

**1 Samuel 21:1-15**

**SI:** On a historical level, the book of 1 Samuel is about the establishment of Israel’s monarchy, and about how David became God’s chosen king.

On a spiritual level, 1 Samuel is about what it means to live by faith.

So what happens when believers don’t live by faith?

**INTRO:** I once had to pick up a friend from jail.

He had been arrested the night before for DUI.

His wife was so disgusted she wouldn’t come get him.

We drove for a while without saying anything and then he said:

I don’t look like a Christian right now.

He was right. He didn’t.

There’s a verse in 2 Timothy that starts this way: If we are faithless . . .

We. We Christians. Paul’s not talking about worldly people being faithless.

He’s addressing the occasions when believers are faithless.

What does that mean? How can you be a faithless believer?

It means those times, those decisions you make that are not made by faith.

Things you do that are not informed and guided by your faith in Christ.

Instead thoughts and decisions motivated by faith it’s the times you act out of fear, self-pity, greediness, bitterness, pride, anger.

You end up doing things that are foolish, shameful, hurtful to people, sinful.

It’s not always something that lands you in jail.

It might be a socially acceptable sin, or you might keep it mostly hidden.

But it’s a faithless act that belies your Christian witness.

So what happens when believers act faithlessly?

Paul tells us. If we are faithless, he will remain faithful.

Christ continues as the faithful one in his relationship with us.

Even though we change and become unfaithful to him,

don’t trust him,

don’t make decisions with him in mind,

act on fear, self-pity, greed, bitterness, and anger—even though we do all that—the Lord does not change, but remains faithful to us.

That doesn’t mean there aren’t consequences that we sometime suffer.

God’s word warns believers about consequences for faithless decisions.

And at the same time it assures us that Christ will be faithful to us.

Uses both motivations to encourage us to walk by faith—warning and assurance.  
That's what this chapter in David's life is about.

So let's look at it in two parts for you note-takers.

1. The consequences, the fallout, from our faithless actions
2. The amazing mercies of the Lord's faithfulness

## **MP#1 The fallout from our faithless actions**

You know what fallout is. A nuclear bomb goes off and blows radioactive particles into the atmosphere, and then raindrops carry those particles down to earth where they poison things.

A man reaps what he sows. That's how the Bible puts it.  
Believers aren't totally shielded from this.

David was running for his life from Saul with nothing but the shirt on his back.

He went to the town of Nob where there was a center of worship.

David had gotten help from Samuel and the prophets.

Now he goes to the priests for help. The priests were the pastors, ministers. Ahimelech chief priest came out to meet David he started trembling. He was afraid. Not of David, but he had apparently heard about Saul's rage.

Saul's reputation for violence and murder was growing.

You wouldn't want to get on his bad side.

And here was David all alone. Not leading a big company of troops.

Obviously, something was wrong.

So Ahimelech asks him and David says:

Oh, yeah, of course I'm alone. I'm on the king's secret mission. Very hush hush.

My men, they're waiting for me in a secret location.

I need food. Anything you have. Five loaves of bread would be great.

Only bread is consecrated bread for the priests, but Ahimelech gives it to him after making sure David and his men are ceremonially clean.

That's his question about them keeping away from women.

Not that there is anything wrong is sexual intercourse itself—

but the ceremonial law had requirements regarding bodily fluids.

Had to be clean from them for a certain time before touching holy things.

David says, Yes, yes, yes. We're clean. Gets the bread.

Then something happens. David sees someone watching. Doeg the Edomite.

Edomites historic enemies of Israel. This man Saul's head shepherd.

David knows at that moment Saul is going to find out about him being there.

He asks Ahimelech: Do you have any weapons here I could have?

I left on this secret mission so quickly, didn't have time to bring weapons.

His explanations are becoming more and more implausible.

But Ahimelech says: Yes, we have Goliath's sword. Here, take it. David leaves.

Now, what do you think of David in this episode?

The writer of 1 Samuel doesn't always tell us what we are supposed to think.

Sometimes he does. Sometimes he give us a moral judgment.

He's say something like: And the thing that Saul did displeased the Lord. But usually the writer of 1 Samuel just shows people doing things and then expects us to figure out the proper biblical judgment.

Do soldiers in war have to conceal the truth in order to deceive the enemy?

Of course. That's what good soldiers do.

But Ahimelech is not the enemy. He's David's pastor.

David should have said: I need your help, but if you help, will put life in danger.

Because that's exactly what David did. Put Ahimelech and all priests in danger.

You're going to find out next week what happened to them. It was terrible.

But David knew it. When he saw Doeg he knew it.

Who knows how Ahimelech would have responded if David had been truthful.

He was obviously frightened, but he still might have helped David and suffered for it, but as it was, David lied.

Instead of making a decision based on his faith in the Lord,

he made a decision based on fear, maybe based on self-pity.

And the most obvious fallout was that it hurt other people, good people.

That's one of the consequences of our faithlessness.

When we act on sinful motives, other people sometimes pay a price.

Christian minister makes faithless decisions based on greed, anger—hurts flock.

Christian parents make decisions based on fear, self-image, hurt their children.

Maybe you've done that, hurt people by your faithlessness.

Let's keep going with the story.

David knew Saul would find out he was in Nob so of all the places he could go

he flees to the Philistine city of Gath. Who was from Gath?

Goliath. David goes there and he's carrying the hometown boy's sword.

He did have a plan. He was hoping the Philistines would accept him as a defector.

That wasn't unusual for a military man to fall out with his king, go over to enemy.

Sort of like Wernher von Braun—who worked for the Nazis then for us.

But David didn't count on the fact that he had not just killed Goliath but way

too many Philistines for them to accept him as a defector.

Isn't this the one the Israelites sing about in their dances? They know the song.

Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.

That's Philistines he's slain they're singing about.

So they arrested him and took him before Achish king of Gath

and David realized he had made a very bad move and was about to be killed.

So he pretended to be insane. He acted like a madman.

It even gives us some details of his act.

When I was a little boy, this was my bedtime Bible story one night.

My dad read it and I asked him, what does it mean making marks on doors?

He jumped up out my bed and acted it out!

David was very convincing. King Achish was disgusted with him and chewed out his servants. Do I need another madman in my court?

Get him out of here! And David was able to escape.

Here we are again. No direct comments that this was good or bad.

But we're given a very strong hint.

Who is the truly insane person in the story so far? Who is actually losing mind?

Saul is. He's a man who has rejected God, rejected faith.

So all his decisions are dominated by jealousy and rage. Making him insane.

David acts insane. In other words, he's acting like Saul.

He's making decisions not based on faith, not based on his trust in God.

But once again it's fear, maybe here's it's even a little pride.

And it leads him to seek refuge, not with the Lord, or Lord's people—  
but with the enemies of God and the enemies of Israel.

He's trusting Philistine military to keep him safe from Saul.

This is not David's finest hour.

Even though his crazy act was clever and worked, it was shameful.

Contrast this image of David with him standing up to Goliath on battlefield.

This is another consequence of faithless—shame and disgrace.

When believers make decisions based on fear, self-pity, greed, bitterness, anger—  
all too often, when the smoke clears, you find yourself shamed and disgraced.

In 1 Corinthians Paul says to church members who are suing each other and who  
are getting drunk and who are excluding poor members. Shame on you.

So here we have a vivid warning.

When you, as a believer, make faithless decisions you run the risk of harming  
other people and of bringing shame and disgrace upon yourself.

Maybe you'll remember that when you are tempted.

It's a sobering motivation. But there's something else.

There's another motive to faithful living.

## **MP#2 The amazing mercies of the Lord's faithfulness**

Remember what Paul says: If we are faithless, he will remain faithful.

The Lord remains faithful when his followers are faithless.

He doesn't treat us as our sins deserve. He extends mercy after mercy.

Most of you know the name Paul Harvey, but I'm sure some of you don't.

It's a generational divide.

For those of you who don't he was a motivational speaker and radio personality.

One of his popular programs was called "The Rest of the Story."

He would tell a story, usually about someone with a troubled life, lots of impossible challenges—and then there would be a commercial break.

When he came back he would reveal who it was, some famous person, or someone who accomplished some great deed.

Would always end the program by saying: And now you know the rest of the story.

We've seen David make faithless decisions that hurt good people and brought shame upon himself. Commercial break. Now the rest of the story.

This episode in David's life is told from a different perspective somewhere else in the Bible. Do you know where?

Open your Bibles again to Psalm 34. Psalm of David. Look at circumstances.

When he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he left.

This Psalm is David's later reflections on this episode in his life.

And what's it about? The Lord's faithfulness to him when he was faithless.

Let's read through this Psalm, and I want you to think about the times you've been faithless and done hurtful and shameful things.

Let these words encourage you and fill you with praise.

That's how the Psalm starts, with praise. **Verses 1-3**

As I look back on that ugly time in my life, I praise God.

He's the one who gets all the praise. What did God do for him?

### **Verses 4-7**

I got myself in that jamb. I went to Gath. I sought refuge with Israel's enemies.

And when I realized what a dumb thing I had done, cried out in my weakness and failure and God saved me anyway.

I called out to me and he heard me. He sent his angels to deliver me.

And he didn't just save me from physical danger.

He didn't just save my life.

He wiped away my shame.

David shamed himself. But looking at the Lord, his face becomes radiant because he has experienced God's undeserved mercy and grace.

Then David just bursts into song again. **Verses 8-10**

God is good. If you trust him. If you fear him, he'll never let you down.

David has learned that it's always best to trust God.

And that makes him determined to trust and obey in the next trial he faces.

### **Verse 11-16**

David remembers his lies to the good priest Ahimelech.

He calls his lies evil.

Then later he says the face of the Lord is against those who do evil, cut off.

What David is affirming is that when we experience the Lord's faithfulness getting us out of our bad, faithless messes, we should never think that sin doesn't matter.

You can't say: Well, if God is faithful, then it doesn't matter what I do.

He's going to forgive me and take care of me. That's his job.

No. It's the opposite.

When you experience God's mercy that you didn't deserve.

When he rescues you and restores you in spite of your sin—  
it should make you see your sin more clearly.

It's an offense against the one who loves you.

But David quickly comes back to God's mercy and compassion.

### **Verses 17-20**

Which one of those verses is quoted in the New Testament? Verse 20.

"He protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken."

John quotes it and applies it to Jesus.

At the crucifixion, when soldiers came to break the legs of those on crosses.

Found Jesus was already dead, pierced his side, but did not break his legs.

John saw in that a fulfillment of this Psalm.

You may ask: Well if he died, why did it matter if bones broken or not?

One of the laws regarding the Passover lamb was that none of its bones were to be broken.

It was a requirement so that the lamb would be an acceptable sacrifice,  
and a substitute for the worshipper and payment for his sins.

So Jesus' bones not being broken was just one more evidence and assurance  
that he was the perfect Lamb of God and our substitute and Savior.

What that means is that even if you do suffer in this life—

if you have troubles because you have obeyed God,

or even if you have troubles because of your faithless decisions—

God's going to preserve and protect you through Jesus.

He's going to preserve your soul.

He's going to bring you back to a walk of faith and trust—like he did for David.

Because in the end, the work of God in your life, the work of Holy Spirit in your heart, and the faith that has been implanted sets you apart from the world.

That's how David ends. Even though I stumbled, I know I'm different.

I know I belong to the Lord and I will be saved in the end.

### **Verses 21-22**

Challenges are going to come in your life, hard times when you are tempted not to walk by faith, not to trust and obey, but to act out of fear, self-pity, anger, greed, and all sorts of other spiritual pathologies.

It's different for each of us. We all have our unique sinful proclivities.

But when those things come, remember the warnings.

You'll hurt other people and bring shame on yourself if you do those things.

Take that to heart. David's story is in the Bible because heavenly Father loves.

He doesn't want you to touch the hot stove and get burned.

But mostly remember this.

If we are faithless, he remains faithful.

He loves you so much, that even if you cry out to him in the mist of a mess you've gotten yourself into, he will send his angels to rescue you.

And you know that's true, because he gave his Son as your perfect substitute and Savior.