

**Title:** Desperation  
**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 21  
**Series:** God, the True King!

1. Introduction:

a. Brothers and Sisters, as human beings, we loathe suffering. The reasons for this are evident.

i. No one wants:

1. the pain that suffering produces,
2. the confusion that is often associated with suffering,
3. and the isolation that comes with suffering.

ii. If we are honest, we typically associate suffering with God's displeasure or His lack of care.

1. Frequently, while suffering, we tend to be angry with God. This is due to the remnant of flesh still inherent within the Christian. During times of suffering, God exposes how much self-pride and self-love are still within us.

a. Many, during their times of suffering, revile God with questions such as these:

- i. Where are you, God?
- ii. Don't you love me anymore?
- iii. How come you are doing this to me after I have served you so faithfully?

1. Such questioning exposes the idolatry of self.

- b. In other words, we tend to become desperate due to the discomfort and agony that suffering inevitably produces. Desperation is always a sign that the believer has forgotten God.
- i. But what is desperation? **Desperation** can be defined as a hopeless state; or absence of hope or expectation. In a Christian's case, it is the loss of hope in the mercy of God.
    1. The words in verse 10 sum up David's desperation. We read, "**And David rose and fled that day from Saul...**" In other words, David's eyes were on the wrong person. Afraid of Saul and desperate, David begins to fear the person of Saul more than he trusts in the Person of God. David loses hope in God and in his promises. It is easy for any of us, under similar circumstances, to do the same.
    2. The reason for this is that Saul is a flesh and bone enemy, and God is Spirit and unseeable with human eyes. And we, weakened by our human nature, will tend to walk by sight and not by faith. We begin to imagine what might happen and always think of the worst possible scenario. At this point, self-preservation begins. Self-preservation then leads to self-reliance, leading to sinful decisions and actions. This is why we are warned against desperation in scripture.
      - a. **2 Corinthians 5:6-7** So we are always of good courage. We know that while

we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, (7) for we walk by faith, not by sight.

- c. This passage warns you and me. If David, a man after the heart of God, can become this desperate, you and I must watch and pray, especially in our suffering.

2. Verses 1-3: Desperation leads to sin: Then David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. And Ahimelech came to meet David, trembling, and said to him, “Why are you alone, and no one with you?” (2) And David said to Ahimelech the priest, “The king has charged me with a matter and said to me, ‘Let no one know anything of the matter about which I send you, and with which I have charged you.’ I have made an appointment with the young men for such and such a place. (3) Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever is here.”

- a. The arrival of the king’s son-in-law without an escort would naturally strike the high priest as strange and, therefore, alarming.
  - i. The high priest smells something wrong.
- b. David, afraid and desperate, assures the high priest that he is on a secret mission from the king. This, of course, is a lie. We must be careful with this passage. The Bible is not condoning David’s actions but merely reporting them.
  - i. Like David, Christians will often find themselves in terrible trouble and persecution. It is in those

times that Christians will have two choices set before them:

1. The Christian can walk by sight.
  - a. In other words, we can live according to the temporary, arbitrary things that our eyes often focus on here on earth, such as the immediate alleviating of our suffering. David made this mistake.
2. Or the Christian can walk by faith.
  - a. In other words, we can live today according to God's promises, even though we cannot see them. In David's case, he had the promise of God that he would one day be king. David forgot about this promise.
  - b. You and I also have exceedingly great promises from God. To walk by faith means that these promises sustain us in our suffering.
3. Brothers and sisters, we live in a world full of desperation. Men and women are lost and, walking by sight, desperately trying to find peace in this world's fleeting pleasures and empty promises.
  - a. We should find none of this in the church of God because we are the children of His promises. Even in the worst times, Christians should be found confidently holding fast to God.
  - b. Let us, like the Psalmist, rely on God. We read in **Psalms 120:1** In my

distress I called to the LORD, and he answered me.

3. Verses 4-6: God's people are to be merciful with the desperate: And the priest answered David, "I have no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread—if the young men have kept themselves from women." (5) And David answered the priest, "Truly women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition. The vessels of the young men are holy even when it is an ordinary journey. How much more today will their vessels be holy?" (6) So the priest gave him the holy bread, for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence, which is removed from before the LORD, to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away.

a. The bread of the Presence, after remaining in the temple from one sabbath day to the next, was to be eaten by the priests in the holy place. Ahimelech, wanting to extend mercy to David, did not want to refuse David's request. He asks if his attendants are at least ceremonially clean because, in that case, the urgency of the king's business would excuse the breach of the commandment. We learn, from this, that Ahimelech truly understood the heart of God's law. Our God desires mercy above sacrifice. Christ used this episode to teach the true meaning of religious duty.

1. **Matthew 12:2-4** But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do

on the Sabbath.” (3) He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: (4) how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?”

2. **Matthew 12:7A** And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice...

- b. Beloved, the desperation of David had driven him to wander from God, but we learn that God had never abandoned David. Please notice that David still received his daily bread in the middle of his confusion and fear. Our text teaches us something simple: that God sustained David through a merciful high Priest?
  - i. When David had fled Saul in haste, he had taken no provision. David’s need for food was real.
    - 1. **Commentary**: A desperate, lying David still receives the incredible mercy of God. God grants him the bread of the Presence, which normally only the priest could eat. In a quiet witness, this bread symbolized that God always sustains His People and supplies their needs. The Holy Bread becomes David’s daily bread.
- c. But we might rightly complain, “David does not deserve such mercy!” Should not David’s lie, his sin, disqualify him from receiving the Lord’s provision? David is not worthy!

- i. What else is new? None of us deserve God’s mercy, yet we find our Daily Bread in Christ.
  - 1. **John 6:33-35** For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” (34) They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” (35) Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.
  - 2. We must ask the following question. Who would have daily bread if it rested on our works or worthiness?
    - a. **Genesis 32:10** I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.
- d. Beloved, doesn’t God’s provision of Jesus Christ and the myriad of other daily blessings amid our suffering not prove that He loves us? Does it not speak as to the gracious character of our God?
  - i. God’s character was displayed in Ahimelech’s willingness to extend mercy to the needy.

4. Verse 7-9: Desperation leads to recklessness: Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD. His name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's herdsmen. (8) Then David said to Ahimelech, “Then have you not here a spear or a

sword at hand? For I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste.” (9) And the priest said, “The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you struck down in the Valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you will take that, take it, for there is none but that here.” And David said, “There is none like that; give it to me.”

a. David shuddered when he saw Saul’s lackey, Doeg. He knew then that he had caused potential harm, yet David continued with his course of action, consumed by desperation. Desperation blinds us to the needs of others or to the hurt that we can cause. David’s lies would have significant consequences. Doeg would report what he saw to Saul, and Saul would have all the priests murdered as conspirators.

i. **1 Samuel 22:22** And David said to Abiathar, “I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have occasioned the death of all the persons of your father's house.”

b. Be careful, Beloved! Desperation leads to reckless living.

5. Verses 10-15: Desperation leads to absurdity: And David rose and fled that day from Saul and went to Achish the king of Gath. (11) And the servants of Achish said to him, “Is not this David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances, ‘Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands’?” (12) And David took these words to heart and was much afraid of Achish



the king of Gath. (13) So he changed his behavior before them and pretended to be insane in their hands and made marks on the doors of the gate and let his spittle run down his beard. (14) Then Achish said to his servants, “Behold, you see the man is mad. Why then have you brought him to me? (15) Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to behave as a madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?”

a. David flees to the Philistines! Can you believe it, Brothers and Sisters? David flees to the enemy himself.

i. **Commentary:** Would a steer walk, knowingly, into a meat grinder? Yet here is David showing up in Goliath’s hometown (with Goliath’s sword!), apparently hoping to find sanctuary.

ii. It is not uncommon for the people in God, when sinfully desperate, to run back to the world seeking to find that which they can only find in God. David does it here. The people of Israel threatened to do so under Moses’ leadership. And you and I will do it if we take our eyes off Christ and place them on the temporary.

1. **Jeremiah 42:10-16** If you will remain in this land, then I will build you up and not pull you down; I will plant you, and not pluck you up; for I relent of the disaster that I did to you. (11) Do not fear the king of Babylon, of whom you are afraid. Do not fear him, declares the LORD, for I am with you, to save you and to deliver you from his hand. (12) I will grant you mercy, that he

may have mercy on you and let you remain in your own land. (13) But if you say, ‘We will not remain in this land,’ disobeying the voice of the LORD your God (14) and saying, ‘No, we will go to the land of Egypt, where we shall not see war or hear the sound of the trumpet or be hungry for bread, and we will dwell there,’ (15) then hear the word of the LORD, O remnant of Judah. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: If you set your faces to enter Egypt and go to live there, (16) then the sword that you fear shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine of which you are afraid shall follow close after you to Egypt, and there you shall die.

a. When we, like David, think that the world of the Philistines is our best hope, we are in serious trouble.

iii. But David was not welcomed in the world of the Philistines:

1. The Philistine leadership had heard the song of David. David had killed tens of thousands of Philistines.

a. The Philistine people would not accept David. He had killed many of their family members.

2. The Philistine leadership understood that David would be the next king of the land. As king, David would wage war against them.

- b. David's plan has backfired. There would be no safety in the world. As Peter expresses in **John 6:67-68** So Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" (68) Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,
- i. David is placed under arrest; he is **in the hands** of the enemy.
  - ii. David, in further desperation, acted like a crazy fool. See how low the man of God has sunk?
  - iii. The king of the Philistine released David, and David was permitted to go slobbering on his way.
- c. We look at these verses and ask, "Can anything good come from David's terrible mistake?" I hope so because you and I make terrible mistakes as well. Beloved, God is always faithful, even when we are not! We should never forget God's mercies, even in times of great foolishness.
- i. Because of this episode, David learned how to trust in God even in the fieriest of storms. The Lord was stripping David of his tendency to rely on himself. David writes Psalms 34 entitled, Taste and See That the Lord is Good! We read in the caption of **Psalms 34:1A** A Psalm of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away...
  - ii. The experience in Gath taught David the folly of desperation. It was in Gath that David began to learn how to walk by faith. We read in **Psalms 34:6** This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.

6. Benediction:

- a. **Psalms 8:4** what is man that you are mindful of him,  
and the son of man that you care for him?

**Public Reading of Scripture**  
**Psalm 8:4-9**