

# (1 Samuel) David on the Decline

by David Guzik

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*David's journey to becoming a king is a process of growth and preparation, but he also makes mistakes, such as lying to Ahimelech the priest, which can have consequences.*

**Duration:** 31:27

**Scripture:** Leviticus 24:5

**Topics:** "Faith And Trust", "Gods Provision"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on a passage from the Bible where David encounters a sword and expresses his desire to possess it. The speaker highlights how it is a natural response for people to desire and pursue things that they find excellent or valuable. The sermon then shifts to discussing how God wants to speak to David and offer him two things. The first thing is provision, as David is in need of food while on the run. The second thing is a reminder to trust in God's weapons and presence to navigate the challenges and fulfill his calling. The sermon concludes with a prayer for the congregation to embrace these teachings.

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## Transcript

1st Samuel chapter 21, we've been following the life of David as we make our way through 1st Samuel on Sunday mornings, and we're seeing what God is doing to take this man that we first met as a young shepherd boy, and what God has to do in his life to bring him to the full calling and destiny that the Lord has for him, and that's to be the king over Israel. First, the Lord made David a man after God's own heart. That happened when David was a shepherd out in the fields, spending sweet time of communion with the Lord, singing praises to God on his harp as he was out there just worshipping God and caring for the sheep and developing that shepherd's heart that God would build in him.

David was a man after God's own heart before the Lord ever called him and anointed him to be one day king over Israel. But that wasn't the end of God's working in David's life. Once David was a man after God's own heart, and God had anointed him to one day be king, then the Lord wanted to do the work of preparing him to be king.

You see, David was made into a man after God's own heart as he tended the sheep in the peaceful fields of Judea. David was made a king and developed to be a king when he was on the run from the angry King Saul out in the desolate wilderness of Judea. And that's where we find David right now, as we pick it up in chapter 21.

David has just learned in the previous chapter that Saul is settled and determined in his hatred and jealousy of David, and that Saul will not quit until David is dead. This means that there's no safe place of refuge for David in anything that he has known before. He can't go back to his home, because Saul knows he lives there and assassins would be there to meet him.

He can't go back to the palace where he once enjoyed a place of privilege and status, and he can't go back there because he knew his enemy there. He can't go back to his job as captain over the armies of Israel because he's not welcome there anyway. David has had to leave everything familiar and comfortable behind and go out into the terrible, bleak unknown, because that's where God has compelled him to go, because that's where God is going to train him to be a king over his people.

Now, with that kind of darkness, with that kind of a foreboding road in front of you, David does exactly the right thing as we come to 1 Samuel chapter 21, verse one. Take a look at it with me here. It says, Now, David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest.

You could just stop right there. Nob, well, that's just the name of a city. What's so important about that? Well, that's not so important other than to realize that David came to Ahimelech the priest.

Now, where the priest was, the tabernacle of God was, the house of the Lord. David, when he was in this time of discouragement, of fear, of panic, he set out on a road and where did he go? First stop, the house of the Lord. Isn't that great? Now, back then, the house of the Lord was known as the tabernacle.

It was a tent that God instructed Moses and the children of Israel to build some 500 years before the time of David. He instructed them to build it when they were on their way from Egypt to the promised land. And this tabernacle, this house of meeting, was a place where God would meet with his priests and where atonement could be made in the Holy of Holies, where incense could be offered to worship God, where sacrifice could be made on the altar outside of the actual tent, but in the courts of the tabernacle.

It was the house of the Lord. It was the place of meeting. And when David needed a place of refuge, he came to the house of the Lord.

Shouldn't it be like that in our lives? Shouldn't we be able to come to the house of the Lord and find peace and find refuge in a time of trouble? David didn't write Psalm 73. Asaph wrote it, but David had the same heart as Asaph, because Asaph says in Psalm 73, how he looked at all the prosperity of the wicked, all the injustice in this world. He looked at all the things that troubled him in life.

He said, God, it's not fair. I don't understand. It doesn't make any sense to me.

And then he says, Psalm 73, verse 16. When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me until I went into the sanctuary of God. Then I understood their end.

In other words, the psalmist is saying in Psalm 73, nothing made sense. I was troubled. I was discouraged.

I was depressed. But when I came into the house of God, God gave me an assurance. God spoke to my heart.

I wanted to be like that here for you. I want you to be able to walk through those doors discouraged, depressed, not knowing what's going on, fearful in your life, panic, not because I want those things in your

life, but should you walk through those doors in that way, I want you to be able to come in here and have God speak to your heart. I want you to be able to come in the midst of God's people who are worshiping him and have the Lord minister something special to your heart as you worship him.

I want you to be able to hear the prayers that come forth from the pulpit and say the Lord speaking to you. I want you to hear the word of God as it comes forth here and have God comfort you and strengthen you and speak to you. That's how it should be.

The house of the Lord should be a place of refuge, a place of strengthening, a place of where God builds us up in him. That's what it was for David. And we look at David and say, yes, David, right on.

Good job. You went to the house of the Lord. Now, what he did when he got there is an entirely different matter.

And that's what we have to look at here. In first Samuel, chapter 21, verse one. Now, David came to knob to him like the priest and him like was afraid when he met David and said to him, why are you alone and no one is with you? You see, when I saw David coming and again, imagine the circumstances that David did.

He's alone. He's frightened. He hasn't had a decent night's sleep in several days.

He isn't eating right. The last time he met with his friend, Jonathan, they had a cheerful, emotionally wrenching farewell. There's probably, you know, cry marks all over David's face.

You see the tears are running down his dirty face. His hair is disheveled. He's exhausted and he's all alone.

And he comes to him like in the Himalaya. This guy says, something's not right. This doesn't look right.

This man is a captain in the army of Israel. This is the man who killed Goliath. This is the man of whom they sing a hit song.

That's going all around Israel. Saul is swaying his thousands, but David is 10,000. This is the man who's the son in law to the king of Israel.

And he looks like this and he's all alone. Famous people, powerful people, they travel with an entourage, don't they? It was all alone. This raised a question in Ahimelech's mind.

He's wondering what's going on here. Something isn't right with this picture. Now notice next what David says to Ahimelech.

Verse two, fasten your seatbelt. So David said to Ahimelech the priest, the king has ordered me on some business and said to me, do not let anyone know anything about the business on which I send you or what I have commanded you. And I have directed my young men to such and such a place.

That's a lie. Now we kind of gasp a little bit. We know that David isn't perfect, right? We knew that.

But this is the first place in the Bible where it directly tells us of a sin. We didn't want to see this, did we? We were hoping it would be different for David. But it's not.

In the stress, in the fear, in the panic, he lies to protect himself. Now, we can all figure out the reasons why he lied, right? I mean, it makes sense to us. First, he wanted to protect himself.

So he's not going to tell Ahimelech why he has come or where he's going. After all, maybe Ahimelech is an informant for Saul. Right? So I'm going to protect myself.

I'm going to lie. And my, how he rattles off the lies. Did you see that in verse two? First of all, he says, The king has ordered me on some business.

That's a lie. Then he says, And the king said to me, Do not let anyone know about the business on which I send you or what I've commanded you. That's a lie.

Saul never said any such thing. And then he says at the end of verse two, And I've directed my young men to such and such place. Oh yeah, I'm really not alone Ahimelech.

There's really other people with me. And they're just over this hill over here. Such and such a place.

That's a lie too. One breath, three lies. And we understand why David did it.

In the same circumstances, we might have done the same thing. To protect ourselves. Maybe to protect Ahimelech.

It seems that Ahimelech knew nothing of the conflict between David and Saul. He didn't know about it. David's saying, I don't want to draw this man into it.

I don't want to make him take sides. Why should I draw him into it? David says, No, forget that. And many of us can understand why David lied and sympathize with him.

Many of us probably would have done the same or worse in the same situation. But at the same time, friends, David would come to horribly regret this lie. We scratch our heads and we ask, Why couldn't he just told the truth? It would have been hard, but he could have done it.

He could have said this to Ahimelech. He could have said, Ahimelech, as strange as it might seem to you, Saul is trying to kill me. And I don't understand the situation myself.

But God knows. And I know that I am not to die at the hands of Saul. So I'm running for my life.

And I'm trusting that God will protect me and show me what to do. Please pray for me, Ahimelech. I'm scared.

I'm depressed. I don't know where I'm going. That would have been hard for David to say.

But it would have been easier in the end than the lies that he told. It's hard for us to feel too strict on David on this point, isn't it? Anybody in this room? Anybody in this room never told a lie to protect yourself? Never told a lie in somewhat similar circumstances to David? If you never have your entire life, please come up forward after service for prayer. I don't want to pray for you.

I want you to pray for me. I need somebody that holy to lay their hands on me and to pray for me. Well, friends, that's David in this situation.

And we say, man, we just wish that David could walk at that high level he had with God, that he could just stay up there all the time. But here we see David starting to go down. And as we do it, we think, man, Saul started out good too, didn't he? And then Saul started going down.

And Saul kept going down and down and down and down. And he never pulled out of it. We look at David and he's starting to go down now.

We go, oh, what's going to happen? Where's he going to go? All that remains to be seen. Now, I think God wants to minister something very special to David at this time. He wants to speak to him.

And God's going to speak to David in two ways that we're going to see in the rest of our text this morning. We're going to take it, verses 3 through verse 9, and you're going to see two things that the Lord wanted to give David. First of all, look at verse 3. David says, again, speaking to Ahimelech, Now therefore, what have you on hand? Give me five loaves of bread in my hand or whatever can be found.

And the priest answered David and said, There is no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread, if the young men have at least kept themselves from women. Then David answered the priest and said to him, Truly, women have been kept from us about three days since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in effect common, even though it was sanctified in the vessel this day. So the priest gave him holy bread, for there was no bread there but the show bread, which had been taken from before the Lord in order to put hot bread in its place on the day when it was taken away.

Now, do you get the picture here? It's very simple. The first thing we notice, or perhaps this wasn't the first thing you noticed, but I noticed, that David continues lying, doesn't he? He's still continuing on this line with there being young men with him. Yeah, they're just over the hill or something like that.

And that's how he represented the situation. But by the same token, we can understand. David needs food.

He's on the run. He needs some food. He needs some provision.

He's probably hungry right then. He knows he's going to need to take some food with him for what lies ahead of him. David needs food.

We understand that perfectly. So he asks the Himalayan, Do you have any bread? The Himalayan says, You know what? We're all out of regular bread. We don't have any.

But what we do have is holy bread. Show bread. Well, what's that? Let's take a look at what show bread is all about.

Keep your finger there in 1 Samuel chapter 21. But I want you to turn in your Bibles to Leviticus chapter 24. The book of Leviticus.

You're going to want to turn left in your Bible. Just a couple of books. The book of Leviticus chapter 24.

Leviticus is the third book of the Bible after Genesis and Exodus. So Leviticus chapter 24. We're going to begin at verse 5 and see what show bread was all about.

God instructs Moses and he says, And you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it. Two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. And you shall set them in two rows, six in a row, on the pure table

before the Lord.

And you shall put pure frankincense on each row that it may be on the bread for a memorial and offering made by fire to the Lord. So every Sabbath you shall set it in order before the Lord continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. So you got the picture here? In this tabernacle, in this house of the Lord, as you entered into it, off on your right would be the table of show bread.

And on that table God would set bread. Now friends, when you set food on a table, what are you saying? You're saying, let's eat. And who did God want to eat with? There were twelve cakes of bread on the table, symbolizing the twelve tribes of Israel.

Do you know what the show bread spoke of? It spoke of fellowship with God. Now as I was just sitting here before service, during the time of worship, I was thinking about that word fellowship. That's a very churchy word, isn't it? You don't use that word outside of church very often.

Now what does it mean? Do you know what it means? It means to share together. It means to have friendship. Of us sharing together.

And this was the sharing together table with God. God came to Israel and He says, I want to share my life and my power with you, Israel. And Israel, I want you to share your life and your power with me.

Nowadays when a man and a woman, they want to get to know each other, they want to go out on a date, what do they commonly do? Let's go out to dinner. Let's sit over a table and we'll get to know each other. Well, in the ancient world, and with their ancient customs, the idea of sharing a common life over food, across a table, was an even more powerful picture.

And so God is saying, with the table of show bread and with the show bread on the table, I want to have fellowship with you, Israel. I want to meet with you. I want you to come into my house and we'll have a meal together and we'll live together and we'll share our lives together.

Did you know that God wants that with you? Sometimes I think about it as a pastor and I get kind of nervous or afraid when I think about the lives of our people and I think, you know what, there's probably some people who come to our church and their Christian life is expressed pretty much by going to church. For them, that's what it means to be a Christian. I go to church.

But they don't have a daily life of fellowship with God. Friends, you're here this morning. I'm ecstatic that you're here.

I'm glad that you've come to church. But you need to know that the Lord wants a life with you that goes deeper than church attendance. He wants a life with you where there's a sharing of your life with His and a sharing of His life with yours.

Every day. All through the day. Where you live in, and here's that churchy word again, fellowship with God.

A sharing together with Him. That's what the showbread was all about. Now, if you notice, in verse 8 of Leviticus chapter 24, God said, I want you to change that bread every week.

You know why? Because God didn't want stale fellowship. God didn't want moldy fellowship. Get that stale, moldy bread off of there.

He doesn't want it. He wants that fellowship to be fresh, to be renewed, to be different all the time. And you might say, well, I know what it is to have fellowship with God.

Do you know what it is to have fresh fellowship with Him? Do you know what it is to have that life with Him that's fresh and vital and new? That's what the Lord wants for your life. Now, I want you to notice one final thing in Leviticus 24. Look at verse 9. What do you do with the old bread? It says, And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, for it is most holy to him from the offerings of the Lord made by fire for a perpetual statute.

God says, what do you do with the old bread? Give it to the priests. That's what was normally done with the showbread after they took it out of the tabernacle. So when David comes and he says to Ahimelech, I need bread, Ahimelech says, all we have is the old showbread.

David says, fine, I'll take that. Now, Ahimelech's concerned here because this was holy bread and it had to be treated as holy. And so he wanted to make sure that David met the minimum requirements for ceremonial cleanliness.

And David did. He explains, oh yes, we meet those requirements. But I want you to know that the other priests, when they watched this happening, some of them probably had their minds blown because they say, listen, Ahimelech, I don't know what's going on.

Every week when that old bread comes out of the tabernacle, it goes to us. Why are you giving it to David? He's not a priest. And Ahimelech would say two things.

First of all, he would say, you didn't read Leviticus 24 9 closely enough. Because Leviticus 24 9 doesn't say that only the priest can have the bread. It says that that should be the normal custom.

But it does not specifically prohibit anybody else from receiving it, though it does say that it should be regarded as holy. And Ahimelech preserved that by making sure that David had the basic requirements of ceremonial cleanliness. But you know the next thing Ahimelech would have said after pointing out Leviticus 24 9? The second thing he would have said is, listen, human need is more important than our priestly traditions.

Do you understand that, friends? Sometimes religious traditions can bind us, can't they? Sometimes we can get locked into a box of religious traditions that isn't necessarily biblical, but it's our box. And we lock ourselves in it. And God wants to do something new or fresh outside of that box.

And we say, no, well, we've never done it that way before. And you look back to the Word and you say, well, the Word doesn't say you can't do it, or the Word doesn't prohibit that. You say, well, no, but we've never done it that way before.

That's it. Oh, friends, don't let your religious traditions bind you. Did you know that Jesus quoted this very incident in 1 Samuel chapter 21, one time when His disciples were being hassled by the Pharisees because they were eating grain on the Sabbath and the Pharisees were trying to tell them that their religious ceremonies, their religious traditions were more important than the disciples' need.

And Jesus said, no! What David did when he received the bread from Himalaya in the book of 1 Samuel, that proves that human need is more important than religious traditions. Now, do you think it was an accident that when David came for bread, asking a Himalaya for it, that the only bread they had on hand

was the show bread? Do you think that's an accident? Do you think that's even common? How often would it be that in all this little village, we know that more than a hundred people lived at the place of Nod. Among all those hundred people, nobody has any bread.

the only bread they have was the show bread. That's kind of unusual, don't you think? What do you think the lesson in that is for David? Don't you think God is reminding him of his need to fellowship with him? Isn't that beautiful? David just tells a bunch of bad lies to protect himself. And what's the Lord's first message with him? I want to fellowship with you.

Here's the show bread. It speaks of fellowship. It speaks of fellowship before my face.

By the way, I should have pointed that out before. The Hebrew word for show bread, literally it means bread of faces. Because it's bread that's to be eaten before the face of God and in light of the face of God.

And the Lord's saying, David, I want you to come before my face. Here's the show bread. Powerful message to David.

That's the first thing the Lord had to say to David. The second thing, take a look at it here. We're in chapter 21 again of 1 Samuel.

Verse 7. Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the Lord, and his name was Doeg, an Edomite, the chief of the herdsmen who belonged to Saul. Now, I want you to file away your remembrance of verse 7. We're going to meet up with this Doeg fellow later. And Doeg, think dog when you think of Doeg.

Because that's the kind of man this fellow was. You're going to see that. By the way, it says, first of all, we know a few things about him.

We know that he was not an Israelite. He's an Edomite. That's a neighboring nation.

Secondly, we know that he worked for King Saul. He was the chief of his herdsmen. By the way, you can also translate that word for chief there as a man who is cruel or violent.

And he was that kind of man. Thirdly, we find out that Doeg was detained before the Lord. Now that sounds very spiritual, doesn't it? Oh, he was just there seeking God, worshiping God.

Isn't that beautiful? Well, there he is. But what we know of this man's character as it unfolds in future chapters, we know that he wasn't there to seek the Lord. He was probably just there on official business.

You know, maybe to work for King Saul, you had to have your ticket stamped at the tabernacle or something. And so there he is just doing that business. Probably just a formality kind of thing because Doeg was not a man who had his heart right with God at all.

But there he is at the tabernacle just like David was. And he sees what's going on. Now, the second thing that David received, verses 8 and 9, David said to Ahimelech, Is there not here on hand a spear or a sword? For I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste.

Lie, lie, lie. David just doesn't let up. But that's how it is with lies, isn't it? You get one going, you've got to keep it up.

So here's David saying, Oh, by the way, Ahimelech, here I am. I'm just going along. And hey, you know what? I just had to leave so quick.

I didn't have a chance to bring a sword or a spear. You got one around here? I think it's interesting because David, even in his lie, he says, For the king's business required haste. Well, considering what the king's business was, you know what the king's business really was? Killing David.

That was the king's business. And so considering what the king's business was, it did require haste. David said, I had to leave there as fast as I could because of the king's business, which was killing me.

So, yeah, so you got a sword? You got anything on hand here? And he says, Yes, I do. As a matter of fact, there is, look at verse nine. So the priest said, The sword of Goliath, the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah, there it is, wrapped in a cloth behind the ethod.

If you will take, if you will take that, take it. But there is no other except that one here. And David said, There is none like it.

Give it to me. Isn't that great? I want it. I want that sword.

So David gets a sword. Now, there's two points that I want to draw from verse nine. The first one is sort of a broader spiritual point.

What does David say? He looks at that sword and he says, There is none like it. Give it to me. That's a logical response, right? When you see something that's really neat, you see something that's really excellent, you say, Give it to me.

I want it. Right? A musician looks at a great guitar. He says, There is none like it.

Give it to me. Somebody looks at a great surfboard. He says, There is none like it.

Give it to me. That's a logical response. When you see how wonderful, how precious something is, you say, I want that.

Now, if that was true of the sword of Goliath, shouldn't it be even more true of the sword of the Spirit, when you look at the Word of God? Can you look at this book that's sitting in your lap and can you say, There is none like it. Give it to me. There's no other book that speaks for the voice of God as this one does.

There is no other book that is the Word of God. It doesn't just contain the Word of God. It is the Word of God.

There's none like it. Give it to me. I want it.

You know what? I think that there's times in our Christian life where we're not saying, Give it to me, having to do with the Word. You know, we don't want the Word. It's because we've lost sight of how glorious the Word of God is.

When you understand what it really is, you'll say, just like David said, There's none like it. Give it to me. Or, when you're in the kind of stress and extremity that David was in, right? He needed that sword.

He knew that he needed it. When you're in that kind of place, you're going to say just as readily, There's none like it. Give it to me.

But I want to take another look at the sword of Goliath in the life of David as well. Not only is it the matter of he needs it, he wants it, but friends, think of what David must have thought as he took into his hands the sword of Goliath. I mean, when's the last time he held that sword? When he held that sword, drawing it from Goliath's sheath after Goliath was laying down on the ground and he used that sword to cut off the head of the giant.

Friends, that's a powerful, powerful picture, isn't it? David was happy to have it because it was a good weapon. But don't you think the Lord was saying something to him through that sword? David, remember the victory you accomplished with this sword? Remember this victory? I'd like to think that the Lord said something else to David at that time. He said, David, the victory you won the last time you held this sword, you didn't win it telling lies and half-truths.

You won it by radically trusting in me. By trusting in me when nothing else seemed to make sense. David, that won the victory the last time you held the sword.

David, it was good that he held that sword. Right? He needs a good, sharp sword. All the more to him.

Great, David, have it. Fine, that's wonderful. But how much better it would have been if David would have had that sling with him? The five smooth stones.

If David, more importantly, would have had the faith that he had when he slew Goliath the last time he held that sword in his hands. My friends, it seems that David here now, because of the press, of the trial that he has with Saul, because of all the things flooding through his life, all the emotions, it's putting him in a place where he's not trusting in God the same way anymore. He's trusting now in his own cleverness more than in the Lord.

He's trusting now in his own ability to shade the truth or to tell the lie or to get himself out of the situation. David, those aren't the things that enabled you to slay that giant. It was a radical trust in God.

Friends, we look at this place in David's life and we get a little nervous. Saul started out good, started going down and never stopped. Is the same thing going to happen with David? What's the Lord going to do in his life next? I mean, where does David go from here? Surely David's going to turn it around from here on, right? He'll walk away from Nob and he'll have that bread of the presence with him there, the showbread, and he'll say, I need to get back before the Lord.

I need the fellowship with him. Yes, thank you, Lord, for giving me the showbread. He'll take a look at that sword of Goliath and say, Lord, I remember it was faith that won the victory the last time I held the sword, not my own cleverness, not my own ability.

It was faith. Yes, Lord, I remember that. David will turn it around right now, right? Maybe, maybe not.

You'll have to come back next week and see as we come to verse 10 and see how the Lord handles this time in David's life where he's training him to be a king. My friends, the Lord wants you to take away at least two things with you here this morning. He wants you to take away the idea that God wants you to share your life with Him, to fellowship with Him.

That bread of the presence, that showbread, that's for you. In addition, God wants you to realize that the weapons He gives you, the Word of God, the armor of the Spirit that He gives you, that stuff goes into practice by faith, not by your own cleverness, not by your own ingenuity, certainly not by your own ability

to lie or do whatever David did. God put a tough road in front of you this week.

Then spend more time in the presence and spend more time trusting God in the weapons He provides for you. That's where the Lord's going to see you through. Not just see you through this next week, but prepare you for the calling and the destiny He has for you down the road.

That's a big order. We should pray to the God in heaven that He'd work that in our hearts right now. That's what you say to your church this morning.

Thank you for your Word, Lord, in Jesus' name, Amen.

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