

## **Adullam's Cave**

**1 Samuel 22**

**By [Dr. Derek W. H. Thomas](#)**

I'm going to warn you that this is not a resurrection text. This is a text about death and destruction. It's a text about the tyranny of a megalomaniac, of a king who in this chapter we will see executes a pogrom on I suppose two hundred or so people. This is a solemn chapter in the life of David and we are going to ask ourselves tonight - I want you to try and put yourselves in David's shoes and there's going to be a quiz. Don't put your Bibles away tonight. I'm going to make you look at something David wrote about this passage in the book of Psalms and I want you to see that. So let's read together 1 Samuel chapter 22 and before we read it let's look to God in prayer.

*Our Father, Your Word prepares us for all seasons of life — the good and the bad and the ugly. And we thank You for this particular chapter. It is Your Word. We ask for Your blessing, for the illumination of the Holy Spirit, that we might read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

This is God's Word. Hear it:

David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. And when his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him. And everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was bitter in soul, gathered to him. And he became captain over them. And there were with him about four hundred men.

And David went from there to Mizpeh of Moab. And he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and my mother stay with you, till I know what God will do for me." And he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold. Then the prophet Gad said to David, "Do not remain in the stronghold; depart, and go into the land of Judah." So David departed and went into the forest of Hereth.

Now we'll pause there. David you remember had gone to a place called Nob or Nobe, to the priest Ahimelech and he had asked the priest you remember for bread for him and his men, although there weren't any men with him — the show bread, the bread of presence, the holy bread, the consecrated bread, the bread that was changed once a week and to be eaten only by the priests. Jesus you

remember comments on that incident, talks about rules that were made for man, rules to help man, to provide tenderness, grace in times of need. He had said to Ahimelech in answer to some questions he was on a secret mission for the king.

I told you two weeks ago that of the thirty or so commentators on 1 Samuel that I had been reading, the vast majority were very critical of David, castigated David for telling lies, except the Bible doesn't. And I'd rather think, and you're perfectly at liberty to disagree with me, but I'd rather think that David was in fact telling the truth. From one point of view he was trying to spare Ahimelech. The less Ahimelech knew of David's plight and his designs the better for him if Saul were to ask him. And he was on a mission, a secret mission, for the king. Not Saul, but the King of Kings. He had been secretly anointed as a king by Samuel. He had gone, you remember, to Gath, Philistine territory where Goliath came from. What possessed him? Desperation, desperation. And you remember he feigned madness. There were enough fools in Gath and the king of Gath didn't need any more. So now he's in Adullam's cave with all the misfits, and debtors, and malcontents. Sounds like a church you may know. (laughter) Four hundred of them - they're not the kind of men you would choose for an army. These are rebels.

They gathered together for all kinds of negative reasons and David does two things. First, he sends his parents to Moab. His great-grandmother was Ruth. She was a Moabitess. There was Moabite blood in his parents. Genes — I'm preaching to the converted here — you understand that blood is thicker than water. David is in an incredibly difficult period in his life. His parents' lives are now in danger, his family is in danger. He takes care of his parents. What a beautiful thing that is to see. And then this prophet, Gad. Where does Gad come from? Almost from nowhere in the Scriptures, but he was probably one of Samuel's prophets. Saul did not have a prophet. There was no word from the Lord coming into the ears of King Saul, but God in His mercy, in His mercy, God provides a prophet for David that he might hear the word of the Lord.

Now verse 6:

Now Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men who were with him. Saul was sitting at Gibeah under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him. And Saul said to his servants who stood about him, "Hear now, people of Benjamin; will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds, that all of you have conspired against me? No one discloses to me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse. None of you is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day." Then answered Doeg the Edomite, who stood by the servants of Saul, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, and he inquired of the

Lord for him and gave him provisions and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

Then the king sent to summon Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests who were at Nob, and all of them came to the king. And Saul said, "Hear now, son of Ahitub." And he answered, "Here I am, my lord." And Saul said to him, "Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, in that you have given him bread and a sword and have inquired of God for him, so that he has risen against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?" Then Ahimelech answered the king, "And who among all your servants is so faithful as David, who is the king's son-in-law, and captain over your bodyguard, and honored in your house? Is today the first time that I have inquired of God for him? No! Let not the king impute anything to his servant or to all the house of my father, for your servants has known nothing of all this, much or little." And the king said, "You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's house." And the king said to the guard who stood about him, "Turn and kill the priests of the Lord, because their hand also is with David, and they knew that he fled and did not disclose it to me." But the servants of the king would not put out their hand to strike the priests of the Lord. Then the king said to Doeg, "You turn and strike the priests." And Doeg the Edomite turned and struck down the priests, and he killed on that day eighty-five persons who wore the linen ephod. And Nob, the city of the priests, he put to the sword; both man and woman, child and infant, ox, donkey and sheep, he put to the sword.

But one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David. And Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the Lord. And David said to Abiathar, "I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have occasioned the death of all the persons of your father's house. Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life. With me you shall be in safekeeping."

Well thus far God's holy, inerrant Word.

Saul, Saul is paranoid, obsessive. He's having a cabinet meeting with his men and he trusts none of them. They're all Benjaminites. This is a case, of course, of typical Middle Eastern nepotism, giving jobs to the boys of his family. Saul is obsessive with conspiracy. You've known people like that — conspiracy around every corner, every event, every circumstance, every turn of phrase, every modulation of the voice — it's all part of one giant conspiracy. Saul is convinced his men are about to defect to David. He asks them, "Will David give you fields and vineyards and make you captains over thousands and captains over hundreds?" Now one of them had told Saul, you see, that Jonathan had made a covenant with David. Jonathan, his son. Saul had evidently come to hear of it

and he is convinced now that defection is about to occur.

And then in verse 9 this man Doeg, and you may be saying “Who on earth is Doeg?” Well, just turn back to chapter 21 and verse 7. The author had just slipped him in. “Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there when David went to Ahimelech to ask for the bread.” This man, Doeg the Edomite, was there. David had seen him. You know, it's like watching a movie, and some movies now are so complicated if you're not concentrating you say to yourself, “I don't understand what's going on here. I need to rewind it. I've missed something.” And if you were sleeping when that little clip went and showed Doeg the Edomite, and the debased sort of growling music because it's sinister, you missed the main part of the plot, because he's here now. He's back with Saul. And Doeg gives the worst possible interpretation of what he had seen. He gives the worst possible interpretation of what he had seen — that Ahimelech had given him a word from the Lord, he had given him bread, and he had given him Goliath's sword. My goodness, the case is closed. The case is closed. The evidence is overwhelming. And to a man who can see conspiracy around every corner there was nothing for it but that Ahimelech and his entire priestly force are brought to Saul.

Ahimelech puts up an honorable defense. How is he to know? I mean, after all, isn't David the king's son-in-law? Isn't he the chief captain of the chief bodyguard, if you like, of Saul's army? He knew nothing. “I know nothing.” And then the slaughter begins. Saul's men, perhaps the men that David was referring to when he had said they were clean in the Levitical sense, perhaps it was them now back with Saul. They won't touch him. They won't touch any of these priests. They won't put priests to the edge of the sword. But Doeg is there and he will do it. And Ahimelech and 85 priests are killed, butchered, slaughtered — it's a massacre. It's awful. And Doeg goes to the town itself of Nob where the families are, where the wives are, where the children are, and every living thing, every living thing is put to death. Perhaps two hundred people have been killed, perhaps more.

And you say to me tonight, “What in the world has this got to do with me?”

Turn to Psalm 52. Psalm 52 — this is a psalm that David wrote about Doeg the Edomite. Now here's the little assignment. I want you to put yourselves in David's shoes for a minute. Here's the little task, an Easter evening task — you're to write a poem about Doeg, this man who has butchered to death over 200 people and you may even think that it's your fault. What do you say? What do you say? Where do you begin?

“Why do you boast of evil, O mighty man? The steadfast love of God endures all the day.” It takes your breath away. He's surrounded by evil, he's surrounded by this appalling act, that in God's providence he was complicit. You know, even with my interpretation, the best interpretation that you can give to David, that he

was actually telling the truth, that he was on a secret mission for the king, but even so you would be saying to yourself tonight, “If only I hadn't gone there. If only I hadn't involved him.” You'd be second guessing your steps.

So where does David turn in that kind of desperate situation? I can't imagine a darker scenario than this: that your words, your actions, your deeds in some way gotten 200 people killed. And David says, “The steadfast love of God endures all the day.” It takes your breath away that he finds his courage, he finds his repose, he finds his peace of mind, he finds his mental stability in the steadfast love of God.

And you think you've got problems, I mean seriously? You think you've got problems? Put your problems up against this tonight. You know, maybe one or two of you can stand right next to David and say, “Yes, my problem is as big as David's but I guarantee you, folks, my dear ones, I guarantee that for most of us tonight our problems — I would be embarrassed to mention my problems in comparison to what David is facing here.

And David can say in the midst of that kind of problem, “God's steadfast love endures all the day.”

It's this word, steadfast love. It's one of these great Bible words. It's a word about covenant love. It's God's word which cannot be broken. It's God's word which cannot be torn apart. It's a love that just endures and endures and endures and cannot be shaken. You see, you can't do what David is doing in the beginning of this psalm — and he goes on to be sure and talks about Doeg and especially talks about Doeg's tongue, because Doeg had used his tongue in treachery. But you can't do what David does in the opening verse of this psalm unless you interpret events not from a human point of view, not from a worldly point of view, but from a divine point of view.

You look at these events and there's only one conclusion. It's like those two disciples, Cleopas and whoever the other one was. They're walking along the Emmaus Road and they're sad because they've seen the events, they've put all their hope in Jesus, and He had been killed and He had been buried, and now it looks as though at this point in the narrative that someone has stolen his body.

You can interpret things from this worldly perspective or you can take God's word, you can take God's word that says to His children, “I love you. I love you.” That love can never be taken away from you. It's breathtaking.

David is thinking about this appalling act and he says, “The steadfast love of God endures all the day.” Look at verse 8.

“I am like a green olive tree in the house of God.  
I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever.

I will thank You forever, because You have done it.  
I will wait for Your name, for it is good, in the presence of the godly.”

I trust in the steadfast love of God.

What providence do you find yourself in tonight? You know, the thing that you would complain about, and I would complain about, if I was given a moment's chance to do it, tell me, what is that providence, that dark terrible thing that you wish would go away?

And here's the lesson from David — I will trust, I will trust in the steadfast love of God. Even when the lights go out, even when it gets dark, I will trust in the steadfast love of God.

You say to me, “Why should I trust? Prove to me that God has steadfast love.”  
“He who did not spare His own Son but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things.”

He did not spare His own Son for us. You can't look at these events in themselves and say, “I can see God's steadfast love here.” Where was God's steadfast love in the massacre of these two hundred people? Where was God's steadfast love in the fact that he was in a cave with four hundred malcontents? “I will trust,” David says. I may not be able to see it.

“Providence,” as John Flavel so eloquently said, “is best read backwards like Hebrew.”

From a distance, David is writing these psalms from a distance, I'm pretty sure. He's reflecting on it from a distance and he's saying, “Those were some of the worst events that happened in my life, but in the midst of it all I perceived the steadfast love of God.”

Turn a few pages to Psalm 57. Here's another psalm written when he was fleeing from Saul and he was in the cave, Adullam's Cave presumably. Look at verse 2. You can understand in verse 1 why he's saying, “Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in You my soul takes refuge.” But look at verse 2, “I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills His purpose for me.”

Now do you see it? Why are all these things happening? “Why am I in a cave with 400 malcontents and misfits? And these 200 people have been killed. God is working out His purpose for me. God is working out His purpose for me.”

In your trouble, in the trial that has befallen you this week, you never saw it coming, you never saw it coming, and you're saying, “This should have happened to someone else but not me.” And here's David saying, “This is what I learned when I find myself in circumstances like that God is working out His

purpose for me.

God has a purpose. God has plan.” Praise God that He has a plan. He has a plan. Life isn't haphazard. Life isn't a series of chance events. Life isn't just a set of contingencies. There is a plan.

Here's the place to apply Romans 8:28. “This I know, this I know, God works all things together for the good of those that love Him.” That's a sweet, sweet promise in the midst of a dark place.

But go back to verse 1. And we could have gone to Psalm 142 because that's another psalm written in the cave but it says almost the same as Psalm 57. But go back to verse 1. “In the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge.” Isn't that a beautiful picture?

You know I grew up on a farm as I've said to you many times. I loved chickens. I don't know why. I have lots and lots of pictures of me when I was young holding chickens. We had lots of chickens and chickens talked to you. You know, when you're feeling a little miserable you can go to the chicken coop and they will talk to you. They will. I can see it in my mind's eye a broody hen with a dozen little chicks and when the cat would appear those wings would go out and those little chicks would run and take refuge and you just see their tiny little heads peeking out between the feathers. And that chicken would scratch your eyes out if you went anywhere near her and her little brood.

That's what the psalmist is saying. “Who is Saul? Who is Doeg the Edomite? I have God on my side. I have God on my side. I will take refuge under the shadow of His wings.” My dear one, you may be at the end of your tether, you may be at the end of your tether, then run. Run to those wings and hide there. Hide there.

On the sixteenth of April in 1521, Luther was at the Diet of Worms. He had been told by his friends not to go there and he said, you remember, “If there are as many devils as there are red tiles on the roofs of that city I will go.” On the sixteenth he made his way to the house of the Knights of Saint John and he said in Latin, *deus erat pro me* — “This I know, God is for me.” And he would give his defense. He was facing death, you understand. He was facing the possible sentence of heresy which was an offense punishable by execution. A week later he would make that famous speech — “Here I stand. So help me God I can do no other. My conscience is bound to the Word of God.” His friends circled him as the Spaniards shouted in chorus-like fashion, “To the fire! To the fire!” His friends whipped him out of that city to the Wartburg Castle where he wrote that famous hymn, “A mighty fortress is my God, a bulwark never failing.”

That's what David learned in this terrible, terrible incident, that God is a mighty, mighty fortress in times of trouble. May you and I, may we learn to take refuge

under the shadow of His wings.

*Father we thank You for Your Word. We pray now that You would bless it to us this Easter evening, for Jesus' sake. Amen.*

Please stand. Receive the Lord's benediction. Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

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