

## **MESSAGE - Part 21 - Faith in the Midst of Fear**

One of the things that's been meaningful to me over the past several months has been this truth in scripture that says **God is our refuge**.

Psalm 46 says, "God is our refuge and strength,  
an ever-present help in trouble."

Psalm 32 says, "You are my hiding place;  
you will protect me from trouble  
and surround me with songs of deliverance."

And, as we just heard, David wrote...

**[SLIDE 1] Psalm 57:1 - Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for  
in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the  
disaster has passed.**

David wrote this while reflecting on the time he was running from Saul.

This actually reminds me of something kind of crazy that happened when I was younger.

It was 1991 — I was in 2nd or 3rd grade at Mountville Elementary —  
And a really bad storm came through while we were in class.

Thankfully the teachers had a plan for this.  
They moved us all out into the first floor hallways,  
and we all took the classic "tornado" position by the wall.

When the storm was over,  
We found out that the wind blew the roof off the building!

I don't remember if I was scared.  
I just remember being excited that we got to go home early!

Thankfully no one was hurt — it could've been a lot worse.

Because when storms like that hit, it's like...  
Where do you go?  
You're surrounded.  
All you can do is hope and pray for the best.

**And in a much more dramatic way...  
that's the situation David finds himself in.**

He's in a life or death situation...  
And he's looking for refuge.

Today we'll look at that in 1 Samuel 21 and 22.  
And at the same time, we'll see how David reflects on it in Psalm 57.

So, if you remember last week...  
Saul's determined to kill David...  
So he makes a run for it.

There's no time for an escape plan.  
He just has to go!

And what do most people do when they sense danger?  
They run in a straight line the other direction.

**If you've ever watched Psych...**

I think of Sean and Gus running full steam away from danger...  
Except I doubt David was screaming his head off.

**So David runs away from Saul to the nearby town of Nob.**

Here's what happens...

**[SLIDE 2] 1 Samuel 21:1 - David went to Nob, to Ahimelek the priest.  
Ahimelek trembled when he met him, and asked, "Why are you alone? Why  
is no one with you?"**

Nob was where the tabernacle was set up at this time.  
This is where people would go to worship the LORD.

Ahimelek is the priest on duty.  
He goes out to greet David...  
And immediately something feels off.

He's not afraid of David.  
He knows and respects David.  
And David has come to him in the past...

But for David to show up out of the blue like this,  
unannounced and by himself?  
That's not normal.

Something was wrong.  
That's why he *trembled*.

**[SLIDE 3] 1 Samuel 21:2 - David answered Ahimelek the priest, "The king sent me on a mission and said to me, 'No one is to know anything about the mission I am sending you on.' As for my men, I have told them to meet me at a certain place."**

So David's at the house of the LORD looking for food and a weapon,  
And he's willing to take whatever Ahimelek had.

But why would you go to the tabernacle?  
David was one of Saul's officers.  
So why not just get what you need from Saul?

Well, we know why...  
But Ahimelek doesn't.

And to keep it that way,  
David tells him that the king sent him on a secret mission.

That was enough to explain David's odd behavior.  
But then the narrator pans the camera around...  
and gives us an important detail.

As they're talking...  
We see someone else there...  
listening in on their conversation...

**[SLIDE 4] 1 Samuel 21:7 - Now one of Saul's servants was there that day, detained before the LORD; he was Doeg the Edomite, Saul's chief shepherd.**

It seems like he's there for religious reasons.  
But there's more to Doeg than meets the eye.

David saw him there.  
**He knew this guy would be a problem.**

But he can't leave just yet.  
He still needs a weapon.

So when David asks...

**[SLIDE 5] 1 Samuel 21:9 - The priest replied, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the Valley of Elah, is here... If you want it, take it; there is no sword here but that one." David said, "There is none like it; give it to me."**

Honestly, that caught me off guard.  
Why would Goliath's sword be in the house of the LORD?!

Well, ancient cultures often put trophies of war in their sacred space.  
Goliath's sword was a reminder of their victory over the Philistines.

So David took it and went on his way.

**[SLIDE 6] Next Stop: Gath — Goliath's Hometown (1 Samuel 21:10-15)**

**But *why in the world* would David run to Gath?!?**

Gath is about 25 miles southwest of Nob.  
It's in enemy territory.  
It's Goliath's hometown.  
And here comes David... with Goliath's sword.

***What was he thinking?!***

He's thinking...  
I need to get as far away from Saul as I can.  
Somewhere beyond Saul's reach. (1 Samuel 27:1)

And what better place to hide than in enemy territory?

Well, his plan backfired.  
People recognized him.  
And David is afraid.

**[SLIDE 7] 1 Samuel 21:12-13 - David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish king of Gath. So he pretended to be insane in their presence ... he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard.**

This is the first time 1 Samuel uses the word "afraid" to describe David.

He's *very much* afraid.

That doesn't mean he has a lack of faith...  
It just means this is the reality he's living in.  
His life is in danger wherever he turns.

But with some quick thinking,  
he acted insane, fooling everyone.

Achish didn't want anything to do with that...  
So he sent David on his way.

**[SLIDE 8] 1 Samuel 22:1 - David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam.**

This is where bible scholars think David wrote some of his Psalms.

You heard two of them this morning — Psalm 57 and 142.  
Both of them give us a window into David's fear.

Psalm 57 says...

**[SLIDE 9] Psalm 57:1-2, 4 - Have mercy on me, my God ... for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed. I cry out to God Most High ... I am in the midst of lions; I am forced to dwell among ravenous beasts—men whose teeth are spears and arrows, whose tongues are sharp swords.**

And Psalm 142 says...

**[SLIDE 10] Psalm 142:5-6 - I cry to you, LORD; I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living." Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need; rescue me from those who pursue me, for they are too strong for me."**

**David is *very much* afraid.**

And while he's in the cave, his family,  
and others who were in distress because of Saul,  
came to meet him there.

David became their commander.  
And from there, they left for a safer place.

**Meanwhile... Saul hears that David and his men have been found...**

**[SLIDE 11] 1 Samuel 22:6 - Saul was seated, spear in hand, under the tamarisk tree on the hill at Gibeah, with all his officials standing at his side.**

This should already have us uneasy.  
Every time we see Saul with his spear in hand,  
it doesn't go well.

And you know...  
I just want to pause on this for a second...

**Do you remember what David said to Goliath on the battlefield?**

Before David took him down,  
he said for everyone to hear...

**[SLIDE 12] 1 Samuel 17:47 - "...it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's..."**

**Do you feel the irony?**

David still trusts the LORD...  
But now he's carrying Goliath's sword.

Saul's trusting in his own strength...  
And he's ready to throw his spear at anyone who opposes him.

What we're seeing is this...

**[SLIDE 13] While David's learning to trust God in the middle of fear, Saul is trying to control everything out of fear.**

But what both of them *do* with their fear is very different.

Even though David ran...  
He still went to the LORD in prayer.

On the other hand...  
We're about to see just how far Saul will go to keep control.

And as Saul's yelling at his officials for conspiring against him...  
A familiar person speaks up...

### **Doeg the Edomite!**

The last time we saw him was at the house of the LORD,  
When David needed food and a weapon.

He stayed quiet in the tabernacle,  
But now he speaks up.  
He says to Saul...

**[SLIDE 14] 1 Samuel 22:9-10 - "I saw the son of Jesse come to Ahimelek son of Ahitub at Nob. Ahimelek inquired of the LORD for him; he also gave him provisions and the sword of Goliath the Philistine."**

So Saul sent for Ahimelek and all the men of his family...  
All of them were priests that served in the LORD's house.

They all came to Saul, and he said to Ahimelek...

**[SLIDE 15] 1 Samuel 22:13 - "Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, giving him bread and a sword and inquiring of God for him, so that he has rebelled against me and lies in wait for me, as he does today?"**

Ahimelek defended himself in a respectful way.  
He's like:

*"David's your son-in-law.  
He's highly respected in your household.  
Was this the first time I inquired of God for him?  
Of course not!  
I don't know anything about this matter with you and David."*

Saul didn't believe him.

And this is where we get a much clearer picture of just how dark Saul's heart had become.

**[SLIDE 16] 1 Samuel 22:16, 18-19 - But the king said, "You will surely die, Ahimelek, you and your whole family." ... The king then ordered Doeg, "You turn and strike down the priests." So Doeg the Edomite turned and struck them down. That day he killed eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod. He also put to the sword Nob, the town of the priests, with its men and women, its children and infants, and its cattle, donkeys and sheep.**

I want us to slow down here...  
And think about Saul's heart.

Saul issues a command: "You will surely die."  
The Hebrew there is *mot tamut*.

**That's a phrase that God says and Satan distorts in the Garden...**

God's command was don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...  
If you do, you will *mot tamut* — you will *surely die*.

But then Satan says to Eve:  
"You will not *mot tamut*" — You will not surely die.

**Satan was taking God's words...  
and trying to claim God's authority.**

That's what Saul's doing here.

He said to Ahimelek:  
You will *mot tamut*... you and your whole family.

But not only that...  
Look at the last sentence I have highlighted on the screen...  
Remember that?

This is almost exactly what God commanded Saul back in chapter 15.

It's the same command that Saul twisted for his own benefit...  
Which led to God's decision to take the kingdom from Saul.

[...]

**Are you seeing what I'm seeing?**

**[SLIDE 17] Saul started out in fear...  
But now he's trying to elevate himself to God's authority.**

This is seriously evil stuff...

But this is what happens when fear shapes our heart over time.

No wonder why Scripture tells us to "Be alert!"

**And no wonder why David is afraid.**

Now, at this point,  
David doesn't know what Saul did to Ahimelek's family.  
But he already knew Saul's heart.  
He's seen how dark it's becoming.

And now, his fear is beginning to take its toll.  
He confessed in his Psalms that...

He's surrounded on every side.  
He's in the midst of lions.  
Their teeth are like spears...  
Their tongues are sharp swords.

He's in distress.  
His spirit is growing faint.

And he's convinced his enemies are too strong for him.

And yet... he knows the LORD is his refuge.  
He knows that the battle is the LORD's.

And the LORD proves it...

One priest escaped Doeg.  
His name is Abiathar.

He ran and joined David and told him everything that happened...

**[SLIDE 18] 1 Samuel 22:22 - Then David said to Abiathar, "That day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, I knew he would be sure to tell Saul. I am responsible for the death of your whole family."**

David didn't issue the order.  
But he still feels responsible.

But then David says something surprising...

**[SLIDE 19] 1 Samuel 22:23 - "Stay with me; don't be afraid. The man who wants to kill you is trying to kill me too. You will be safe with me."**

**The one who was *very much* afraid...  
Says, "don't be afraid."**

But how can he say that?  
How can he guarantee Abiathar's safety?

This is where—despite his own fear—his trust in the LORD kicks in.

**Look at Psalm 57 again...**

**[SLIDE 20] Psalm 57:2-3 - I cry out to God Most High, to God, who vindicates me [avenges me]. He sends from heaven and saves me, rebuking those who hotly pursue me [God puts them to shame]—God sends forth his love and his faithfulness.**

I love that David *turns* to the LORD.  
That should be our first instinct too.

But hold on a second...  
Look at what *God* does!

God **sends** His love and faithfulness...  
He **sends** from heaven...  
That's not just poetry.

God is **sending** His very attributes...  
His character!

And it's His character that shames evil intentions,  
and exposes just how futile it is to go against Him.

God is *the Most High God*.  
He's the *Almighty*.

David's enemies don't stand a chance against the Almighty.  
When God "sends"...

**His actions create friction for those who oppose Him.**  
**Because He exposes what's really going on in the heart.**

**[SLIDE 21] Depending on the direction of our heart, God's character is either a raging fire... or a refuge.**

That's why the spirit God sent to Saul in earlier chapters felt *tormenting*.  
That's the friction. That's the fire.

Saul's heart is running against the grain of God's will.  
But David cries out to the LORD when he's in distress.

He's not perfect...  
He uses deception...

he's carrying Goliath's sword...  
he feels responsible for what happened to the priests.

But he takes refuge in the shadow of the LORD.

And because of God's love and faithfulness...  
David can pray with confidence...

**[SLIDE 22] Psalm 57:7 - My heart, O God, is steadfast; my heart is steadfast; I will sing and make music.**

I don't know about you...  
But that's what I want.

When I'm hard pressed on every side...  
In the middle of the storm...

**I want the kind of faith that's steadfast.**

The kind of faith that doesn't try to control everything...  
but trusts the One who's already in control.

Because at the end of the day...  
we're all going to face moments where we feel surrounded.

And in those moments, we have a choice.

We can respond like Saul...  
trying to control everything out of fear...

Or we can respond like David...  
bringing our fears to the LORD...  
and taking refuge in Him.

But I have to say...  
The point of this sermon isn't: Be like David.

David's learning what it's like to trust the LORD in the fire.  
And that's great! We can learn from his life experiences...

But at this point in the story,  
I'm not sure David fully realizes his purpose yet...  
The reason why God chose him.

But for us—even if we're in the storm—we already know our purpose.  
Because through Jesus, we see the bigger picture.

Here's the bigger picture...

**[SLIDE 23] 2 Corinthians 4:4 - The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**

Like Saul, they're in darkness.  
And when the darkness they love is confronted with light...  
Evil is exposed and sometimes retaliates.  
This is why Paul says...

**[SLIDE 24] 2 Corinthians 4:7 - But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.**

We carry a treasure.  
The gospel—the message of Jesus.

That those who trust in Him are not put to shame...  
their sins are forgiven...  
they're adopted into His forever family.

And this treasure... is unstoppable.  
It's an all-surpassing power that God **sends**.  
This is the power in us that keeps us steadfast in the storms.

But we have it in jars of clay.  
We're the clay jar.  
We're fragile.  
But that's on purpose...

**[SLIDE 25] 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 - We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.**

That truth proves the power of the gospel that's at work in us.  
It's what shows those living in darkness the light of Jesus.

That's our purpose.

The question is whether or not we'll trust the LORD...

Will we take our fears to Him in prayer?

Will we look to Him for refuge?

Will we carry the gospel into the storms?

Or will we take up our swords and spears?

**Let's Pray**