

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE March 12

MONDAY

The priest Ahimelech stood before King Saul. He was in big trouble - accused of giving David, a fugitive, food and a weapon. He told the king that when David appeared in the Temple, knowing him to be a most loyal subject, he had believed his story. At that time, he had no idea that David was actually fleeing the king. But the King, ruthlessly, declared the death sentence on Ahimelech - on the spot.

READ: I Samuel 22:15-16

Ahimelech is a admirable man in every way. He aided David. And now, when called to answer for that doing that, he doesn't blame David for everything. Instead, he bases his defense on something that no one can argue against: the character of David. He adds to his defense that he minds his own business and does not meddle in the affairs of the king. Saul is unreasonable in his hatred of David and unjust in his treatment of Ahimelech. That's a good reason for us not get angry; anger blurs our thinking, mars our judgment, and mis-directs our behavior.

TUESDAY

King Saul, after hearing Ahimelech's defense, declared the sentence: Ahimelech and all his family should be executed. He commanded the servants there with him at that moment, to draw their weapons and slay him. But the king's servants refused to kill Ahimelech because he was a priest.

READ: I Samuel 22:16-17

What wickedness man will rush to when he forgets that there is a God in Heaven! Saul's only thought is to bring hurt upon David and to those who align with him in any way. The decision of the servants not to obey the king is honorable. They recognized the wrongness and chose to face punishment (maybe even death) themselves. They acted upon their convictions. As should we. And when we do, because our convictions are biblical, we will find ourselves to be living honorably before the Lord, and making choices with which He is well pleased. God looks for people of conviction.

WEDNESDAY

Saul ordered Doeg, an Edomite, to do what his own servants would not. And he killed Ahimelech and his entire extended family: 85 priests, and all the men, women, and children in the city of Nob where Ahimelech lived. He even killed the livestock. (Knowing something of Saul, we suspect Saul would have preferred to have the animals spared and given to him!)

READ: I Samuel 22:18-19

Why did God permit such a thing to happen? We do not challenge the mind of God in this. We cannot pretend to understand everything perfectly, but think on this: this was the fulfillment of the word of God spoken to Eli back in chapter three, that God would *judge his house forever* for his sin. So this is a consequence of sin. Through the harshest of times, we ought never to forget that God will be with us always. He will strengthen us. He will work within us to complete that work He has started there!

THURSDAY

One of Ahimelech's sons, Abiathar by name, escaped the slaughter, and fled to David. He told David what happened. David had been suspicious ever since he had seen Doeg in the Tabernacle on the day Ahimelech had given him the bread and the sword. The murder of the 85 priests and all the people in Nob was therefore his fault, David confessed. He told Abiathar that he should stay with him, and that he would be safe.

READ: I Samuel 22:20-23

What strikes me is that God has sent a priest to David. The priesthood was strictly a family affair and since Abiathar's father had been a priest, so was he as a son. Now, although on the run, David has a priest running with him. And he won't have to risk the death of any other priests he might otherwise visit. There's a lot unsaid here, but we are probably on target if we think that it was a great comfort to David to have a priest in the camp, and a great relief to the priest to be there. How many hours they must have passed together in the things of the Lord!

FRIDAY

David received word that the Philistines were fighting against the village of Keillah. The Lord told David to go and help the people there. But the men who were with David opposed the idea, saying that they had enough trouble with Saul. Why should they take on the Philistines as well. David asked the Lord a second time, and the Lord told him to go and fight, adding that He would deliver the Philistines into David's hand.

READ: I Samuel 23:1-4

We see something of the way God is using David here. He is sending him to do what the King should have been doing, that is, safe-guarding the citizens of the country against invasion. God is teaching David to render good for evil. Do you see that David is acknowledging God in all his ways? He asks of the Lord His directions for the day. What better way for us to start the day than this? "How can I live for you today? And when God finds our hearts seeking to honor and serve Him, He will direct our paths.

SATURDAY

David and his men march down to Keilah, fight against the Philistines there, and defeat them soundly, thus rescuing the citizens. Saul heard that David was there and recognized it as a fortuitous moment: David was trapped in a walled-city which had an iron gate! In other words, he could easily be captured there. We read that when Abiathar fled to David, he took with him the ephod (apron) of the high priest.

READ: I Samuel 23:5-7

David and his men, gradually increasing in number, defeated the Philistines who had been troubling the people of Keilah, and even captured some loot. Meanwhile, Saul makes plans to trap and capture him there. And the scoundrel declares that he will do so in the name of God! "*God hath delivered him to me!*" he chortles. What a sham! Just because a man throws the name of God around does not mean that he's God's man. Let us ask for wisdom and use discernment when we meet such people. Let us be careful that we are not guilty of doing the same.