

## 35. The Book of 1Samuel—21:1-15

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### *“The Fear of Man Brings a Snare”*

(2/7/16)

In our last study in 1Samuel we saw how King Saul was becoming more and more unstable in his thinking and erratic in his behavior.

He had degenerated into a madman determined to kill David so that he would never replace Saul as King—even though that was what God had told Saul was going to happen.

The last time David stood before Saul he threw a spear at him causing him to flee for his life—this now begins a ten year period where David is a fugitive running from Saul.

This is where we pick it up in 1Samuel 21.

This is a sad chapter in the life of David—he doesn’t act like a future king, a man who trusts God and lives by faith (didn’t God promise David he would be king someday therefore how could Saul kill him?)—but rather he acts like a lying coward and a drooling idiot.

It’s as David’s own son Solomon would later write in the book of Proverbs (possibly with this chapter in his father David’s life in mind)—

**Proverbs 29:25 (NKJV)**

<sup>25</sup> The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.

That's why I have entitled this message, "*The Fear of Man Brings a Snare.*"

And the two main points that I see emerge from the chapter are: "*The fear of man turns us into compromisers*"; and "*The fear of man turns us into cowards*".

## **I. The Fear of Man Turns Us Into Compromisers—v.1-9**

**1 Samuel 21:1a (NKJV)**

**<sup>1</sup> Now David came to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest.**

Nob was one of the towns where the priests of Israel lived—it so happened that Ahimelech, the High Priest, lived there at this time because that was where the Tabernacle (the house of God) was currently located.

Because of his friendship with Samuel, the prophet, David knew he would find refuge and help among the priests there at Nob.

**1 Samuel 21:1 (NKJV)**

**<sup>1</sup> 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?"**

So Ahimelech was not really overjoyed to see David—in fact he was *afraid* ('trembled in terror') because it was highly unusual for a general in the king's service, like David, to be alone—and he asks him about it—"why *are* you alone and no one is with you?" (v.1)

In other words, "*Where are your men David—a general in the army doesn't travel alone?*"

So what does David do?

**A. He lied about his mission—v.2**

**1 Samuel 21:2 (NKJV)**

**<sup>2</sup> 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.**

Because David feared Saul and wanted to get as far away from him as fast as he could—he lied to Ahimelech saying that he was on a secret mission for the king.

As we will see in chapter 22 this lie would have some very serious unintended consequences in the life of Ahimelech and the priests of Nob—

Consequences that came upon them because David was too much of a coward to tell the truth being more concerned for his own safety than for theirs.

We'll look at that next week, but right now I'd like to say that fearing what people will think of us or what they may do to us will often cause us to become 'closet Christians' because we're scared of the consequences of standing up for Jesus, being a light in this dark world and confronting the culture when it comes to sin.

There are many commentators who think that David, when he said he was on a secret mission for the king, actually didn't have King Saul in mind but rather the true King of Israel—the LORD.

I don't know if that's what David actually meant (I doubt it) but I do know that many men and women of God today live their Christian lives as if they're on a 'secret mission' for their King, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In other words because they fear public ridicule (that people will make fun out of them or that their friends will shun them) or because they fear being fired or at least frozen in their job without any chance of further promotion—they don't live openly and honestly for Jesus.

This is a very sad thing to see and the number one “snare” when it comes to the fear of man—it causes you to live your Christian life in secret instead of out in the open.

The second thing David's fear of man caused him to do was—

## **B. He took holy bread and used it for common purposes—v.3-6**

### **1 Samuel 21:3-6 (NKJV)**

<sup>3</sup> Now therefore, what have you on hand? Give *me* five *loaves of bread* in my hand, or whatever can be found." <sup>4</sup> 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.*" <sup>5</sup> 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." <sup>6</sup> 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.

First of all what exactly is this ‘holy bread’ that Ahimelech is talking about also called ‘the showbread’?

In the tabernacle they had a special table called the table of showbread.

On this table, each Sabbath Day, were placed twelve freshly baked loaves of bread—each loaf representing one of the tribes of Israel, one loaf for each tribe.

As I said, every seven days these loaves would be replaced with twelve fresh ones.

When that happened the old loaves were given to the priests to eat—and as God specified in His law they were only to be eaten by the priests because they were considered holy.

No one else was allowed to eat these loaves because they had been offered to God and He only permitted His priests to eat them.

**Leviticus 24:9 (NKJV)**

<sup>9</sup> 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, by a perpetual statute."

Why Ahimelech allowed David to take five of the loaves of holy bread with him to eat (v.3) we're not told.

Certainly David knew that this bread was holy and only to be eaten by the priests of the Lord—but he took the holy bread and used it for common purposes.

I believe that this bread is symbolic of Jesus Christ, who said He was the "*Bread of Life*";

Also another title for Jesus is the "*Word of God*."

In the Bible the Word of God is likened to spiritual bread that is holy and only to be used to feed the priests of the Lord in the New Covenant—Peter called Christians a "royal priesthood" in 1Peter 2:9.

And so because God's Word is holy (to be used only for God's glory)—it is not to be used for common purposes.

What do I mean? How can we take the Holy Word of God and use it for common purposes?

I believe when Christians take the name of Jesus Christ and the Word of God and use them to claim fancy cars, mansions and all kinds of other material things—that is taking God’s holy Bread and using it for “common” purposes.

The Amplified Bible rather than translate the Hebrew word ‘common’ as does the NKJV instead translates it ‘secular’—in other words David wanted to use the holy bread in a secular way.

Often this kind of thing also falls under the category of the fear of man.

Many Christians are going to Word of Faith churches and fear not looking spiritual in the eyes of others in those churches—others who tell them that those who are the most spiritual will be the most successful in life and have the most material possessions to show for it.

So what do they do? They take the holy bread of God’s Word and use it for a common purpose—to lay up for themselves treasures on the earth (or try to at least).

The problem with far too many Christians today is that they can no longer distinguish between the common and the holy, between the secular and the sacred.

They no longer see the Word of God as something that is holy and to be used to transform us more and more into the image of Jesus Christ—no for many God’s Word is just a means to an end.

And that end is totally secular—to allow me to have as many material blessings on this earth as possible.

And so because David feared man—

**A. He lied about his mission**

**B. He took holy bread and used it for common purposes**

**C. He took the enemy's sword for his weapon**

**1 Samuel 21:7 (NKJV)**

<sup>7</sup> 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.

We'll look at Doeg the Edomite in detail next week so I won't spend any time on him right now.

**1 Samuel 21:8-9 (NKJV)**

<sup>8</sup> 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." <sup>9</sup> 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."

At this point David is more excited to have Goliath's sword than he is to have God's promise—the promise that someday David would be king.

God's promise is His Word which is the Sword of the Spirit!

One author said it well—

*“David was happy to have a good weapon (**“There is none like it”**). As David held this sword, he should have remembered how he came to win it. He didn’t do it with lies and half-truths. He did it with a bold trust in God. David can have the sword of Goliath in his arsenal but he would be better equipped if he still had the faith that killed Goliath in his heart.”*

Another pastor made this observation—

*“David is on a downward spiral. He’s a lover of God, but now he’s trusting in his lies and in Goliath’s sword. Before, when he was in the Spirit, he refused to take Saul’s weapons, choosing instead to rely on the God who had given him victory over the bear and the lion (1 Samuel 17:36). But now he seeks material weapons. 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 tells us that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual (the Word of God and prayer). But when we’re in a carnal place, we start depending on carnal weapons.”*

And that is exactly what’s going on in the Church today—people have lost confidence in the power of God’s Word to defeat the enemy and instead have taken up the world’s weapons to fight things like depression, fear, loneliness, and emptiness.

And so many in the Church are turning to things like psychology, yoga, hypnosis, and other worldly philosophies and techniques to defeat these things.

Those in the Emerging Church movement are saying that God’s Word (doctrine) is outdated and is even counterproductive to our goal of unity and love in the Church and must be replaced with spiritual experiences (visualization and contemplative prayer) that will bring us together and make people happy.

In fact the pursuit of happiness has replaced the pursuit of holiness in the Church as the number one goal of the Christian life—much more than the pursuit of knowing God’s truth.

Listen to what Andy Stanley, a pragmatic, felt needs pastor, said in his blog a few months back—

*“People are far more interested in what works than what’s true. I hate to burst your bubble, but virtually nobody in your church is on a truth quest—including your spouse. They are on happiness quests.”*



*As long as you are dishing out truth with no “here's the difference it will make” tacked on the end, you will be perceived as irrelevant by most of the people in your church, student ministry, or home Bible study. You may be spot-on theologically, like the teachers of the law in Jesus' day, but you will not be perceived as one who teaches with authority. Worse, nobody is going to want to listen to you. Now, that may be discouraging—especially the fact that you are one of the few who is actually on a quest for truth. And, yes, it is unfortunate that people aren't more like you in that regard. But that's the way it is. It's pointless to resist. If you try, you will end up with a little congregation of truth seekers who consider themselves superior to all the other Christians in the community. But at the end of the day, you won't make an iota of difference in this world. And your kids...more than likely your kids, are going to confuse your church with the church and once they are out of your house, they probably won't visit the church house. Then one day they will show up in a church like mine and want to get baptized again because they won't be sure the first one took. And I'll be happy to pastor your kids. But I would rather you face the reality of the world we live in and adjust your sails. Culture is like the wind. You can't stop it. You shouldn't spit in it. But, if like a good sailor you will adjust your sails, you can harness the winds of culture to take your audience where they need to go. If people are more interested in being happy, then play to that. Jesus did”.*

Every time I read that I want to say “get thee behind me Satan!”

The culture doesn't drive the Church, the Church confronts the culture.

My biblical mandate as a pastor isn't to build a big church—it's to make strong disciples.

And as far as this idea goes that no one is interested in truth—not even Jesus who only wanted His people to be happy—I'll let Him speak for Himself:

**John 17:14-17 (NKJV)**

<sup>14</sup> I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup> I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

Andy Stanley is the fulfillment of Paul the apostle's admonition to pastors living in the last days church—

**2 Timothy 4:1-4 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: <sup>2</sup> Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. <sup>3</sup> For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; <sup>4</sup> and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

Spurgeon gives the proper admonition to pastors living in any age but especially today—

*"There are some who are bent on taking away the Word of God. Well, if they discard it, 'Give it to me.' There are some who want to put it up on the shelf, as a thing that has seen its best days. They suppose the old sword is rusty, and worn out, but we can say, 'There is none like it—give it me!' "*

**I. The Fear of Man Turns Us Into Compromisers—v.1-9**

Whenever we're afraid to live full on for Jesus we will begin to compromise with the world—plain and simple.

**II. The Fear of Man Turns Us Into Cowards—v.10-15**

**1 Samuel 21:10-15 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup> Then David arose and fled that day from before Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath. <sup>11</sup> 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'?*" <sup>12</sup> Now David took these words to heart, and was very much afraid of Achish the king of Gath.

**<sup>13</sup> So he changed his behavior before them, feigned madness in their hands, scratched on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva fall down on his beard. <sup>14</sup> Then Achish said to his servants, "Look, you see the man is insane. Why have you brought him to me? <sup>15</sup> 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?"**

This was definitely not David's finest hour—he plays the fool here.

Notice that Achish apparently had heard of the promise God made to David that he would be the next King of Israel and he believed God's Word when Saul didn't.

Unbelievers often know what God has said in the Bible—but are watching us to see if we will trust our God and live up to our calling when adversity strikes.

Unfortunately many Christians panic and act like carnal fools rather than like Spirit-filled children of God.

It's an amazing thing when a Christian goes from conquering hero (killing Goliath) to a drooling coward—all because of the fear of man.

And it doesn't happen all at once—often it's a gradual moving away from God until you're living more in the company of unbelievers than believers (as was David when he moved to Gath).

I can't help but think of Peter who started following Jesus at a distance and wound up warming himself by the enemies fire and denying his Lord three times.

**Psalm 1:1-2 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Blessed *is* the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; <sup>2</sup> But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.

The days are coming when the fear of man will not just be psychological but could become physical—are we ready?

Will we trust our God and stand up for Jesus—or will the fear of man cause us to compromise our faith and act like sniveling cowards?

Only time will tell—but we must prepare now for what is coming.

Being a good soldier of Jesus Christ then will depend on having the mind of Christ now.

**John 4:34 (NKJV)**

<sup>34</sup> Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.