

Refine Women's Ministry  
**David Lesson 5: Saul Executes Priests of Nob - 1 Samuel 22**  
February 21, 2018 by Kim Peelen

*That word above all earthly pow'rs, No thanks to them abideth.  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours. Through Him Who with us sideth.  
Let goods and kindred go, This mortal life also.  
The body they may kill; God's truth abideth still. His kingdom is forever!  
"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" by Martin Luther*

"On 15 October 1517, Luther posted his historic Ninety-five Theses, launching his defiant protest against the vile perversions and grave abuses of the church in Rome. This decisive act became the hinge upon which history turned. And at the very core of this Protestant movement were the Psalms, which continued to play a defining role throughout Luther's life and ministry. While being hidden by supporters in Wartburg Castle, the German Reformer translated the Bible into the German language. Included in this work were the Psalms, which Luther referred to as 'the Bible in miniature.'"

In 1527, Luther faced one of the greatest difficulties of his life as the Black Plague swept across Germany and Europe. During this time, Luther's son almost died, his own body was fainting under the mounting pressure, his wife was pregnant with their second child, and the Luther home was transformed into a hospital where he watched many friends die. With death surrounding him on every side, Luther sought refuge in God, specifically contemplating the promises of Psalm 46. This encouraging psalm of trust inspired Luther to compose his most famous hymn, "A Mighty Fortress". Though he had previously taught and translated the Psalms, he was now living them! Often during this dark period, when terribly discouraged, he would enjoin his co-worker Philipp Melancthon, 'Come Philipp, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm.' And they both drew strength from it. The biblical truths of the Psalms empowered the spiritual leader and enabled him to persevere in the midst of his many struggles to reform the church. A few years before his death he wrote in his Bible, "If Your Law had not been my delight, then I would have perished in my affliction." Psalm 119:92. Truly, a man after God's own heart! [From Preaching The Psalms, p.15, 16]

David, like Martin Luther, knew suffering and persecution from powerful enemies. The reigning king Saul increasingly succumbs to jealous rage against his court musician and successful warrior and finally officially decrees that David be put to death. He flees to Nob, a conclave of Israel's priests, for food and a weapon. By God's sovereign design, the chief of Saul's shepherds, Doeg the Edomite, is also in Nob, having been "detained before the LORD". After Ahimelech the priest gives bread and Goliath's sword to David, he escapes to Philistine city of Gath, where he is brought before king Achish. Feigning insanity, David barely eludes being killed by the king's servants who recognize the famous giant-killer.

**Bearing With One Another in Love**

Our theme verse Ephesians 4:1-3 expresses the necessary qualities a follower of Christ displays if his faith journey is to prove 'worthy of the calling to which he has been called': humility, gentleness, patience, **bearing with one another in love**, eager to maintain the unity

of the Spirit in the bond of peace. David continues to set his heart to trust God in the midst of opposition from the Philistines and, more threatening, Saul's determination to kill him. 1 Samuel 22 examines the hearts of David and Saul.

*To bear* (v.) means to hold up, tolerance for, forbearance to, bear with, endure, its synonym is **longsuffering** (in noun form). Always a middle voice verb in New Testament – it is reflexive; the subject acts on or for itself, e.g. the cat washes itself.

**"Longsuffering** is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger and is associated with mercy, and is used of God (Ex. 34:6). **Patience** is the quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial; it is the opposite of despondency and is associated with hope, in 1 Thes. 1:3; it is not used of God."

**Longsuffering** [anache, Greek] is God withholding deserved punishment towards sinful man, but which must eventually be exercised unless the sinner repents.  
*Vines Expository Dictionary.*

So when a Christian 'forebears' another, he demonstrates an attribute of God, not excusing the wrong, but restraining his retaliation. David embraces this quality as he entrusts his safety and Saul's punishment to God. *How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!*

### **David's Protection of Others: 1 Samuel 22: 1-6**

*Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Now there were about four hundred men with him. And David went from there to Mizpah of Moab; and he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and my mother come and stay with you until I know what God will do for me." Then he left them with the king of Moab; and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold. The prophet Gad said to David, "Do not stay in the stronghold; depart, and go into the land of Judah." So David departed and went into the forest of Hereth.*

David flees from the king of Gath to the cave of Adullam, closer to home. His family joins him, but David, sensing they are also in danger because of Saul, relocates them out of Saul's jurisdiction to Moab, the homeland of his great grandparents, Ruth and Boaz (Ruth 4:16 – 22), under the protection of its king. Although David is a hunted man, he attracts displaced men and becomes their leader. On the advice of the LORD's prophet, Gad (2 Samuel 24:11-17), he removes his group from Saul's Gibeah in Benjamin to Judah, south of Bethlehem, for safety. Even though David is under extreme harassment himself, he bravely puts others' protection above his own life and comfort (2 Corinthians 1: 3-5).

### **Saul's Suspicion of Others: 1 Samuel 22:6-13**

*Then Saul heard that David and the men who were with him had been discovered. Now Saul was sitting in Gibeah, under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing around him... Saul said to his servants who stood around him. . . "For all of you have conspired against me so that there is no one who discloses to me when my son makes*

*a covenant with the **son of Jesse**, and there is none of you who is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me to lie in ambush, as it is this day."*

Saul violates sound communication skills by generalizing and accusing everyone of constant evil intent – he is the VICTIM with no responsibility in events surrounding him. Also, note how that he does not name David, but says, ‘son of Jesse’, keeping him more anonymous and generalized than if he spoke his given name. Enemies tend to do this, perhaps distancing themselves from the relationship. Doeg, the Edomite, is a servant who stirs up Saul’s wrath, by giving information on David’s whereabouts and also incriminating the priest of Nob: *“I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. He inquired of the LORD for him, gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine.”* Doeg’s report feeds Saul’s suspicions so the priest and all his family must appear before the king.

Using the same ‘non-name approach’, *Saul said, “Listen now, **son of Ahitub**.” And he answered, “Here I am, my lord.” Saul then said to him, “Why have you and the **son of Jesse** conspired against me, in that you have given him bread and a sword and have inquired of God for him, so that he would rise up against me by lying in ambush as it is this day?”*

In stark contrast to David who welcomes the disenfranchised into his camp, Saul attacks his own servants and priests with cruel incriminations of sabotage and treachery – quite the opposite of ‘bearing with one another in love’ - he hastily retaliates at slight provocations. What does Saul’s heart dwell upon? What does David’s?

### **Ahimelech’s Rebuke; Saul’s Revenge: 1 Samuel 22:14 – 19**

*Then Ahimelech answered the king and said, “And who among all your servants is as faithful as David, even the king’s son-in-law, who is captain over your guard, and is honored in your house? Did I just begin to inquire of God for him today? Far be it from me! Do not let the king impute anything to his servant or to any of the household of my father, for your servant knows nothing at all of this whole affair.” But the king said, “You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father’s household!”*

It appears that Saul has no interest in learning the facts of the situation so he can respond wisely. He rashly issues a death sentence for his guards to immediately exterminate the entire priestly family. Even the elite soldiers of the king are not willing to comply with such an outrageous order; however, Doeg the Edomite has no hesitation, so slaughters 85 priests before Saul, and then travels to Nob to wipe out all the living beings there with the edge of his sword. Ironically, this complete destruction of a town is what Saul refused to do against the Amalekites and resulted in his disqualification as God’s choice as king of Israel. Perhaps Saul thought God would be pleased by his delayed obedience to His command. As Saul imputes evil motives to David and the priests and focuses on his perceived personal injustices, his heart is consumed by wrath and murder.

### **God’s Remnant: 1 Samuel 22:20-23**

*But one son of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David. Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD. Then David said to Abiathar, “I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have*

*brought about the death of every person in your father's household. Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life, for you are safe with me."*

The slaughter of the priests of Nob is the ghastly outcome of Saul's arrogance, yet fulfills God's prophesy against Eli and his descendants (see 1 Samuel 2:31-36 for the exact judgment) who repeatedly dishonored God's offerings. However, even in God's harsh punishment, He keeps a remnant – Ahimelech's son Abiathar. He wisely runs to David, who humbly confesses his guilt for the tragedy and yet, also bears the burden of Abiathar's unspeakable tragedy promising to personally protect the lone survivor.

**In your groups discuss Psalm 52 – use the Overview of the Psalms Worksheet**

Superscription/ title: *For the choir director. A Maskil [teaching psalm?] of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul and said to him, "David has come to the house of Ahimelech."*

1. What do you learn from the superscription – author, historical setting, etc.? In which Book of Psalms does it belong and its corresponding book of The Law?

Doeg is from Edom, a region southeast of Israel inhabited by the descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob who although was the eldest, was not God's choice to inherit the land (Gen 36) Apparently, Doeg embraces Hebrew religion since he is at the tabernacle. David's psalm tells how he deals with his decision that results in the death of many innocent people.

*1 Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? The lovingkindness of God endures all day long.*

*2 Your tongue devises destruction, Like a sharp razor, O worker of deceit.*

*3 You love evil more than good, Falsehood more than speaking what is right. Selah*

*4 You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue.*

2. What does he emphasize about this evil worker? What is his primary means to destroy others?

3. What is the evil man's problem – what does he do or fail to do?

*5 But God will break you down forever; He will snatch you up and tear you away from your tent, And uproot you from the land of the living. Selah*

*6 The righteous will see and fear, And will laugh at him, saying,*

*7 "Behold, the man who would not make God his refuge, But trusted in the abundance of his riches And was strong in his evil desire."*

4. What is the fate of the evil man? Do you think this helps David? Does it help you?

5. What do the righteous witness and declare?

*8 But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in the house of God;*

*I trust in the lovingkindness of God forever and ever.*

*9 I will give You thanks forever, because You have done it,*

*And I will wait on Your name, for it is good, in the presence of Your godly ones.*

6. How does David contrast himself with Doeg?

7. Can you claim the same as David? Explain your thoughts.

8. If you find yourself in the company of evil people (men, women, teens, or children), what are some ways they seek to do evil? What is your response?

What should be your response if you desire to imitate David and his ability to trust God to handle the situation?

9. Does David suggest solutions to God? Is there evidence of his holding onto guilt in the psalm?

10. What from David's psalm can help you in time of stress – what should be my focus?

**Summary:** In Psalm 52, Doeg and David are a study in contrasts, like Saul and David.

As David's stresses escalate and multiply, he examines his heart to see if his motivation and actions honor God. David confronts the tragedy of Doeg's report of his visit to Nob that results in the massacre of the entire community. Rather than heap guilt on himself for his part in it, he seeks shelter in the stronghold of God's protection and power. David denounces his evil enemy Doeg for his perversity and his overt violation of what pleases God. His real problem is a wicked heart, loving what he should hate, and hating what he should love. Ultimately, David trusts that God will destroy Doeg completely, so that the righteous will laugh at the absurdity of such opposition to God's will. David is not like Doeg (or Saul); rather he relies upon God's grace and will praise God and hope in His great Name forever. Like David, and Martin Luther and so many other faithful followers of Christ, when surrounded by troubles, trials, threats, we need to rely on God as our stronghold, our refuge, our strong tower, and continually give Him our hearts full of praise. He WILL use our difficulties to drive us closer to Him and deeper into His Presence.

*O my strength, I will sing praise to Thee. For God is my stronghold,  
The God who shows me lovingkindness. Psalm 59:17*

**Resources:** *Preaching the Psalms* by Steven J. Lawson  
*Holman Old Testament Commentary: Psalms 1-150* by Steven J. Lawson  
*John MacArthur Study Bible, NKV*  
*Precept Upon Precept: 1 Samuel*  
*Vines Expository Dictionary of OT/NT Words*, p. 116

### Homework for Lesson 5

1. Read Eli the priest's story in 1 Samuel 1-4.

- Why does God issue the harsh punishment on Eli and his descendants? See 1 Sam. 2:29-36; 3:13, 14.

- Could Eli have averted this judgment of God (give answer from Scriptures)?

- 1 Samuel 2:33 – what part of God's judgment prevents hopelessness for Eli? How does Abiathar (great grandson of Eli) fit into this prophecy?

- Contrast the responses of Eli and Samuel to the same judgment message from the LORD – who fears God and how can you tell? What lessons in Eli's life can be applied to your life?

- For further study read 1 Kings 1:5-8 and 2:22-27 for Abiathar the priest's story. Note: Solomon is the heir to David's throne, NOT Adonijah, who is David's fourth son.

3. Read and reflect on Psalm 142 using the Observation of a Psalm worksheet. Reread Psalm 52 and reflect on what you know about David at this point in his life. How can his responses help you in your circumstances? What type of psalm is it?

3. Read 1 Samuel 23:1-14 and reflect on this episode in David's life. Then read 1 Samuel 23: 15 – 24: 22. Can you discern what is in David's heart? In Saul's heart?