

LIFE LESSONS – 1 SAMUEL: Life on the Runⁱ 1 Samuel 21-22

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Church Family! It is always great to gather together and worship together. I'm grateful for my friend, Evan and his wife Hannah, for leading us this morning.

I do want to take the opportunity to welcome those of you that are guests. Thanks for trusting us with your Sunday. It is my prayer that our church already feels like home to you.

We would like to connect with you. There are a couple of ways you can help us do that. One, feel free to text, anytime, the keyword TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant to the number 94-000. When you do, you'll be sent a link where you can share with us basic contact information. I will then look forward to following up with you this coming week. Or another way you can connect with us is by stopping by our information center located in the main lobby area under the banner "Hope is Here." We have a gift there for you to say thanks for joining us today. It is the highlight of my week to visit with those of you that are our guests. We are thrilled to have you with us today.

SERIES OVERVIEW:

In January, we began the second installment of a teaching series we began last year. We have been studying the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel in a series we've called, Life Lessons. So far in part two of our study we have studied the epic story of David and Goliath, the deep friendship formed between Jonathan and David, we've discovered the dangers of jealousy, and last week we looked at the blessing of friendship. Today we continue our study by looking at chapters 21 and 22 in a message I've entitled, "Life on the Run." So, I want to invite you to grab your Bibles and turn with me to 1 Samuel, chapter 21 as we look at David's life on the run.

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: MOVIE TRILOGIES

You know, it seems like a lot of movies coming out today are actually remakes. Have you noticed that? There's not much original content when it comes to movies that are out right now. But the best movies are those that come in trilogies. Do you have a favorite trilogy?

I came across an article on the 33 greatest movie trilogies.ⁱⁱ On this list was the Mission Impossible series, X-men, and the Indiana Jones movies. The top 3, according to this article is the Back to the Future trilogy at number 3 (not sure about that), The Original Star Wars trilogy at number 2, and The Lord of the Rings trilogy taking number 1.

But not even making the list, is my favorite movie series, The Bourne movies. Now, I know, technically there are 5 Bourne movies, but I don't count number 4 and 5. For one, Matt Damon wasn't in the 4th movie, and 2 number 5 was a money grab. Know what I mean? But The Bourne Identity, Bourne Supremacy, and Bourne Ultimatum movies are the best movie trilogy ever. My opinion. How many of you have seen all the Bourne movies?

You know the premise of each of these movies. Jason Bourne had been reprogrammed to be the greatest secret weapon ever. But he begins to understand his true identity and as a result he goes rogue. This becomes a threat to what was an under the table experiment. So, the government goes after Jason to eliminate them so that he doesn't expose them. The entire series is about Jason Bourne running for his life and trying to expose the truth behind those that are after him.

Well, I am convinced that Robert Ludlum, the author of the books that the Bourne trilogy was based on, took the plot from 1 Samuel. Similar plot. King Saul is hunting down David to eliminate him. So, David is on the run from chapter 21 through the remainder of the book, chapter 31. So, today, we begin the study of the last section of 1 Samuel which is all about David in exile and on the run. We will visit all of his journey through the remainder of our study, but today we are going to see David run to the city of Nob, from Nob to Gath, and then from Gath to the cave of Adullam [A-Do-Lum].

Have you ever felt like you were living life on the run? Maybe you're not running from someone trying to hunt you down. But you feel like the enemy is just after you? Like he won't relent? You feel like you can't gain any ground because just as soon as you move forward in your spiritual journey, you run into roadblocks and hurdles and difficulties? I know I can relate to that. And we are going to be able to identify with David as he is living life on the run.

And not to completely spoil the story, but we are going to see some amazing things from this part of David's journey. My prayer is that will be an

encouragement to us. As painful as this time was for David, it was all a part of God preparing him for what was next. So, I will recap the story, visiting key verses in chapters 21 and 22, and then look at a life lesson we can apply to our lives. We are going to also be observing Communion, The Lord's Supper at the end of our service, so we are going to work quickly this morning.

BACKGROUND:

So, after David, Jonathan and Michal discover Saul's plan to kill David, they say goodbye to him. He had to leave his wife, his home, his job, and his best friend. He's now a refugee. Because of Saul's jealousy, he deploys the resources at his disposal to find and kill David; he's public enemy number one.

Chapter 21 opens with David coming to the city of Nob. This city was just outside of Jerusalem.ⁱⁱⁱ Most scholars believe that the Tabernacle was located there.^{iv} Now remember, the Temple won't be constructed until David has died and his son Solomon builds the Temple. But Nob was a city that had many priests as a part of its population.

So, David runs to this place and finds Ahimelech [Ah-Him-Uh-Leck]. He's a priest living and ministering there in Nob. Verse 1 of chapter 21 tells us that, *"Ahimelech came to meet David, **trembling**, and said to him, "Why are you alone, and no one with you?"*

Ahimelech gets nervous when he sees David alone. As the priest, he knows David has been anointed the next king of Israel.^v He is the king's son-in-law, and he didn't have secret service with him? That's a red flag.

So, David concocts a story about being sent on official king business. He lied. He's not on a business trip, he's running from the king. This does not reflect good on David, and as we will see, this will come back to haunt him later.

David has a few guys with him. They're hungry from travel. Another red flag is David didn't make plans for dinner. David asks Ahimelech for bread. To which the priest says, "I don't have any common bread, but I do have holy bread."

The holy bread that Ahimelech is referring to is called the Bread of The Presence.^{vi} In the Tabernacle, there was a table with 12 loaves of bread, each loaf representing the 12 tribes of Israel. Fresh bread would be baked on the Sabbath and the priest would remove the old bread and replace it with the fresh

bread. In the book of Leviticus, it says that only the priest could eat the bread that was removed.

But David said that he and his men were ceremonially clean and able to eat the bread. So, Ahimelech gives them the holy bread. Now, The Law did make provision for the bread to be given to those truly in need.^{vii} So, Ahimelech deems this to be such a case.

But as all this is taking place, we learn that there was someone overhearing this exchange. His name is Doeg [Dough-egg]. Doeg is the chief of king Saul's herds. So, this is going to all come back on David later.

A third red flag is that David didn't have any weapons on him. But, in the Tabernacle at Nob, was Goliath's sword. The one David used as a boy to decapitate Goliath. So, David takes that sword with him.

The next day, David left and went to Achish [A-kish] the king of the city of Gath. You'll remember Gath. That's where Goliath, the Philistine, was from. It was a Philistine city and was the county seat of this region. David most likely feels like he has to flee Israel and hide in a foreign city. Jason Bourne is David!

When David arrives, they recognize him. This is the guy that defeated Goliath. Verse 12 of chapter 21 tells us, *"¹²And David took these words to heart and **was much afraid of Achish the king of Gath.** ¹³So 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.**"* Achish sees this and is like, "Let him go. I don't need another madman in our midst." That's the end of chapter 21.

Chapter 22 begins with David leaving Gath and going to the cave of Adullam [A-Do-Lum]. When his family hears this, they come to see him in the cave. But others also joined him. Verse 1 of chapter 22 says, *"**And when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him. ²And everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul, gathered to him. And he became commander over them. And there were with him about four hundred men.**"* So, all the people that couldn't stand king Saul, couldn't pay the high taxes, join David's family and formed a militia. Now I'm confident these people were from East Texas. Know what I mean?

They leave there and head to Mizpeh [Miz-pah]. We learn that this city was also in a foreign country, Moab. David's great-grandmother was Ruth, and she was a Moabite. So, the king allowed them to stay there. With his parents taken care of, David heads to the forest of Hereth [Hair-eth].

King Saul's intelligence agency informs him of David's journey. Saul throws a fit saying that no one is helping him. He manipulates the people by telling them that he is the one providing for them, but David wants to take everything away. Sounds like our politicians today, huh?!

Well, Doeg [Dough-egg] speaks up and says, I can confirm that David was at Nob visiting with Ahimelech. So, Saul mounts up and heads to Nob. He confronts Ahimelech, the priest that gave David bread. The priest tells Saul, "I didn't know David was running from you." That's because David lied about it. But Saul sees it as conspiracy against him.

So, Saul orders Ahimelech to be killed. None of the soldiers wanted to do that because they didn't want to take the lives of their own countrymen, especially a priest. Well, remember Doeg? He's an Edomite and Edomites hated the Jews. So, he says he has no problem doing it. And Doeg kills Ahimelech along with 84 other priests. Saul then sends Doeg into the city, and he kills other men, women and children. Scholars believe somewhere in the neighborhood of 385 people lost their lives that day. This was a massacre. You can tell that Saul is sick and demented and that he has become a tyrant.

But one of the priests manages to escape, Abiathar [A-Bia-thar]. He meets up with David and brings David up to speed. David is saddened by this news because he confesses that his lie led to that tragedy. And David asks Abiathar to stay with him and he will ultimately become David's main priest.

That's the end of chapter 22 and the end of our focus this morning. My question for us is, "Can you feel it?" This tragic situation is the result of jealousy, envy, lies, and abuse of power. These outcomes are the result of the human heart. When sin reigns supreme, this is the ultimate result.

What is that saying? Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it. So, the question becomes, what can we learn from this story?

LIFE LESSONS:

I think there are a ton of life lessons we can talk through, but I want to just focus on one for today. The life lesson that I want us to realize is that...

1) God uses all seasons in our lives.

Listen, there is not a time in your life that God is not at work. If you are a believer in Jesus, God is working all things in and around your life for His glory and your good. In a way that only God can, He uses all seasons, the good, the bad, and the ugly, to work in our lives. Like what is often repeated in our Celebrate Recovery ministry, "God never wastes a hurt." That's true. Isn't it?

If you feel like you are on the run, you need to hear that. If you have events in your past that have been painful, I want you to know that God never wastes a hurt. If you find yourself in the midst of a challenge today, God is at work in and through it. God works to redeem all things, even painful things, for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. That's Romans 8:28. And David is a prime example of this truth.

In chapter 21 of 1 Samuel, David is beginning what will be a decade of life on the run. He's being hunted, like an animal, by king Saul. He will go from cave to cave, from dwelling to dwelling, from city to city. And make no mistake, this is a dark time in David's life. But did you know that this is also the time in his life that he pens many of the Psalms he wrote? He wrote Psalm 18, 34, 52, 54, 57, 59, 63, 124, 138, and 142 all during this time.

Here's where this applies to our lives today. David allowed his pain to fuel his devotion to God. When we encounter these kinds of circumstances in our lives, people usually go in 1 of 2 ways. They choose to abandon their walk with The Lord, or they run to The Lord. David ran to The Lord. How do we know that? Well, where was the first place David went? To Nob. What was at Nob? The Tabernacle and all the priests. David ran to The Lord and that would prove to be what fueled his faith to endure this dark season in His life.^{viii}

Think about this. Not only did running to The Lord fuel David's faith, that running to God afforded God to use that dark season in David's life to minister to countless people. If David didn't go through this, we wouldn't have the Psalms he wrote. It's in the Psalms, we learn about what many theologians call the dark night of the soul.^{ix} What we could probably call clinical depression today. In the Psalms, we see the transparency and authentic faith of our ancestors. Aren't you grateful for the Psalms? It is a book filled with

encouragement for us when we find ourselves experiencing the dark nights of our souls. Sounds kinda strange, but I'm glad David went through what he went through. David still ministers to me today! The same is true for you.

Let me show you a couple examples. Turn to Psalm 34. I want you to notice the inscription at the beginning of this Psalm. It says, "Of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech, same person as Achish, so that he drove him out, and he went away." This Psalm was written when David fled to the Philistine city of Gath. Zoom in on verse 4. *"I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears."* In one of David's darkest moments, he says that he sought The Lord and God answered him. Some of you here today are seeking The Lord. You need to know that at the proper time He will answer. You can hold onto that.

Flip over to Psalm 56. Notice the inscription there. "To the choirmaster: according to The Dove of far-off terebinths. A Mikdam of David, when the Philistines seized him in Gath." Again, the same time period when he wrote Psalm 34. David writes:

***1**Be gracious to me, O God, for man tramples on me; all day long an attacker oppresses me; **2**my enemies trample on me all day long, for many attack me proudly [Can't catch a break. Can you relate?]. **3**When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. **4**In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me? **5**All day long they injure my cause; all their thoughts are against me for evil. **6**They stir up strife, they lurk; they watch my steps, as they have waited for my life. **7**For their crime will they escape? In wrath cast down the peoples, O God! **8**You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book? **9**Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call. **This I know, that God is for me.** [You can't say that unless you've experienced that]. **10**In God, whose word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise, **11**in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me? **12**I must perform my vows to you, O God; I will render thank offerings to you. **13**For you have delivered my soul from death, yes, my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of life. See, it's in the fire that David learns, truly learns, God's goodness.*

One more Psalm. Psalm 142. The inscription of this Psalm tells us that David wrote this when he was in the cave, the cave of Adullam. It is a prayer. ***1**With*

*my voice I cry out to the Lord; with my voice I plead for mercy to the Lord. **2**I pour out my complaint before him; I tell my trouble before him. **3**When my spirit faints within me, you know my way! In the path where I walk they have hidden a trap for me. **4**Look to the right and see: there is none who takes notice of me; no refuge remains to me; no one cares for my soul. **5**I cry to you, O Lord; I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living." **6**Attend to my cry, for I am brought very low! Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me! **7**Bring me out of prison, that I may give thanks to your name! The righteous will surround me, for you will deal bountifully with me.*

I think you see the point. God uses all season in our lives. That was the case for David. But the Bible also shares other examples with other Bible characters. Joseph, Moses, Elijah, Paul, and the early church could all echo this truth.

If you are hurting, running, discouraged, depressed, enduring hardship, can't see a way out, listen, God uses all seasons in our lives. Run to Him. Seek The Lord. As David says, "Taste and see that The Lord is good." A personal relationship with The Lord affords us the ability to know that God leverages all seasons in our lives to form and shape us.

CONCLUSION:

As we come to a time of response, I want to invite you to respond to The Lord's prompting on your heart this morning. If you have never been born again unto a relationship with Jesus, our elders will make themselves available at the front this morning. Or if you have a prayer concern, we would like to pray with you and over you.

But I also want to ask you to use this time of response to prepare your heart to observe The Lord's Supper. Scripture urges us to examine our hearts before we partake in the elements of communion. We are to come to The Lord's table with reverence having readied our hearts to remember the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. So, during this response time, please take time to do that this morning.

We practice what we refer to as open – closed communion. That means that we believe the Scriptures teach that the only requirement for participating in The Lord's Supper is that you have trusted Jesus as Lord of your life. If you are here this morning, you are a believer in Jesus, even if you belong to another church, we invite you to participate along with us this morning. If you have not yet trusted Jesus as Lord, we are so glad you are here with us today. Because

Communion is highly symbolic of faith, we would simply ask that you observe as we participate in something that is deeply meaningful for those that believe.

I'm going to pray, we will stand and sing, but let's all respond to Jesus and ready our hearts for observing The Lord's Supper. [Pray].

COMMUNION:

As we come to partake in the Lord's Supper, we do so recognizing the beautiful name of Jesus. For it is through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection that we are afforded a relationship with God.

I want to ask you to take the cup that was in your seat when you came in this morning. We will first take the bread. So, you can turn your cup over and carefully peel back the paper to reveal the bread.

You know, the elements of The Lord's supper are highly symbolic. They simply represent the two components of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, His body and His blood.

Jesus instituted this observation on the night that he was betrayed by Judas. Scripture tells us that He was gathered together with His disciples in the upper room. As they were eating the Passover meal, Jesus took bread, blessed it, and broke it. He then distributed it to each disciple and said, "This is my body which is broken for you. Eat this bread in remembrance of me." [Take the bread].

Jesus then took the cup, which contents were red from the fruit of the vine. He passed it around to the disciples saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." [Take the cup].

The Lord said that when we partake in Communion, it is for two purposes. Remembering the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. And to proclaim The Lord's death until He returns. Let's pray together [Pray].

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation for this message: Robert D. Bergen, *The New American Commentary: 1, 2 Samuel, Vol. 7*, B&H Publishing: Nashville, 1996; Heath Thomas and J.D. Greear, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel*, Holman: Nashville, 2016; Bill T. Arnold, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 & 2 Samuel*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2003; Troy Rackliffe, *Life Lessons Messages 15 & 16*, sermon preached at Glad Community Church in Daniels, WV; Ray Fowler, various sermons, published by Ray Fowler Ministries, accessed online: <https://www.rayfowler.org/sermons/1-samuel/>; Nate Holdridge, *The Life of David – Pursued by God – 1 Samuel 21-22*, published by Nate Holdridge, September 2, 2021, accessed online: <https://www.nateholdridge.com/blog/the-life-of-david-pursued-by-god-1-samuel-21-22/>; Skip Heitzig, *Expound: 1 Samuel 21-22:2 & 1 Samuel 2-23*, message taught at Calvary Church, August 25, 2001, accessed online: <https://calvarynm.church/connectwithskip/teachings/#/series/314/sermon/4597>.

ⁱⁱ Willow Green, *The 33 Greatest Movie Trilogies*, article published by Empire Online, June 4, 2022, accessed online: <https://www.empireonline.com/movies/features/trilogy/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bergen, page 221.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Heitzig.

^{vi} See Bergen's commentary on this subject for greater detail. Pages 221-222.

^{vii} Leviticus 10:12-20.

^{viii} Pointed out by Skip Heitzig.

^{ix} Ibid.