonathan met his father in the field, where he pleaded with him not to hurt David. He reminded his father that David had risked his life in killing Goliath, resulting in a great rescue for Israel through the Lord's enabling. "Why then," Jonathan asked his father, "do wrong to an innocent man like David, by killing him for no reason?" Jonathan's reasoned plea seemed to soften King Saul, and he promised, "David will not be put to death." Sadly, Saul was no longer a man of his word; shortly afterwards, he again placed David at the forefront of a battle against the Philistines. David though, led the Israelites in God's strength, to another mighty victory! Later, while David played in the palace, Saul, consumed with jealousy and prompted by the evil spirit, again hurled his spear at him. It missed, but once more David was forced to run for his life. He returned to his home, followed by some of Saul's men. They had been instructed to watch the house, and kill David in the morning. However, Michal, David's wife, was loyal to him. She helped him escape by letting him down through a window.

Then she put an image in the bed, covered it with the bedspread and told Saul's men that David was sick. Saul, when he heard, didn't care." Bring him here to me in his sickbed and I'll kill him myself!" he shouted angrily. Of course, when the men returned to David's house they found 'the bird had flown' - David was gone!

GOD'S PROTECTION Saul, of course, was very angry with Michal, and accused her of deceiving him and helping his enemy escape. True, she had deceived her father, out of love and loyalty to her husband, (for which we could hardly condemn her), but David was in no way Saul's enemy! He had only ever tried to do good to Saul. Such was the twisted state of Saul's mind that he could no longer distinguish truth from falsehood or friend from foe.

David meanwhile, escaped to Ramah where the prophet Samuel lived. He told Samuel of his persecution by Saul and the attempts on his life. Samuel listened sympathetically and offered David shelter with him, at a place called Naioth in Ramah. Hearing of this, Saul sent men to capture him. But when they arrived at the place, Samuel was instructing a company of prophets. Instead of arresting David, the Spirit of God came upon them and they began to prophesy (to express praise to God), too!

Another group of men was sent by Saul with the same result - and a third group became as helpless as the others! Saul, not to be thwarted, decided to go himself. He set off for Ramah, where he enquired as to the whereabouts of Samuel and David. Told they are in Naioth, he set off to find them. While still on the way, the Spirit of God came upon him and he began to prophesy, also. When Saul finally reached Naioth, he stripped off his royal robes and lay on the ground prophesying all day and night! This humbling experience should have been a powerful lesson to Saul of God's sovereign power and authority over him.

These events clearly show God's protection of David. Firstly, the King's son Jonathan shielded him; then the King's daughter Michal helped him; and finally the Spirit of God prevented even the King from harming him. Instead Saul was caused to praise God and serve HIS purposes! David was, after all, destined to reign over Israel by God's appointment. All efforts to destroy him were doomed to fail!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. How did Jonathan prove his loyalty to David?	.....
2. What did Jonathan remind his father about David?	.....
3. Why do you think Saul wanted to kill David?	.....
4. Name David's three protectors mentioned in this lesson.	.....
5. Why were Saul's efforts to kill David sure to fail?	.....

My Name is Age

A Faithful Friend

Key Verse:

“A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”

Proverbs 18:24

Level 5 lesson 26

Extra: What significance do you see in the remarkable favour Jonathan asks of David.

Read 1 Samuel 20:1-23

Further reading: 1 Samuel 18:1-5

DAVID’S CONCERN After Saul’s unusual experience at the hand of God, we can be sure that he also received a stern reprimand from the Prophet Samuel, regarding his wicked persecution of David. Perhaps as result of this rebuke, Saul professed to be reconciled to David, and seems to have expected him to resume his place at the palace (v25-29). David (understandably) no longer trusted Saul, and did not go. Instead, he contacted Jonathan near the palace, and shared his concerns with him.

There were three ‘burning’ questions which he put to Jonathan: “What have I done? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father that he is trying to take my life?” We can imagine how these weighed heavily on the young fugitive’s heart and mind. Jonathan seemed horrified to think that his father would still be trying to take David’s life. He assured David that if his father truly planned to kill David, he would know about it. David, however, was not so sure! He suspected that Saul would hide it from Jonathan, because he knew of their deep friendship. David was sure there was only ‘a step between me and death’! Jonathan replied that he would do whatever David wanted, to protect him from Saul.

SECRET PLAN David suggested a plan. “Tomorrow is the new moon,” he said, “and I am supposed to dine with the King. Instead I’m going to hide here in the field for three days. If your father misses me, tell him that I asked permission to go home to Bethlehem, to take part with my family in the annual sacrifice. If he says, “That’s OK,” then everything is alright. However, if he gets really mad because I’m not there, you can be sure he wants to harm me!”

David appealed to Jonathan. “If this happens, deal kindly with me; remember the covenant of the Lord between us. But if you think there is deceit or evil in my heart, then kill me yourself, rather than let your father do it!” Of course, this was unthinkable for Jonathan; instead, he agreed to protect David.

Right there in the field, the two men made a solemn vow of loyalty to each other before God. This friendship was a wonderful provision for both young men, who don’t seem to have enjoyed close friendships with their own brothers.

SOLEMN VOWS Jonathan promised to advise David of his father’s intentions - whether they were good or evil. “If I don’t do this,” Jonathan vowed, “let the Lord’s displeasure and anger be on me!” Next, Jonathan asked a favour of David; that David should not only show kindness to him personally, while he lived; but that his kindness should extend to Jonathan’s descendants forever. It is clear that Jonathan believed David would one day accede to the throne; he knew that this terrible struggle with Saul would end in David’s favour. It showed too, the depth of love and concern Jonathan had for David. As Saul’s son, he stood to lose his place as heir to the throne of Israel if David became King. Yet he was righteous and wise enough to see that God was with David, and to unselfishly give up that right. Jonathan really “loved him as he loved his own soul.” David solemnly vowed to comply with Jonathan’s request, and as we’ll see later, faithfully kept his promise.

SPECIAL SIGNAL Before parting, the two men decided how Jonathan would signal Saul’s intentions toward David. Jonathan agreed with David’s earlier plan to hide and miss the New Moon festival dinner at the palace. “You will be missed,” he said. “The day after tomorrow,” he continued, “towards evening, go to the place where you hid when this trouble began, and wait by the stone Ezel. I’ll come out with my bow and arrows and pretend to do some shooting, as if I was shooting at the stone. I will shoot three arrows and then send my servant-boy to pick them up. What I call out to him will be a signal to you in your hiding place, telling you either to run for your life or that it is safe for you to return to the palace. If I call out to the lad, “Look the arrows are beyond you,” then go away, for the Lord has sent you away.” Next lesson we will see what happened!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Why would David not go back to the King’s court?

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2. How would Jonathan find out Saul’s attitude towards David?

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3. What did Jonathan believe about David?

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4. What was the special favour Jonathan asked of David?

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5. What signal would show David that he must go away?

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David in Exile

Read 1 Samuel 20:35-42, 21:1-15

Further reading: Psalm 54

Key Verse:
“It (the holy bread) belongs to Aaron and his sons, who are to eat it in a holy place, because it is a most holy part of their regular share of the offerings.”

Leviticus 24:9

Level 5 lesson 27

Extra: What do you think about David lying?

It didn't take long for Saul to reveal his true intentions for David. When David was again not present at the dinner table, on the second day of the New Moon celebrations, Saul asked Jonathan where he was. Jonathan gave him the arranged answer, that he was visiting his family in Bethlehem. Saul immediately flew into a terrible rage. Accusing Jonathan of being a disgrace to his family, he picked up his javelin and threw it at him! Jonathan didn't need to see or hear any more. He ran from the room, terribly upset; angry at his father's treatment of him, his own son; but also sorrowful that this would mean parting with his best friend David.

First thing next morning, as arranged, Jonathan went out into the field with his servant-boy for some 'archery practice.' Firing several arrows towards the stone marker, he then sent the boy to fetch them back. As he ran, Jonathan called after him loudly, "Isn't the arrow beyond you? Hurry! Go quickly! Don't stop." The boy of course, was ignorant of the true meaning of his words - but not so David, hiding nearby. It meant Saul was against him and he must now flee for his life! Jonathan then sent the boy back to the palace with his bow and arrows.

FOND FAREWELL After he'd gone, David came out of his hiding place and greeted Jonathan. Both men embraced, weeping, in a most touching and poignant farewell. They realised time was short, and that they would probably never meet again. Jonathan reminded David of their vow of loyalty and friendship and wished him God's blessing. Then with heavy hearts, they separated, David going north to a place called Nob, while Jonathan returned to Jerusalem. Arriving at Nob, David went straight to the priest, Ahimelech. Seeing David alone, Ahimelech was immediately suspicious and afraid. David lied, pretending to be on a special, top secret mission for Saul. He then asked what food he could have for himself and his imaginary group of waiting men. Ahimelech, however, had no ordinary bread; only the holy bread which was unlawful for anyone other than priests to eat. However, these loaves were actually leftover and had been replaced by fresh loaves. So the priest agreed to let David have them. Jesus mentioned this incident, (Matthew 12:3-4) and justified it on the basis of David's genuine need and hunger.

FEARFUL FLIGHT Now David needed a weapon. Again he lied, claiming that the King's business was so urgent, he'd had to leave without bringing any weapons. This was at least partially true! Perhaps the priest had a spear or a sword handy that he could let him have? Ahimelech replied that he actually had the very sword which once belonged to Goliath the giant and with which David had cut off his head. He offered it to David who eagerly accepted it, saying, "There is none like that; give it to me!"

Unfortunately for Ahimelech, as we'll see later, a man named Doeg, one of Saul's servants, was staying in the priest's house and witnessed all that took place between Ahimelech and David. Knowing Saul and his men would be looking for him everywhere, David hurried to Gath in the land of the Philistines, where Achish was King.

FOOLISH FRIGHT Being in Philistine country was dangerous of course, but David possibly felt it was the last place Saul would expect to find him. However, it was not long before he realised he had made a foolish mistake. King Achish's servants recognised him (perhaps Goliath's sword was the giveaway!) and asked the King, "Isn't this David, the king of the land? Did they not sing of him in dances saying, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?"

David knew 'the game was up,' and in desperation, began acting like a madman; scratching on the doors and drooling and dribbling into his beard. Fortunately, Achish was completely fooled by this act; he told his servants that he had quite enough madmen around him already, and didn't need any more! So David was sent away and escaped with his life.

As we look at the lives of these Bible 'heroes' it's good to notice that they were not perfect. They were ordinary men and women like you and me, who failed and faltered in their walk with God, just as we do. We can take comfort from this! God in His infinite grace was still able to do mighty things through them and use them to fulfil His purposes - and He wants to use you and me, too! There was only One who never sinned or did any wrong - that was our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He is the ultimate 'Hero!'

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What did Jonathan's signal to David mean?	.....
2. In what way did David deceive Ahimelech?	.....
3. What did David obtain from Ahimelech?	.....
4. How did David escape from King Achish?	.....
5. What can we learn from the lives of Bible heroes such as David?	.....

David in Hiding

Key Verse:

“You (Doeg) love evil rather than good and falsehood rather than speaking the truth.”

Psalm 52:3

Extra: How does this lesson show the harm we can cause to others by doing wrong ourselves?

Level 5 lesson 28

Read 1 Samuel 22

Further: Psalm 52

RAGGED REFUGEES On the border of the Philistine country (about six miles south-west of Bethlehem) is a large region of limestone country, full of pits and caves. David headed straight from King Achish’s presence to a very large cave in this area, known as the Cave of Adullam. There he hoped to be safe from King Saul.

Word somehow reached David’s family, who also lived in fear of Saul, and they soon joined him in the cave. David however, took his father and mother to the land of Moab, and left them under the care of the King, until he knew God’s plan for him. Slowly, other people from all walks of life joined him at the Cave of Adullam.

Many were in debt or in trouble of some sort, and others were unhappy with Saul as King. In total, around 400 men gathered around David. They may have appeared a nondescript group of ‘activists and misfits,’ but they were loyal and devoted to David as their leader. They were prepared to share David’s hardship, knowing that God had anointed him as the future King.

TESTING TAUNTS Soon, David is warned by the prophet Gad, to leave the Cave of Adullam and take his band of ‘warriors’ to the forest of Hareth, in the hills of Judah. News of David’s movements reached Saul, and thinking he was planning an attack on him and his servants, he immediately set out to find him

In fact, nothing was further from David’s mind; he had no grudge against Saul! Even Saul’s own tribe (the Benjamites), were not keen on hunting David. Sensing this, Saul accused them of really being on David’s side and not committed to him. He taunted them, asking them whether they were expecting David (if he became king) to reward them by giving them fields and vineyards and positions of authority, etc.

This must have been quite a dilemma for these men - to be loyal to Saul, their king who was acting wickedly; or to David, the righteous and upright man who they knew would soon succeed him as King of Israel. In any case, the Benjamites ignored Saul’s desperate appeal.

TERRIBLE TREACHERY One man, however, remained intensely loyal to Saul. Doeg, an Edomite, stepped forward; “I saw David arrive at Nob,” he said. He then reported what he had seen at Ahimelech’s house; how Ahimelech inquired of the Lord for David, and gave him food and Goliath’s sword. He made it appear as though Ahimelech was guilty of treason.

The facts were, of course, that Ahimelech had been deceived by David’s lies and had only sought to help him on what he thought was King Saul’s business. What followed next was a terrible lesson to David (and a reminder to us) of the destruction and strife which even ‘white lies’ can cause.

SAVAGE SLAUGHTER Hearing this, Saul sent for Ahimelech and the other priests, and charged them with conspiring against him. Ahimelech tried to point out that neither he nor David had conspired against him; both were loyal to Saul. It was hopeless. Saul, in a rage, screamed that Ahimelech and all his family would die for their supposed treachery. Turning to his soldiers, he ordered them to “kill them all!” To their credit, his men didn’t move; they refused to carry out such a wicked act against innocent men.

Doeg, however, had no such qualms; he took his sword and ‘in cold blood,’ murdered Ahimelech and all the priests, one by one. Not satisfied with that, he went on a murderous rampage in the town of Nob, killing everyone in it - even the livestock! Behind this mad act of cruelty, however, we cannot help but see the working of God’s curse on the house of Eli (see 1 Samuel 2:31). What a lesson in how far-reaching the results of sin may be!

Of course, this does not lessen Saul and Doeg’s guilt, regarding their crime. They, along with each of us, will one day stand before the Living God, to give an account of their lives; God will be the final, righteous judge! Ahimelech’s son, Abiathar, escaped the massacre and ran to tell David the dreadful news. David was overcome with grief, knowing it was his actions and lies that had led to this horrible massacre. “I have caused the death of all your father’s family!” was his heart-wrenching cry to Abiathar. All David could do, was offer him refuge and protection from Saul. What a sad lesson to us of the huge damage sin can cause - to ourselves and others!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. How did David take care of his parents?
2. How did Saul try to arouse his own tribe to action against David?
3. What do you think of Doeg?
4. Why was David so upset when he heard about the slaughter of the priests?
5. What lessons should we learn from the events of this study?

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