

**David In Gath (1 Sam. 21)**

**First Stop (1 Sam. 21:1-3)**

*1 Now David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. And Ahimelech was afraid when he met David, and said to him, "Why are you alone, and no one is with you?" 2 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. 3 Now therefore, what have you on hand? Give me five loaves of bread in my hand, or whatever can be found."*

- David now comes out with full-blown lies.
- Nob was a priestly city and perhaps David thought he would be helped there.
- Ahimelech was from the line of Eli. Notice his fear at encountering David.
- We're not sure if David was literally alone at this time.

**Bread And A Spy (1 Sam. 21:4-7)**

*4 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." 5 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 consecrated in the vessel this day." 6 So the priest gave him holy bread; for there was no bread there but the showbread*

---

---

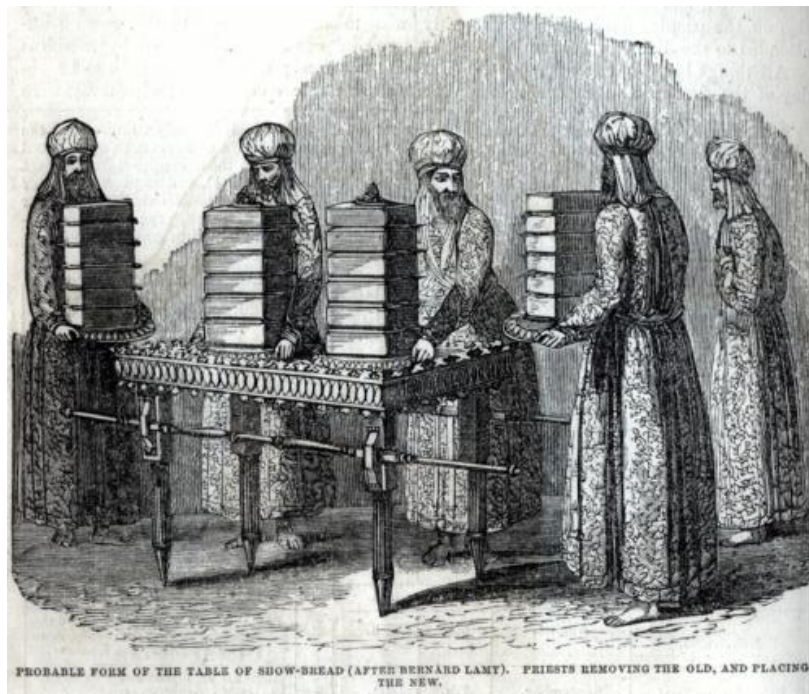
---

---

---

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. 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.

- All the priest had was the *showbread*. This is the *bread of the Presence*.
- New bread was put out every Sabbath, 12 fresh loaves that were placed on a special table in the Holy Place.
- These loaves were made with frankincense and salt, to represent the kingship (authority) of God, and the eternal nature of His Word. This bread is a picture of us feeding on Messiah, the Bread of Life.



---

---

---

---

---

- The lesson from the Table of Showbread: how vital it is for us to feast on His Word! Outside the Most Holy Place was the Holy Place, with its three pieces of sacred furniture: the Altar of Incense; the Menorah; and the Table with the Bread upon it, representing the Word of God.
  - All three of these things speak to us of our fellowship with the God who lived inside the veil.
- Only priests could eat this bread, but the fact David can take it is another sign to the reader that David is a special person.
- Doeg appears, an Edomite who has achieved a very high position with Saul. His name means *fearing*, or *fearful*.
- Doeg was detained before the Lord. This could mean that the Sabbath laws were prohibiting him from journeying. No one could travel more than 2000 cubits on the Sabbath. For whatever reason, Doeg is there to see that David is there and that the priests are helping him. That will become very significant later on.

**The Sword Of Goliath (1 Sam. 21:8-9)**

*8 And 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." 9 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 ephod. If you will take that, take it. For there is no other except that one here." And David said, "There is none like it; give it to me."*

- David probably knew or suspected that Goliath's sword was being kept there, probably as a trophy for God's people.

---



---



---



---



---

- David is happy to take the sword because, he says, there is no sword like it. We can see the carnal thinking of Saul's Kingdom now infecting David a bit.
- David came hunting for the sword of Goliath when, instead, he should have remembered that he had killed the giant without a sword.
- Young David had said "...*the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands.*"

**David Flees To Gath (1 Sam. 21:10-11)**

*10 Then David arose and fled that day from before Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath. 11 And the servants of Achish said to him, "Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of him to one another in dances, saying:*

*'Saul has slain his thousands,  
And David his ten thousands?'"*

- David has given up. Even though he has the promises of God for his future, he isn't trusting God to fulfill them. Many times God's Word comes to try us!
- Foolishly, David goes to the most dangerous place he could have picked.
- It wasn't an unusual thing for a Hebrew to offer himself as a mercenary, but why would go to the hometown of Goliath himself? With Goliath's own sword?
- Achish may have been the local title for the king, much like Pharaoh in Egypt.
- Apparently the servants of King Achish recognized David immediately, and they've even heard the song that made Saul so jealous. Their wrong information concerning David actually reveals what a threat he had become.

---



---



---



---



---

## **David Pretends Madness (1 Sam. 21:12-15)**

*12 Now David took these words to heart, and was very much afraid of Achish the king of Gath. 13 So he changed his behavior before them, pretended madness in their hands, scratched on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva fall down on his beard. 14 Then Achish said to his servants, "Look, you see the man is insane. Why have you brought him to me? 15 Have I need of madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?"*

- In response to being recognized, David became like Saul in yet another way. He became afraid, the first and only time that David feared anyone other than God.
- Achish might have made a joke here when David acted up.
- David's performance might have been very calculated. It was received as genuine madness. Defiling someone's beard was a mark of shame in the Middle East.

## **What David Learned From Gath**

### 1. Take counsel

David made foolish mistakes because he failed to seek the Lord, or to seek counsel from the Word or the wise. We will seldom see him making this kind of mistake ever again.

### 2. Don't surrender to fear

In Psalm 56:3-4, David said, *Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.... I will praise His word... I will not fear.* Like Saul before him, he arrived at a place of fear because he didn't seek the Lord nor any counsel. It was only when David forgot what God had done for him, and reached out for a false sense of security, that he feared for the first time.

---

---

---

---

---

Meditating on God's Word and rehearsing in his mind the things that God had done for him keep David encouraged: *"Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You."*

### **David's Teaching In Psalm 34 (a teaching acrostic poem)**

This Psalm was written to young people, and David was teaching them not to repeat the mistakes he had made, mistakes that almost cost him everything.

- Verse 1: *I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.* Praising Him all the time will keep you from discouragement.
- Verses 4-5: *I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed.* God delivered him from all his fears and once again made his face radiant!
- Verse 6: *This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.* David didn't have much time for elaborate prayers.
- Verses 11, 13: *11 Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord... 13 Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit.* David remembered how he was growing in deceitfulness, and so he tells young people not to let those seeds of deception grow within them.

### **The Turnaround**

God didn't just rescue David from Gath, but as David turned back to God with a greater commitment to seek God's guidance, God began to turn around his entire situation. This will become clear in the next chapter.

---

---

---

---

---

*All quotes NKJV except as noted. New King James Version®  
Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.*