

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

Mercy in Our Desperation

I Samuel 21:1 – 22:5

Intro: David is at the point of desperation: his king wants him dead, he can't go home to his wife, his best friend has just told him that he is persona-non-grata in his own country & he must now run 4 his life if he wants 2 keep it. He has no food, no supplies, no weapons and no friends that can keep him safe. He's truly at the end of his rope & the edge of his life. David is a man in desperation! Have you ever been in that position? Maybe not as severe as David but let's face it: any amount of difficulty that disrupts the normalcy of our lives can lead us 2 the point of desperation.

In battle, desperation has its benefits. It causes the soldier 2 focus on survival (ie: **defeat the enemy so you can live**).

But in everyday life, if we're in a desperate situation 4 very long, we **get desperate about getting out of desperation**. It becomes tiring, especially if you feel like you're on your own. You might be tempted 2 do things that you think will help you escape the situation, or at least relieve the urgency. More often than not, they only serve 2 make it worse. **21:10a** sums up the next few chapters & initially, David tries his best to escape his lot in life but only succeeds in making it worse 4 him & others. What's the point of recording all these cliff-hanging episodes in David's life? Maybe its 2 teach us that **even during the times of their greatest desperation, YHWH refuses 2 let go of His servants**.

1-3- priest- Nob seems 2 have been the primary sanctuary site at that time (**3 ml S of Gibeah; 2 ml N of Jerusalem**). Something about David's arrival & appearance caused Ahimelech 2 sense something was wrong. He knew David's reputation & official status so why was he traveling w/o a royal entourage? Why's he alone? Why does he look like he's been sleeping outside a while? David shows up needing food & a weapon but his cover story seems very flimsy.

What's David doing here? There's no white-washing it – he's lying! Why would he do this? **1st) 2 protect himself**. He probably doesn't know Ahimelech well enough 2 trust him w/ his itinerary. **2nd) 2 protect Ahimelech**. He's trying 2 keep Ahimelech & the priest out of his conflict w/ Saul. We might be sympathetic w/ David here, he's at wit's end & who can say if they'd do any different? But the bottom line is this: David is **scheming** instead of **trusting the Lord**.

Not that you can see it right off b/c the **text** neither **justifies** nor **condemns** David's actions. It **reports** it but doesn't **recommend** it; it **describes** it but doesn't **discuss** it. So who are we 2 judge? Just like real life, often the consequences of our sins don't show up until later. If David hoped 2 protect Ahimelech w/ this lie, his plan would fail. Saul will have him & all the other priest (**except 1**) executed 4 conspiring w/ his enemy. David himself expresses regret over this in **22:22** & we get a glimpse of the true depths of his feelings in **Ps 119:28-29**. What would've happened if David had told the truth? We'll never know but we do know that **YHWH** would have sustained him regardless. It's not easy 2 walk in faith, especially when you're desperate, but God hasn't called us 2/b comfortable, He's called us 2/b obedient &

2/b completely dependent upon Him in every area of our lives. **D** regrets but **A** pays!

4-6- wasn't much food available in the tabernacle that day except leftover **showbread** (**Lev 24:5-9**). Every Sabbath, 12 loaves of this bread were laid on the table on the north side of the holy place in the tabernacle. This was a quiet testimony that **YHWH** sustains His people & supplies their needs. The old **showbread** was given 2 the priests. The term= **bread of faces** & is associated w/ & 2/b eaten b/4 the face of God. 2 eat showbread in the tabernacle was 2 eat God's bread in God's house as a **friend & guest** of the Lord, enjoying His hospitality= **fellowship / relationship**.

In light of that truth, there are 2 aspects of **showbread** we should observe: **1) Holy** – b/c it was set apart 4 **YHWH**, it was not 2/b treated **casually**. While **Lev 24:9** doesn't specifically say that only priests can eat showbread, it does establish the principle that it is **holy** & can't be given 2 just anyone. That's why Ahimelech insists on a basic level of ceremonial cleanliness from David (& his men) b/4 he'll give him the bread. Too often, we as God's people seem 2 forget that the blessings of God aren't given 2 us b/c we earn them, they're given b/c He loves us but also, they're given by His power 2/b used 4 His purposes. We should have a **holy** (set apart) respect 4 the blessings we receive.

2) Fresh – b/c **showbread** was always 2/b fresh, **A** would give **D** the old **showbread** so it could be replaced w/ fresh. In the same way, God desires our fellowship w/ Him, our time b/4 His face, 2/b fresh. We shouldn't cram thru a few verses on our way out the door & then throw out a few petitions / requests thru-out the day. Our time w/ God should be planned & anticipated, it shouldn't be an afterthought. Don't settle 4 a stale, moldy relationship w/ the Lord. The **showbread** was a picture of Israel's dependence on **YHWH**. Just as food is necessary 4 our survival, so 2, fellowship w/ God is necessary 4 our spiritual survival. It is the sustenance that fuels our lives & makes our ministry possible.

We've seen what David is doing but the important question is: What's **YHWH** doing here? Amidst the confusion, danger & fear of David's life, **YHWH** provides 4 him his daily bread. Ahim's **holy bread** becomes David's **daily bread**. Now some may object that, w/ all his scheming & deception, David doesn't **deserve** this provision. So what else is new? Would any of us have daily bread if it depended on what we deserve? We'd all be skin & bones! We ought 2 have the attitude of Jacob in **Gen 32:10**. We receive our daily bread not b/c we're godly but b/c God is gracious. So, in the midst of our worst crisis, when we're pressed down by the weight of the world, boxed in on every side & it seems like God's nowhere 2/b found, are we still eating every day? At least once? The Lord's small provisions in the midst of our big problems should at least assure us that He hasn't cast us aside & that He's still carrying us thru.

7-9- Doeg- Edomite (Saul's lackey) only has a bit part here but will play a major villainous role in the next chapter. But, David has sustenance, now he needs protection. Only weapon on hand turns out 2/b Goliath's sword. David jumps at the chance 2 carry that trophy b/c **there is none like it**. curious words indeed, considering his next move.

10-12- Gath- What? David might've figured that his presence anywhere in Israel would only jeopardize the lives of his friends, so he decides 2 emigrate & the last place Saul would look 4 him would be in Philistia. But what possessed him 2 flee 2 Achish the king of Gath? Cattle don't usually walk 2 the butcher's shop on their own but here's David showing up at

Goliath's home town w/ Goliath's own sword! Maybe he thought Achish would gladly receive the defection of Saul's most popular commander but his servants & advisers saw it differently, which is not surprising. There were plenty of reasons why David wasn't warmly received. There were plenty of disfigured soldiers down at the VFW hall that had a bone 2 pick w/ David. Not 2 mention all the widows in town that achieved that status by David's military exploits. Besides, Goliath's family still lived there! I'm sure David knew all this & the fact that he still took the risk shows how **desperate** he really was. You know you're in real trouble when Achish is your best hope!

Problem: David's fear of Saul had replaced his faith in YHWH & this led to even worse trouble than he already had!

It appears that Achish's servant listened 2 Jewish radio stations b/c they remembered the lyrics of at least 1 popular Israelite song. *This is the legendary David, who had slain his 10Ks most of whom, O king, had been Philistines.* David had every reason 2/b **very much afraid**: he was recognized, arrested & taken into their custody & it was not very likely that King Achish would ever let the man who killed Goliath go. What's David going 2 do?

13-15-pretended- David begins an acting career & his 1st performance is pretty convincing! He starts scratching nonsensical graffiti on all the gates (**more work 4 the Parks & Rec Dept.**) & he let spit drool down on his beard (**insult**). After a time of this constant scratching & soaking, Achish is convinced he has a raving maniac on his hands. Apparently, he already had a full quota of lunatics on his hands so David is released 2 go slobbering on his way.

If we simply say, "David dodged a bullet there," we're missing the point. David didn't win his release by taking acting lesson but by getting right w/ God. **Ps 34** & **Ps 56** were written after this Gath fiasco. **Ps 56** records David's prayer 4 YHWH's help (**1-4, 8-9**). **Ps 34** is David's hymn of praise 4 YHWH's deliverance (**1, 4, 6, 8**). David doesn't say, "I escaped b/c I'm lucky" but b/c "**God is 4 me.**" He sees his deliverance as a pledge that God will do the same 4 other believers. In his desperation & foolishness, God delivered David & that formed the basis of his continuing praise. That doesn't = be foolish so praise will come but we mustn't forget that God gives us mercy even in our foolishness.

22:1-2- brothers- things start 2 turn around 4 David, even if just slightly. The arrival of his brothers = they deserted Saul's army & have become fugitives like David. They aren't the only ones 2 join him. A motley crew of social riff-raff, malcontents & debtors were drawn 2 David. It's like the **Island of Misfit Toys**. As distasteful as they may sound, these 400 w/b the foundation of an effective fighting force & 30 leaders will become the legendary David's Mighty Men.

3-4- Moab- David's greatest concern now was protecting & caring 4 his parents (**2 keep them out of Saul's hands**). After Saul & Achish, it must've been a relief 2 find 1 king who would give him help. But why Moab? It's not accidental that David's great-grandmother was from Moab. We don't know how much this fact moved the king of Moab but it had 2 count 4 something. Having a tad of Moabite blood certainly didn't hurt his case 4 seeking asylum 4 his parents.

This sheds new light on the events recorded in Ruth, all the struggles, death & pain. Old Naomi could never have guessed that all her suffering would bear so much fruit. This also sheds light on God's providence in His provision b/c all these arrangements had been made 4 David's benefit over a century b/4. God has planned His kindness towards us b/4 the foundation of the world. He directs circumstances years in advance 2 bring relief 2 David in his present desperation. This wasn't something David did; it was a gift from **YHWH** He graciously arranged years b/4. If He did it 4 David, we must realize that He can & will do the same 4 us as well. Not b/c we earn it but b/c He loves us.

5- Gad- Where'd he come from? What difference does his appearance make 4 David? A big difference! **YHWH** gives David direction & special guidance thru a prophet. Why significant? B/c this is a privilege that Saul would never have again. Saul was on his own, resigned 2 living by his own wits w/o **any** direction from God. Saul had no light in his misery but the light of God's guidance shines on David thru the ministry of Gad. Desperation isn't fun but desperation & silence is a nightmare! Being in distress isn't so bad if you can hear the Shepherd's voice & know He's close by. David heard that voice directly thru Gad. In our distress, we still hear that voice thru the Scriptures & it gives us hope

God upholds His desperate people, but not always w/ grand, flashy miracles. He usually does so quietly, thru small provisions & deliverances. Can we see them, do we recognize His hand working in our lives. Maybe you find it difficult 2 hear the Shepherd's voice in Scripture. **A. W. Tozer**, "Most Christians don't hear God's voice b/c we've already decided we aren't going 2 do what He says." That sounds more like Saul's heart than it does David's heart.

What about God's provision, how do you receive it? Do you consider it holy (set apart) or is it deserved? Does it become ours 2 do w/ as we please or is it still His & we're responsible 2 use it in such a way as 2 honor Him Who gave it us? Are we more apt 2 consume it upon our lusts or use it 2 meet our responsibility 2 further His kingdom?

We pray 4 our needs b/c God desires 2 help His children but sometimes we should check our motives. Why should God grant this request? To what end will I use His provision? This line of thought, tho impossible 2 determine, may very well give us comfort in those instances when God refuses 2 grant a request. Maybe it might do me more harm than good. Maybe I am asking 4 the wrong reasons. God blessings are always good & we should always use them accordingly. 😊