

1 Samuel 21, An Introduction:

In chapter 19, David fled from Saul and went to Samuel at Ramah. Together they both moved to Naioth to live, a short distance away. Then, after a brief time, David returned to Gibeah to inquire of Jonathan for a reason why his father Saul desired David's death (chapter 20). Jonathan remained uncertain that truly this was his father's intention. David, therefore, along with Jonathan hatched a plan to discover the king's true disposition toward David. The plan worked. In no uncertain terms Saul's intention to kill David was clearly revealed. David must flee the presence of the king to protect his life.

Dave departs from Jonathan at Gibeah and flees to Nob, the place of the residing tabernacle and attending priests (chapter 21). At Nob, David is met by Ahimelech the high priest, who seemed to exhibit somewhat of a fear toward David. Also, quite understandably, Ahimelech wondered why David traveled alone. David's answer was grievous. He fabricated a boldface lie, saying that the king had sent him on an urgent secret mission. David's lie will later have bitter consequences. Many innocent lives will be lost because of David's sin. This Biblical narrative reminds every reader that sin is costly. It is the devil's deception to think otherwise. And *sometimes* sin's cost is exceedingly high. For David, this sin will come at a very high cost (this is not the only time David's life provides such an example).

In need of food and a weapon, David requested both from Ahimelech. In response, David was permitted to take holy bread from the tabernacle and the only weapon in Nob, the sword of slain Goliath. Concerning this unlawful incident of David eating the "Bread of the Presence" (i.e., the tabernacle Showbread), Bible commentator William MacDonald writes:

"In Matthew 12:3,4, the Lord Jesus approved this unlawful use of the showbread, presumably because there was sin in Israel If David had his rightful place on the throne, there would have been no need for him to be begging bread. The law, which forbade the profane [common] use of the bread, was *not intended to forbid a work of mercy such as this.*"

In verses 7-9, Doeg, an Edomite and a servant of Saul, was detained in Nob for a reason unexplained. While detained Doeg observed the entire incident. However, his presence at Nob and detention was not a matter of chance. The law of Moses warned, "... *be sure your sin will find you out* (Num.32:23); and for David, so it did.

Leaving Nob, David – apparently out of fear and very faulty thinking – fled to Gath, the city of Goliath. The anointed king of Israel sought refuge among the Philistines. When David finally realized the insanity of his decision, he pretended to be a madman before Achish the king, an act that rightly fit the occasion (v.13). But God in His grace delivered David from the sure grip of death. Through all these episodes in David life, God was doing a refining work. In Psalm 34 David in solitude reflects on the lessons he learned.