

# 1 Samuel 21 Commentary

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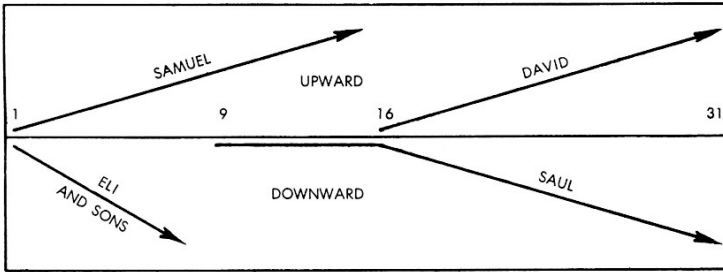
Chart from recommended resource [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#) - used by permission  
[1 Samuel Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

TIMELINE OF THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL, KINGS & CHRONICLES									
1107	1011				971	931	853	722	586
1 Samuel	2 Samuel				1 Kings	1 Kings	2 Kings		
31	1-4	5-10	11-20	21-24	1-11	12-22	1-17	18-25	
1 Chronicles 10		1 Chr 11-19		1 Chr 20-29	2 Chronicles 1-9	2 Chronicles 10-20	2 Chronicles 21-36		
<p><b>Legend:</b> B.C. dates at top of timeline are approximate. Note that 931BC marks the division of the Kingdom into Southern Tribes (Judah and Benjamin) and Ten Northern Tribes. To avoid confusion be aware that <b>after the division</b> of the Kingdom in 931BC, the Southern Kingdom is most often designated in Scripture as "<b>Judah</b>" and the Northern Kingdom as "<b>Israel</b>." Finally, note that 1 Chronicles 1-9 is not identified on the timeline because these chapters are records of genealogy.</p>									

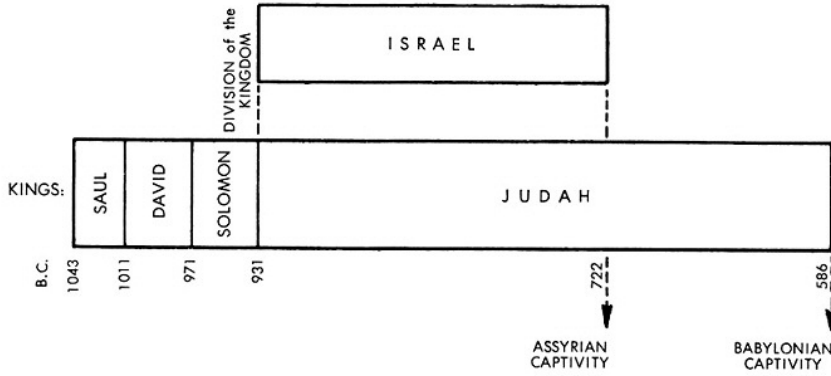
[The Ryrie Study Bible](#)

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Map on Left [ESV Global Study Bible](#), on right [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#)  
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Overlappings in 1 Samuel



First Three Kings of Israel

1	9	16	31
SAMUEL —prophet, priest, judge	SAUL —man after man's heart	DAVID —man after God's heart	
—birth —childhood —judgeship	—choice —reign —rejection	—anointing —pursuit —exile	

Main Characters in 1 Samuel

## MAPS TRACING DAVID'S FLIGHT FROM SAUL 1 SAMUEL 19-24

[Click here for an excellent map with DAVID'S FLIGHT FROM SAUL with Numbered Movements of David](#) - Copyright Faithlife / Logos Bible Software (<https://www.logos.com>).

Below is a summary from the [ESV Global Study Bible](#) of 18 places David fled

Click to Enlarge

The following notes are modified from ESV notes to include the related Scriptures.

David's growing reputation fueled Saul's jealousy which soon flamed into a desire to murder David (1Sa 19:9-10).

- (1) David fled from Saul in Gibeah (1Sa 19:9-10) and then from his home (1Sa 19:11-17)
- (2) After Saul tried unsuccessfully to kill him in his home, he fled to Samuel at Naioth in Ramah (1Sa 19:18)
- (3), Saul sought David in Naioth of Ramah, but the Spirit saved him (1Sa 19:19-24), and he fled back to meet Jonathan in Gibeah where Jonathan sent an "arrow-gram" warning David of Saul's determination to kill him(1Sa 20:1-42)

- (4). David then fled to Ahimelech the priest at Nob where he collected food and Goliath's sword. (1Sa 21:1-9)
- (5), David briefly sought refuge in the Philistine city of Gath (1Sa 21:10-15)
- (6) David then escaped to set up headquarters at the cave of Adullam where his army swelled to 400 men. (1Sa 22:1-2)
- (7), In order to protect his parents from harm, David left them in the care of the king of Moab at Mizpah (1Sa 22:3-4)
- (8) and went to live in "the stronghold", the cave of Adullam (1Sa 22:1, 4)
- (9). Prophet Gad warns David and he went to the forest of Hereth (1Sa 22:5)
- (10) and then left to rescue nearby Keilah from some Philistine raiding parties. (1Sa 23:1-5)
- (11) When David heard that Saul was coming to Keilah, he and his 600 men fled Keilah. (1Sa 23:9-13) David relocated to the wilderness of Ziph (1Sa 23:14)
- (12) After the men of Ziph betrayed David to Saul (1Sa 23:19-20), David and his men went to live in the wilderness of Maon (1Sa 23:24-25) and narrowly escaped capture there by Saul (1Sa 23:26-28)
- (13) . Fleeing the strongholds of Engedi (1Sa 23:29) David again evaded capture by Saul and refused an opportunity to take Saul's life. (1Sa 24:1-22)
- (14) After Samuel's death (1Sa 25:1) David went to the wilderness of Paran (1Sa 25:1)
- (15). While he was there, David was again betrayed to Saul by the men of Ziph and refused another opportunity to take Saul's life. (1Sa 26:1-25)
- (16) Finally, David and his men sought refuge with Achish, the king of Gath (1Sa 27:1-12)

Below is another map from the Holman Bible Atlas ([digital book](#); [Hardcover](#))

Click to enlarge - from the Holman Bible Atlas ([digital book](#); [Hardcover](#))  
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 This is one of the best resources for Bible maps.  
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**1 Samuel 21:1 Then David came to Nob to Ahimelech the priest; and Ahimelech came trembling to meet David and said to him, "Why are you alone and no one with you?"**

BGT 1 Samuel 21:2 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) κα ρχεται Δαυιδ ε ς Νομβα πρ ς Αβιμελεχ τ ν ερ α κα ξ στη Αβιμελεχ τ παντ σει α το κα ε πεν α τ τ τι σ μ νο ς κα ο θε ς μετ σο

LXE 1 Samuel 21:1 And David comes to Nomba to Abimelech the priest: and Abimelech was amazed at meeting him, and said to him, Why art thou alone, and nobody with thee?

KJV 1 Samuel 21:1 Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee?

NET 1 Samuel 21:1 David went to Ahimelech the priest in Nob. Ahimelech was shaking with fear when he met David, and said to him, "Why are you by yourself with no one accompanying you?"

CSB 1 Samuel 21:1 David went to Ahimelech the priest at Nob. Ahimelech was afraid to meet David, so he said to him, "Why are you alone and no one is with you?"

ESV 1 Samuel 21:1 Then David came to Nob to Ahimelech the priest. And Ahimelech came to meet David trembling and said to him, "Why are you alone, and no one with you?"

NIV 1 Samuel 21:1 David went to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. Ahimelech trembled when he met him, and asked, "Why are you alone? Why is no one with you?"

NLT 1 Samuel 21:1 David went to the town of Nob to see Ahimelech the priest. Ahimelech trembled when he saw him. "Why are you alone?" he asked. "Why is no one with you?"

NRS 1 Samuel 21:1 David came to Nob to the priest Ahimelech. Ahimelech came trembling to meet David,

and said to him, "Why are you alone, and no one with you?"

NJB 1 Samuel 21:2 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) David then went to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest. Ahimelech came out trembling to meet David and said, 'Why are you alone? Why is nobody with you?'

NAB 1 Samuel 21:2 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) David went to Ahimelech, the priest of Nob, who came trembling to meet him and asked, "Why are you alone? Is there no one with you?"

YLT 1 Samuel 21:1 And David cometh in to Nob, unto Ahimelech the priest, and Ahimelech trembleth at meeting David, and saith to him, 'Wherefore art thou thyself alone, and no man with thee?'

- Nob: Nob appears to have been a sacerdotal city of Benjamin or Ephraim. Jerome says, that in his time the ruins of it might be seen not far from Diospolis or Lydda. But the Rabbins assert that Jerusalem might be seen from this town. The tabernacle resided some time at Nob; and after it was destroyed, it was removed to Gibeon; "and the day of Nob and Gibeon were fifty-seven years." Maimonides in Bethhabbechirah, c. 1. 1Sa 22:19 Ne 11:32 Isa 10:32
- to Ahimelech: 1Sa 14:3, called Ahiah, 1Sa 22:9-19, called also Abiathar, Mk 2:26
- afraid: 1Sa 16:4
- [1 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Picture of Nob from popular bible encyclopedia of Archimandrite Nicephorus (1892).

## DAVID BEGINS RUN FOR HIS LIFE FIRST STOP: NOB

**Then** - Marks progression in the narrative and connects the present text with the previous text "Jonathan said to David, "Go in safety, inasmuch as we have sworn to each other in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD will be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever.'" Then he rose and departed, while Jonathan went into the city (GIBEAH)." (1Sa 20:42+) This marks the beginning of about 10-12 years of David fleeing for his life as Saul continually seeks to murder him. We reap wisdom from Psalms 7, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 22, 25, 31, 34, 35, 52, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 63, 64, 142, 143 from what he learned during the 10-12 years of exile!

**THOUGHT** - You have probably read every one of these psalms, but what you need to do now is read them in the light of wilderness experiences and I can assure you that you will experience a paradigm shift if regard to how you read them. I had never done that in the past 35 years, but in the inductive study from [Precepts on 1 Samuel](#), they had us read 4 psalms that parallel 1 Samuel 21-23. I can personally testify (as can several of the students) that lesson 6 on First Samuel was revolutionary in regard to how we will approach the psalms of David the rest of our lives. These psalms are included in the commentary on chapters 21-23 to help you associate the specific events with specific psalms.

**Brian Bell** - From these encouraging Psalms God's people throughout the generations, & still today, can find strength & courage in our own times of testings. Even Jesus drew strength from them on the cross! Ps.22:1; Ps 31:5! The bible never flatters its heroes. It tells the truth about them no matter how unpleasant it may be. So we get to watch on as their character is developed, w/all the facts so we might study them. [Meet God's man: in exile, running for his life, destitute of friends, begging bread, lying, pretending madness]

**Eugene Merrill** notes that "As far as can be determined, David was a young man of no more than 20 when he was forced to leave Saul's palace and his own home because of Saul's relentless determination to destroy him. Driven to the wilderness area of Judah, the logical place because of his familiarity with it from childhood, David lived out a "Robin Hood" existence for nearly 10 years. This period of time is reckoned from the fact that David was 30 when he began to rule over Judah at Hebron (2 Sam. 5:4), his accession occurring immediately after Saul's death (2 Sam. 2:10-11). David had spent a year and four months among the Philistines just before that (1 Sam. 27:7) and, as just suggested, was only about 20 when exiled from Saul. The events of chapters 21-26 must then represent only a fraction of David's activity during this period. But God was teaching David many things in those days, lessons David still shares with all who read his psalms which find their setting in this turbulent period of his life (see, e.g., Pss. 18; 34; 52; 54; 56-57). All these things were surely working together to prepare David to be the kind of leader who would glorify God and inspire His people." (Borrow [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Old Testament](#))

**David came to Nob to Ahimelech** ("Melek is father" or "my father is king") **the priest** - See the map above for location of **Nob** which is just south of Gibeah and about 2 miles north of Jerusalem. In 1Sa 22:19 we learn it was "the city of the priests." In Mark 2:26 Jesus says David "entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest and ate some of the consecrated bread." Therefore at this time we can conclude that the Tabernacle or Sanctuary ("house of God") was present at Nob.

**Eugene Merrill** points out that "It is difficult to trace the history of the tabernacle after the capture of the ark in 1104 b.c. The ark itself rested at Kiriath Jearim since then (7:2; 2 Sam. 6:3-4), but the tabernacle is not mentioned or even hinted at till 1 Samuel 21, when it was presumed to be at Nob, the "city of priests," where David fled after he made his final break with Saul. (Borrow [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Old Testament](#) )

and **Ahimelech** came trembling ([charad](#)) to meet David and said to him - Trembling describes a profound fear. Why did the priest tremble? (Note the Septuagint translations say he was "surprised.") The text is not clear, but **trembling** means he had fear and his fear was directed at David. He knew David was allied to the king's court (at least he had been) and that King Saul was known to be erratic, so it seems Ahimelech did not know what to expect, so like many of us in similar situations he "**feared the worst!**" And sadly, if that is the case, his premonition proved all too true in chapter 22.

"**Why are you alone and no one with you?**" - David mentions he has men he will meet in a certain place, but at this time he is alone. Ahimelech is skeptical as to why David is traveling alone, since he is well-known as a member of the king's court by this time.

**Dale Ralph Davis** - Ahimelech the priest smells something wrong. Otherwise, why "tremble" to meet David (v. 1)? Why was David alone, and so on? (Borrow [Looking on the heart](#))

**Don Anderson** on these next chapters in David's life - God is testing David's faith, and David is blowing it badly. But in all of this, God is molding David to be the kind of man that he intends for him to be when he is king. This is a hard principle for us to accept, but God allows some circumstances to come into our life that really test our faith in him, but only so he can accomplish his purpose for our lives in a way that he could never do if the path were always smooth and easy. GOLD IS REFINED THROUGH FIRE. It is when problems and difficulties seem to be overwhelming that the child of God learns some lessons that he could never learn otherwise. We can learn from David's experience here, first of all: fear set in. As we said before, fear is always the enemy of faith. To believe God, to rely on the Word of God, to claim the promises of God, is to conquer our fear. God is allowing David to go through some rough times now, not because of any failure or sin that he had committed but this testing period was to prepare David for the throne. It was all in the will of God. David should not have feared, but he did. We shouldn't fear, but we do. If we are really honest, we have to admit that sometimes our fear of our problems and circumstances are far more real to us than the presence of the Lord and the reality of his promises. Someone said one day, "But this is real life." It is easy to lose 20/20 spiritual vision. We can get a spiritual squint and see things in the wrong perspective and start to panic. We can well remember Peter walking on the water. When he got his eyes off the Lord and on his circumstances, he began to sink. What caused David's panic when we was in the will of God but surrounded by bewildering circumstances? We have so many blind spots in our lives and so many things that we are not willing to face up to as far as our weaknesses and unbelief are concerned. And God just has to get our attention and to pinpoint these things for us by the curriculum of circumstances He allows to come into our lives

**Carl Laney** points out, "David now entered a long period of separation from the royal court. Most of that time was spent fleeing from Saul, who saw David as his number one enemy. Through David's adventures as a fugitive, he learned lessons on prayer, trusting the Lord, and how to praise God. That is evidenced by many of the Davidic psalms that have their background in these chapters. (Borrow [First and Second Samuel](#))

It takes but a moment to make a convert;  
it takes a lifetime to manufacture a saint.

**Alan Redpath** says, "At this particular point in David's history, God had shot an arrow beyond him. He was going through this situation not because of any failure of sin that he had committed, but simply because of God's purpose in proving the reality of his love, his devotion, his faith. This crucible of testing (see Pr 17:3) was to prepare David for a throne for which he had already received the anointing of the Spirit. I am underlining this because I want you to understand that **what is happening to David at this point is all in the will of God to make of him a man of God.** It takes but a moment to make a convert; it takes a lifetime to manufacture a saint. David is now looking at God through the threatening clouds of opposition and trouble, instead of looking down at circumstances through the rainbow of God's love. It is very easy to lose 20/20 spiritual squint, to see things in the wrong perspective and start to panic. But how does it all begin? How so you think it began in David's life?" ([The Making of a Man of God - Life of David - online](#))

**Vos** pictures well the scene before us: "As David fled from the fields at Gibeah, he was evidently in very [dire straits](#). He presumably had not been able to return home after escaping out of a window and so had little or no baggage or food. Where should he go? The priestly village of Nob, a couple of miles away on the northern outskirts of Jerusalem was a likely source of help." (Borrow [1, 2 Samuel : Bible study commentary](#))

**Blaikie** points out, "We enter here on a somewhat painful part of David's history. He is not living so near to God as before, and in consequence, his course becomes more carnal and more crooked." ([1 Samuel 21](#))

**John Davis** says, "Widespread popularity and permanent security were not often the lot of God's people in the Old Testament era. This was especially true with David during these tragic years of separation from the royal court. Perhaps one of the greatest frustrations experienced by David was the fact that his persecutors came from within Israel, as well as without. These chapters in the book of 1 Samuel are most important if one is to understand properly the background and circumstances of many of the psalms. One learns quite a bit about David the psalmist in these chapters as well as about David the fugitive." (Borrow [The Birth of a Kingdome : Studies in I-II Samuel and I Kings 1-11](#))

**THOUGHT - ON DAVID GOING TO NOB** - Getz raises the question, "What about you? Have you ever lost perspective, unable to remember God's promises and provisions in your own life? Do even the Lord's daily miracles in your life, such as health and strength, sometimes seem unrelated to the supernatural? Have you ever taken matters into your own hands and made a mess of things? It's at times like these that we too hurt those closest to us, cause innocent people to suffer, and then bring reproach on the name of Jesus Christ." (Borrow [David: God's man in faith and failure](#) - see page 83)

**A W Pink** - Faith must be tested, and we must learn by painful experience the bitter consequences of not trusting in the Lord with all our hearts, and the evil fruits which are born whenever we lean unto our own understandings, take matters into our own hands, and seek to extricate ourselves from trouble.

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**Nob** was a city of priests in Benjamin, situated on an eminence near Jerusalem. Some think Nob may have been located at [Mount Scopus](#). Following the destruction of the Shiloh sanctuary in about 1000 B.C. (Jer. 7:14), the priesthood relocated to Nob and in 1Sa 22:19 it is referred to as "the city of the priests." Presumably Yahweh's priests had fled there with the ephod after the capture of the ark and the destruction of Shiloh (1 Sa. 4:11). From Isa. 10:28-32 it appears that Nob was on one of the roads leading from the north and within sight of Jerusalem. Isaiah had prophesied that the Assyrian invaders would reach Nob, between Anathoth, 4 km NE of Jerusalem, and the capital (Isa 10:32), At David appealed to Ahimelech for bread after he fled from Saul (1Sa 21:1-6). Some think that the Ark was then located there before being moved to Jerusalem (2Sa 6:1-2). A company of the Benjamites settled at Nob after the return from the Babylonian exile (Neh. 11:32). Of course the saddest event at Nob was a frightful massacre that occurred there in the reign of Saul (1Sa 22:17-19) and undertaken at his command to Doeg. Saul was guilty of murdering the innocent priests and all the inhabitants of the city! Beloved, reading stories like this make it difficult to believe that Saul was truly a saved man, but I won't be dogmatic.

**Easton's Bible Dictionary on Nob** - **Nob** means "high place," a city of the priests, first mentioned in the history of David's wanderings (1 Sam. 21:1). Here the tabernacle was then standing, and here Ahimelech the priest resided. From Isa. 10:28-32 it seems to have been near Jerusalem. It has been identified by some with el-Isawiyeh, one mile and a half to the north-east of Jerusalem. But according to Isa. 10:28-32 it was on the south of Geba, on the road to Jerusalem, and within sight of the city. This identification does not meet these conditions, and hence others (as Dean Stanley) think that it was the northern summit of Mount Olivet, the place where David "worshipped God" when fleeing from Absalom (2 Sam. 15:32), or more probably (Conder) that it was the same as Mizpeh (q.v.), Jdg. 20:1; Josh. 18:26; 1 Sam. 7:16, at Nebi Samwil, about 5 miles north-west of Jerusalem. After being supplied with the sacred loaves of showbread, and girding on the sword of Goliath, which was brought forth from behind the ephod, David fled from Nob and sought refuge at the court of Achish, the king of Gath, where he was cast into prison. (Comp. titles of Ps. 34 and Ps 56.) The Rabbins assert that Jerusalem might be seen from Nob. The tabernacle resided for a time at Nob; and after it was destroyed, it was removed to Gibeon.

**Ahimelech** was the son of **Ahitub** and father of **Abiathar** (1 Sam. 22:20-23). He descended from **Eli** in the line of **Ithamar**. In 1Chr 18:16 he is called Abimelech, and is probably the same as Ahiah (1 Sam. 14:3, 18). He was the twelfth high priest, and officiated at Nob, where he was visited by David (to whom and his companions he gave five loaves of the showbread) when he fled from Saul (1 Sam. 21:1-9). He was summoned into Saul's presence, and accused, on the information of Doeg the Edomite, of disloyalty because of his kindness to David; whereupon the king commanded that he, with the other priests who stood beside him (86 in all), should be put to death. This sentence was carried into execution by Doeg in the most cruel manner (1 Sam. 22:9-23). Possibly Abiathar had a son also called Ahimelech, or the two names, as some think, may have been accidentally transposed in 2 Sam. 8:17; 1 Chr. 18:16, marg.; 24:3, 6, 31.

**Ahimelech** - 16x/15v - 1 Sam. 21:1; 1 Sam. 21:2; 1 Sam. 21:8; 1 Sam. 22:9; 1 Sam. 22:11; 1 Sam. 22:14; 1 Sam. 22:16; 1 Sam. 22:20; 1 Sam. 23:6; 1 Sam. 26:6; 1 Sam. 30:7; 2 Sam. 8:17; 1 Chr. 24:3; 1 Chr. 24:6; 1 Chr. 24:31

**Trembling** (startled, frightened, make afraid, terrified) ([02729](#)) **charad** is a verb which contains the idea of movement resulting from agitation, usually trembling coming from emotional trauma. It can describe the shaking of a mountain or the flitting of a bird, but it is most commonly used to describe trembling or shuddering from some sort of fear.means to tremble, quake or shudder and describes



human trembling before some strange or fearsome event. It conveys the the idea of movement resulting from agitation, usually trembling coming from emotional trauma as when Isaac realized Jacob had deceived him and received Esau's blessing (Ge 27:33) or when Joseph's brothers who had abandoned him in a pit met him in Egypt (Ge 42:28). In the future [Millennium](#) Israel will forget her disgrace and treachery against Yahweh and will live securely in the promised land "with no one to **make them afraid**." (Ezek 39:26+, cf Micah 4:4+, cf Mic 4:1-3, also Zeph 3:13+) After Jonathan and his armor bearer had slaughtered about 20 Philistines, "there was a **trembling** (noun form **charadah**) in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. Even the garrison and the raiders **trembled** (verb - **charad**), and the earth quaked so that it became a great**trembling** (noun form **charadah**)" (1Sa 14:15, cf Da 10:7).

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### **Theodore Epp - THE EFFECTS OF SIN** 1 Samuel 21:1-10

When he fled to Ahimelech, the priest, David resorted to an untruth. Ahimelech was afraid that David's presence before him was the beginning of trouble, but David sought to quiet the priest's fears by saying, "The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place" (1 Sam. 21:2).

This was a sad chapter in David's life, but he was not forsaken. God permitted these tests in order to teach David some very valuable lessons. The Lord was preparing him for the throne where he would have to meet much greater tests.

David did not know that his lies would bring trouble to Ahimelech. David was hungry and asked for food. While conversing with the priest, he saw Doeg, chief herdsman for King Saul, near the sanctuary. This man was an Edomite, not an Israelite, who wore a cloak of religion to cover up the true condition of his heart. He was a tool of Saul's, cruel and unscrupulous, and it is likely that David's heart skipped a beat when he saw this wicked man. Had David stayed with Samuel no harm would have come to Ahimelech and his fellow priests; but David's presence among them, of which they were entirely innocent, proved to be their death warrant (1Sa 22:9-18).

One person's sin can sometimes have far-reaching effects on others.

"For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption;  
but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:8).  
(DAVID SOWED TO THE FLESH AND REAPED CATASTROPHIC "CORRUPTION"!)

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### **No Small Sins - The Life Recovery Devotional**

Bible Reading: 1 Samuel 21:1-10; 22:21-23

We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

Sometimes we end up hurting innocent victims. When we started down the road seeking pleasure, or a path of safety or escape from our problems, we never imagined that our actions would lead to the destruction of innocent lives.

When young David was escaping from the wrath of King Saul, he ran to the priest, Ahimelech. "'The king has sent me on a private matter,' David said. 'He told me not to tell anybody why I am here. . . . The king's business was so urgent that I didn't even have time to grab a weapon!'" (1 Samuel 21:1-2, 8). The priest believed David's story and assisted him. But King Saul saw Ahimelech as a co-conspirator and had all eighty-five priests killed along with their entire families. Only one of Ahimelech's sons escaped to tell David what had happened. David responded, "Now I have caused the death of all your father's family. Stay here with me, and don't be afraid. I will protect you with my own life" (1Sa 22:22-23).

David never intended to hurt anyone. He was just trying to cover his own tracks and get what he needed in his desperation. He recognized his responsibility and tried to do what he could after the tragedy. When people suffer innocently because of things we do, it will help them and their families if we acknowledge our responsibility and do whatever we can to help. In recovery we must take responsibility for the consequences of our actions.

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[Brian Bell](#) - We've all been in high altitude & found ourselves out of breath from the thin air, the lack of oxygen. a) It isn't easy to walk w/God, for the air at that height is somewhat rare. b) It is pure, but sometimes its hard to breathe, & faith almost gives up in the attempt to keep pace w/God's way w/His child. 2. I've been at the lowest elevation on earth's surface. The Dead Sea(1200' below sea level) It's easy to breathe there. Many flock there for Climatotherapy: [i.e. treatment which exploits temperature, humidity, sunshine, barometric pressure] a) It's true to human experience, it's easier to breathe/live in the depth of the valleys rather than in the thin air of the mountain tops.

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## QUESTION - [Who were the priests of Nob?](#)

**ANSWER** - Many priests ministered in service to the Lord in the Israelite city of Nob. Because the city contained so many priests, Nob became known as “the city of priests” (1 Samuel 22:19ESV). Located in the territory of Benjamin (1 Samuel 22:7–8) near Jerusalem, the city is notable for the horrible massacre that took place there.

David went to Nob seeking help from the priest Ahimelek, who lived in Nob with his large family, the priests of Nob (1 Samuel 21:1). The priests of Nob were Aaron’s descendants, specifically in the line of [Ithamar](#) and Eli, and so had claim to the Levitical priesthood (1 Samuel 22:11). They wore priestly vestments, set out the consecrated bread, and kept the [ephod](#), which held the [Urim and Thummim](#) (1 Samuel 21:4, 6, 9).

When David first fled from Saul, he stopped at Nob to ask for provisions from Ahimelek (1 Samuel 21:1–3). David did not tell Ahimelek that he was on the run from King Saul; rather, he said he was on a secret mission for the king. Ahimelek provided David with five loaves of [showbread](#), which was consecrated and holy to God (1 Samuel 21:1–4). Also provided to David was the sword of Goliath the Philistine whom David had killed (1 Samuel 21:8–9).

Jesus later referred to David’s encounter with Ahimelek. When His disciples were criticized for picking some heads of grain and thus “breaking the Sabbath,” Jesus said, “Haven’t you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread—which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests” (Matthew 12:3–4). The priests of Nob did not sin in giving David the showbread, and neither did Jesus’ disciples sin in eating in the grainfields. Necessity or distress overrides ceremonial law.

In Nob on the day that David visited was an evil man named [Doeg](#), an Edomite who served as King Saul’s head shepherd (1 Samuel 21:7). Doeg reported to Saul that he had seen David, and Saul was angered at Ahimelek, considering his actions treasonous. Saul summoned all the priests of Nob and accused them of conspiring against the throne (1 Samuel 22:11–13). Ahimelek, of course, had acted innocently in providing David with supplies, knowing nothing of the king’s displeasure, and he proclaimed the truth: “Your servant knows nothing at all about this whole affair” (1 Samuel 22:15).

But Saul would not listen to reason, and he ordered all the priests of Nob to be killed: “Turn and kill the priests of the Lord, because they too have sided with David. They knew he was fleeing, yet they did not tell me” (1 Samuel 22:17). Fearing God more than the king, none of Saul’s guards would raise their swords against a priest, so Doeg the Edomite massacred all the priests. He didn’t stop there, however; included in the massacre were all the priests’ families and all the people in the city of Nob, including men, women, children, babies, and livestock (1 Samuel 22:18–19). Eighty-five priests were killed that day, which completely wiped out Ahimelek’s family except for one son, Abiathar (1 Samuel 22:18, 20). Once David heard of the ruthless killing of the Lord’s priests at Nob, he blamed himself for their deaths (1 Samuel 22:21–22).

The priests at Nob were in Eli’s lineage, and Eli’s descendants were prophesied to lose the priesthood and die before reaching old age (1 Samuel 2:30–33). Doeg’s massacre of the priests at Nob greatly thinned out Eli’s descendants, which partially fulfilled the prophecy (1 Samuel 2:33). However, the entire prophecy wasn’t completed until later when Abiathar lost the priesthood due to his involvement in a conspiracy against Solomon (1 Kings 1:7; 2:26–27).

The atrocity committed against the priests of Nob and their city was triggered by nothing more than the kindness of a priest. The hatred of King Saul was on full display. The same king who had earlier refused to wipe out the Amalekites at God’s command (1 Samuel 15) slaughtered an innocent and peaceful town within his own kingdom. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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[Steven Cole](#) has an interesting perspective (and application for believers) regarding 9 chapters 18-26 referring to these chapters as "[God’s Training School](#)."

Every Christian is enrolled in a school--“**God’s Training School**.” Hebrews 12:8 tells us, “If you are without training [discipline], of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.” So every true child of God is enrolled in the program. There is some good news and some bad news about God’s training school. The good news is, nobody fails the course: “I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:6). If God has begun a work in you, He will see you through! The bad news is, you don’t graduate until you die and you can’t drop out before then! If you try to drop out, the course gets even more difficult!

Some of you may be protesting because you signed up for the course without knowing what you were getting into! You were told that if you would trust Christ as Savior, all your problems would be solved (instantly was implied) and you would enjoy a trouble free life. Or perhaps you were told that if you would walk in the victory Christ offers, you would live on a higher plane where problems just glance off you. That sounds good, but it’s not biblical. The Bible clearly teaches that God uses trials to train us to become more like Jesus, who learned obedience through the things He suffered (Heb. 5:8). The process takes time and is often very painful, but the



final product makes it worthwhile (Heb. 12:11).

Others of you are enrolled in the program, but you may not be aware of the course of instruction or the objectives of the training. You aren't familiar with the catalog. So you don't understand why certain things are happening to you. You're wondering why you're going through certain tests and why you never seem to graduate. Sometimes you think you passed the test, but the next thing you know you're going through the same course all over again. It's easier to endure the program if you know what to expect. So I'd like to explain, from the life of David, the program, the courses, and the objectives of God's training school.

As we've already seen, David was an unusually gifted and advanced young man. While he was still a teenager he had been anointed as king to replace the disobedient King Saul. He also killed Goliath while he was a teenager. That victory pushed David into instant national fame and popularity. He was brought into the palace and set over the men of war (1 Sam. 18:5). Imagine how it must have felt to be not yet 20 years old and to be where David was at!

And yet God did not see fit to remove the corrupt Saul and install the upright David as king until David was 30 (2 Sam. 5:4). What was happening during the 10-12 years between David's victory over Goliath and his ascension to the throne? He was in God's training school. Let's look at the program, courses, and objectives of that school.

For rest of his sermon see [God's Training School](#) and below are his subheadings to encourage you to read the full message.

A. GOD'S TRAINING PROGRAM IS NOT EXPLAINED TO THE STUDENT IN ADVANCE.

B. GOD'S TRAINING PROGRAM GOES ON FOR A LIFETIME.

C. GOD'S TRAINING PROGRAM INVOLVES MANY COURSES THAT MUST BE REPEATED EVEN IF YOU PASS. (See 1 Sam. 19:8-10, 11-12; 21:10; 22:1, 5; 23:12-14, 24-29; 24:1-2; 26:1-2.)

D. GOD'S TRAINING PROGRAM IS NECESSARY FOR A PERSON TO BE ABLE TO HANDLE PROSPERITY.

Here are Cole's "Courses"

A. BROKEN PROMISES (101)

B. EVIL FOR GOOD (102)

C. OPPORTUNITY TESTING (104)

Here are the Course Objectives:

A. DAVID LEARNED TO TAKE REFUGE IN THE LORD AND TO SEE THE LORD'S LOVE EVEN IN ADVERSITY.

B. DAVID LEARNED TO SEEK THE LORD'S MIND RATHER THAN TO ACT IMPULSIVELY ON HIS OWN. (aka Submission)

C. DAVID LEARNED TO WAIT UPON THE LORD FOR HIS TIMING. (aka Endurance - 1Sa 26:10,11, Ps 62:5)

D. DAVID LEARNED TO ACKNOWLEDGE HIS SIN QUICKLY TO THE LORD AND TO THOSE HE HAD WRONGED. (aka a Tender Conscience)

To "fill in the blanks" see "[God's Training School](#)."

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### **THERE IS NONE LIKE THAT; GIVE IT ME - Cyril Hocking - Day by Day thru the OT**

THERE WERE LESSONS for David to learn as a courtier. The syllabus became more demanding for him as a fugitive. Our reading presents David's visit to the priests, 21:1-9, his flight to the Philistines, vv. 10-15, and a temporary respite, sanctuary in a cave, 22:1-5.

What can sustain David when rejected? The showbread is the only answer, vv. 4, 6. Were all in order, this was not lawful. But the priesthood had hopelessly failed, the lamp of God had all but gone out, 3:3, the ark of God was no longer in the tabernacle, 7:1, and God's anointed was rejected by the nation generally. While God had far from done with these institutions as yet, all was "in a manner" profaned, rendered common. David may have it rightfully, as the man after God's heart, and with whom His future purposes rest. Without the Lord of the sabbath, there can be no rest in ordinances, Mark 2:25-28. So it is with us. Without Jesus Christ, our advocate upholding us before the Father, as suggested by the table, and without our feeding upon that which God sees us to be in Him, as suggested by the showbread, what is there for a fearful, failing saint?

David not only sought food. He felt the need of weapons, ct. 17:47. The priest's offer of "The sword of Goliath the Philistine" took him

back to that memorable God-given victory. But now his conscience was overridden by fear, v. 8f.

Fear of Saul drove him yet further. He went over to the Philistines at Gath, Goliath's home town of all places. However slow many in Israel were to recognize him, these Philistines said "Is not this David the king of the land?"; here was the slayer of ten thousands, v. 11. David was now "sore afraid of Achish", ct. Psa. 56:4. His self-chosen path brought him lower still as he pretended to be mad. God could have no direct part with him, though He overruled in the matter so that "David therefore departed thence", 22:1. Fear God alone.

Fear through looking at the things that are seen, confidence in the help of good friends, speaking one untruth following hard upon another, even seeking shelter with known enemies, is a slippery slope not a few of us have embarked upon. Be warned, for that is the very purpose of this record.

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[Walter Kaiser - go to page 374 in Hard Sayings of the Bible - Mark 2:26+, 1 Samuel 21:1-6 Who Was the High Priest? ABIATHAR OR AHIMELECH?](#)

In Mark we read that Jesus said that Abiathar was priest when David received and ate some of the bread of the Presence from the tabernacle. In terms of the point that Jesus is making it really does not matter who was priest, for the issue is the breaking of the rule about a layperson eating consecrated bread and its application to Jesus' disciples breaking the sabbath regulations. However, when we look up the incident in 1 Samuel 21:1-6, the text reads "**Ahimelech**" rather than "**Abiathar**." Was Jesus mistaken? Surely the Pharisees would have caught the error?

The first point to note is that Abiathar and Ahimelech are son and father. The son, Abiathar, first appears in 1 Samuel 22:20 as the one son of Ahimelech who escaped when Saul slaughtered the priests of Nob and their families for having helped David. Abiathar then remains with David and later serves as high priest during his reign. It looks like the son has been switched with the father.

The second thing we should look at is the textual tradition. There is no evidence that this switch is a textual error. It is true that the Western text does omit the priest's name, but none of the other textual traditions do, and the Western text does sometimes correct or add to the text in various books. When the Western text's reading remains unsupported by other textual traditions, it is not taken as very weighty. **In fact, the Western text actually follows the other Synoptics, for Matthew 12:4 and Luke 6:4 both drop this offending name. Thus there appears to be solid evidence that Mark wrote "Abiathar."**

There have been attempts to solve the problem by arguing that "in the days of Abiathar the high priest" should be understood to mean "In the section [of Samuel] entitled 'Abiathar,'" since this section explains how Abiathar joined David (and there were no chapter and verse numbers for citing Scripture in Jesus' day). However, if that is what it means, Mark found a most awkward way of expressing it. To mean this, the Greek phrase with "Abiathar" in it should have been placed in Mark 2:25 right after "Have you never read?"

Likewise some argue that the phrase means "when Abiathar who became high priest was alive." However, if this was what were intended (if Jesus had forgotten the name of Abiathar's father or thought his listeners would not recognize it), a phrase like "in the days of the father of Abiathar the high priest" or "in the childhood of Abiathar the high priest" would have expressed the thought clearly. The phrase as it stands would express such an idea so unclearly and awkwardly that it is unlikely that it means this.

What, then, are the possibilities? First, we can be fairly certain that Mark is not covering up the Pharisaic response to an error Jesus made. If Mark had been aware of such a problem, he would have omitted the whole story or changed the name rather than simply omitted the Pharisaic response. Mark probably did not see any other problem with this passage than the issue of Jesus' defending his disciples' breaking the sabbath regulations.

Second, if Mark did not see the problem, he did not see it for one of three reasons: (1) he actually wrote Ahimelech and the more familiar name crept into the text at a very early stage, perhaps as an error in the first copying (often texts were read aloud to scribes making copies, so an oral substitution of the more familiar name for the less familiar would be quite possible), or (2) he received the story as it is and did not himself realize that there was a problem with it (in the latter case, we do not know if Jesus actually said "Abiathar" or if he said "Ahimelech" and the more familiar Abiathar was substituted in the course of oral transmission), or (3) his view of historical accuracy was not bothered by such an issue, since the main point is not affected by it. Whatever the case, Mark apparently did not realize that there was a problem.

**The truth is that this is one of the problems in Scripture for which we do not have a fully satisfactory solution.** We do not have Mark's original edition to check which name was in it, nor do we have Mark here to question about his state of mind. We do not have a tape recording of the preaching of Peter (thought by many to be the source of Mark) to see if he was using the right or the wrong name. While many ancient historians would not have been bothered by such an innocuous slip, it did seem to bother Matthew and Luke, so we cannot be sure that it would not have bothered Mark. Thus we can either arbitrarily select one of the speculative

solutions mentioned in the previous paragraph, perhaps choosing the one which pleases us the best, or we can say, “We honestly don’t know what the answer is to this problem, nor are we likely to ever know.” In that case, this verse makes plain that our knowledge is always partial so that our trust remains in God rather than in what we know.

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**[Gleason Archer - go to page 367 in Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties](#) - Who was high priest when David ate the showbread—Abiathar or Ahimelech?**

Mark 2:26 quotes Jesus as asking His hearers whether they had never read what David did, when he and his men were hungry and entered the sanctuary at Nob to beg for food, in the time of Abiathar the high priest (1 Sam. 21:1–6). As a matter of fact, however, it was with Abiathar’s father, Ahimelech, that David had dealings; for Ahimelech was really the high priest at the time of that episode.

Did Jesus err when He referred to the wrong high priest? A careful examination of Mark 2:26 reveals that Christ did not actually imply that Abiathar was already high priest at the time of David’s visit. He simply said, “Epi Abiathar archiereōs,” which means “in the time of Abiathar the high priest.” As things turned out, bloody King Saul soon had Ahimelech and the entire priestly community of Nob massacred by Doeg the Edomite (1 Sam. 22:18–19); and Abiathar the son of Ahimelech was the only one fortunate enough to escape. He fled to join David (v. 20) and served as his priest all through David’s years of wandering and exile. Naturally he was appointed high priest by David after David became king, and he shared the high priesthood with Zadok, Saul’s appointee, until David’s death. Under these circumstances it was perfectly proper to refer to Abiathar as the high priest—even though his appointment as such came somewhat later, after the incident at Nob—just as it would be proper to introduce an anecdote by saying, “Now when King David was a shepherd boy,” even though David was not actually a king at the time he was a shepherd boy.

According to W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich (A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1957], p. 286), epi with the genitive simply means “in the time of”; and that is the meaning that applies in Mark 2:26 (the same construction as Acts 11:28 [“in the time of Claudius”] and Heb. 1:2 [“in the time of the last of these days” (ep’ eschatou tōn hēmerōn toutōn)]). The episode did happen “in the time of” Abiathar; he was not only alive but actually present when the event took place, and he very shortly afterward became high priest as a result of Saul’s murdering his father, Ahimelech. If Jesus’ words are interpreted in the way he meant them, there is absolutely no variance with historical fact.

**1 Samuel 21:2 David said to Ahimelech the priest, "The king has commissioned me with a matter and has said to me, 'Let no one know anything about the matter on which I am sending you and with which I have commissioned you; and I have directed the young men to a certain place.'**

BGT 1 Samuel 21:3 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) κα ε πεν Δαυιδ τ ερε βασιλε ς ντ ταλτα μοι μα σ μερον κα ε π ν μοι μηδε ς γν τω τ μα περ ο γ ποστ λλω σε κα π ρ ο ντ ταλμα σοι κα το ς παιδαρ οι ς διαμεμαρτ ρημαι ν τ τ π τ λεγομ ν θεο π σι ς Φελλα νι Αλεμωνι

LXE 1 Samuel 21:2 And David said to the priest, The king gave me a command to-day, and said to me, Let no one know the matter on which I send thee, an concerning which I have charged thee: and I have charged my servants to be in the place that is called, The faithfulness of God, phellani maemoni.

Lexham English - And David said to the priest, “The king has commanded me in a matter today and said to me, ‘Nobody must learn of the matter about which I am sending you and concerning what I have commanded you.’ And to my servants I have affirmed at the place the one called ‘Faithfulness of God;’ Phellani Maemonei.

KJV 1 Samuel 21:2 And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place.

NET 1 Samuel 21:2 David replied to Ahimelech the priest, “The king instructed me to do something, but he said to me, ‘Don’t let anyone know the reason I am sending you or the instructions I have given you.’ I have told my soldiers to wait at a certain place.

CSB 1 Samuel 21:2 David answered Ahimelech the priest, “The king gave me a mission, but he told me, ‘Don’t let anyone know anything about the mission I’m sending you on or what I have ordered you to do.’ I have stationed my young men at a certain place.

ESV 1 Samuel 21:2 And David said to Ahimelech the priest, “The king has charged me with a matter and said to me, ‘Let no one know anything of the matter about which I send you, and with which I have charged you.’ I have made an appointment with the young men for such and such a place.

NIV 1 Samuel 21:2 David answered Ahimelech the priest, "The king charged me with a certain matter and said to me, 'No one is to know anything about your mission and your instructions.' As for my men, I have told them to meet me at a certain place.

NLT 1 Samuel 21:2 "The king has sent me on a private matter," David said. "He told me not to tell anyone why I am here. I have told my men where to meet me later.

NRS 1 Samuel 21:2 David said to the priest Ahimelech, "The king has charged me with a matter, and said to me, 'No one must know anything of the matter about which I send you, and with which I have charged you.' I have made an appointment with the young men for such and such a place.

NJB 1 Samuel 21:3 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) David replied to Ahimelech the priest, 'The king has given me an order and said to me, "Do not let anyone know anything about the mission on which I am sending you, or about the order which I have given you." I have arranged to meet the guards at such and such a place.

NAB 1 Samuel 21:3 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) David answered the priest: "The king gave me a commission and told me to let no one know anything about the business on which he sent me or the commission he gave me. For that reason I have arranged a meeting place with my men.

YLT 1 Samuel 21:2 And David saith to Ahimelech the priest, 'The king hath commanded me a matter, and he saith unto me, Let no man know anything of the matter about which I am sending thee, and which I have commanded thee; and the young men I have caused to know at such and such a place;

- The king: 1Sa 19:17 22:22 Ge 27:20,24 1Ki 13:18 Ps 119:29 Ga 2:12 Col 3:9
- [1 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Proverbs 12:22 Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, But those who deal faithfully are His delight.

## DAVID LIES TO THE PRIEST

**David said to Ahimelech the priest, "The king has commissioned me** ("gave me a mission") **with a matter - The king** here refers to King Saul who was hardly sending David on a mission but in fact was seeking David's life! David was clearly guilty of lying and deception, which he carried out because he was afraid someone might report his whereabouts to Saul. He reasoned that if they thought Saul had truly sent him, then no one would tell Saul they saw him, for they would assume Saul knew. David has forgotten the words of Moses in Numbers 32:23+ "if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and **be sure your sin will find you out.**"

**Youngblood** thinks he was deceptive "to protect the priest from any accusation of complicity in his flight from Saul"? (Expositor's Bible Commentary)

**and has said to me, 'Let no one know anything about the** ("top secret") **matter on which I am sending you and with which I have commissioned you** - David says this "top secret!" David adds to his lie so that no one would dare say anything about his presence in Nob. His ruse should have defused any questions about why he was in Nob. But as we learn one man, **Doeg the Edomite**, did not "[buy it](#)!" And later David gives a clue that something is "fishy" because he has come without his sword or weapons (1Sa 21:8)!

**and I have directed the young men to a certain place.'** - NIV "I have told them to meet me at a certain place."

**NET NOTE** on **a certain place** - The Hebrew expression here refers to a particular, but unnamed, place. It occurs in the OT only here, in 2 Kgs 6:8, and in Ruth 4:1, where Boaz uses it to refer to Naomi's unnamed kinsman-redeemer. A contracted form of the expression appears in Dan 8:13.

**John MacArthur** [minces no words](#) declaring that David "supposed, as many do, that it is excusable to lie for the purpose of saving one's life (ED: Compare Michal in 1Sa 19:17+). But what is essentially sinful can never, because of circumstances, change its immoral character (cf. Ps 119:29). David's lying led tragically to the deaths of the priests (1Sa 22:9-18). (Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**TSK** - The whole of this is a gross falsehood; and which was attended with the most fatal consequences. It is well known that from all antiquity it was held no crime to tell a lie in order to save life. (**ED**: MEN'S THINKING, BUT NOT GOD'S!) Thus Diphilon "I hold it right to tell a lie for safety:nothing should be avoided to save life." (**ED**: CLEARLY DIPHILON HAD NEVER READ 1 Samuel 21-22!)

**John Davis:** “David evidently adopted what is commonly known today as a [situational ethic](#).’ He assumed that the situation was of such a nature that the greatest good could be accomplished by getting food for his men at the cost of truth. This perhaps was the same feeling shared by Abraham in deceiving the king in Egypt (Ge 12:13+). Recall also the lies of Rahab (Josh. 2:4+) and David’s wife, Michal (1Sa 19:14+). The concept of a **situational ethic**, therefore, is not a new one.... As is the case with many lies, they seem to meet the immediate need of a given situation, but have ultimate effects which perhaps were not foreseen by the one lying. Such was the case in David’s experience, for this lie led to the ultimate destruction of the city of Nob (cf. 1Sa 22:22ff.)” (Borrow [Israel : from conquest to exile : a commentary on Joshua-2 Kings](#)) (ED: "LITTLE LIES can have BIG CONSEQUENCES!")

**Wiersbe** - It Ever Right to Lie? Scripture commands us to tell the truth and warns about the consequences of lying. Jesus is our example, for there was no deceit in His mouth (1 Pet. 2:22). We must always speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). If our telling the truth endangers others, silence is our best response. When David ran ahead of God, he found himself in trouble and lied. The safest thing is to stay away from those situations and to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” (Borrow [With the Word](#))

**Brian Bell** - Scripture commands us to tell the truth & warns about the consequences of lying a) Jesus is our example, for there was no deceit in His mouth. 1 Pet.2:22 b) Speak the truth in Love. Eph.4:15 c) If our telling the truth endangers others, silence is our best response! d) When David ran ahead of God, he found himself in trouble & lied. e) The safest thing is to stay away from those situations & to pray, “Lead us not into temptation.”

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**[Gleason Archer - go to page 179 in New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties - First Samuel contains several instances of lying and deceit on the part of God’s chosen servant David and of Samuel the prophet \(1 Sam. 16; 20; 21; 27\). Did the Lord really condone lying and deceit as means to a good end?](#)**

In dealing with this difficult question, we must keep the following factors in view.

1. Even though Scripture records the dishonesty of men, this does not necessarily mean that it approves or condones such a sin. The same is true of other types of sin committed by religious leaders.
2. The duty to tell only what is true does not necessarily carry with it the obligation to tell the whole truth about the matter, especially if lives would be endangered or lost as a result of this information, or if divulging all the details would violate a trust of secrecy or amount to a betrayal of another’s confidence.
3. The mere recording of an episode involving subterfuge or deception does not imply that the person resorting to it was acting responsibly on the highest level of faith or furnishing a valid example of conduct that believers might justifiably follow today.

With these factors in mind, we may profitably examine each of the episodes alluded to in the question.

1 Samuel 16:2 relates Samuel’s apprehension at carrying out the Lord’s assignment to anoint a new king down in Bethlehem. “But Samuel said, ‘How can I go? When Saul hears of it, he will kill me.’ And the LORD said, ‘Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD’ ” (NASB). Verse 5 relates that Samuel said to Jesse and his family, “I have come to sacrifice to the LORD” (NASB). Of course this was in fact true, for he had followed God’s instructions in this matter. He had actually taken along a heifer to offer on the altar in Bethlehem, even though he really had a further purpose in mind. In this entire transaction he was carrying out the instructions of God Himself. It is quite clear that the Lord had approved a policy of withholding information from King Saul that would have moved him to violence or bloodshed had he known of it in advance. If Samuel had divulged his full intention (beyond the performing of a religious sacrifice in Bethlehem), Saul would have killed not only Samuel himself but also David and his entire family. In this case then, it would have been altogether wrong and extremely harmful for Samuel to have told the entire truth or revealed his entire purpose. There is a clear distinction between resorting to actual deceit and to withholding information that would result in great harm and even failure to obey carrying out the will of God—in this case the anointing of young David to be king over Israel. In other words, Samuel was entirely within the will of God when he told only part of the truth rather than the whole truth.

1 Samuel 20 relates how Jonathan handled the difficult matter of protecting the life of his dearest friend, David, in a situation where he knew (1) that God had chosen David to be the next king of Israel and (2) that his own father, Saul, was likely to attempt to prevent this purpose of God by having David killed, as a dangerous rival to the dynastic rights of the house of Saul. His loyalty to his father represented a definite conflict with his duty to the Lord Himself and to His chosen servant, David, whom he personally loved far more than himself or his insanely jealous and bloodthirsty father. Under these peculiar circumstances, Jonathan could pursue no other course than he did. That is to say, he agreed with David on a test of Saul’s true intentions (which were difficult to determine, in view of his unbalanced mentality and his occasional change of mind; cf. 1 Sam. 19:6). The only way he could find out the king’s real purpose was to present him with a situation to react to, namely David’s failure to show up at the new moon feast at Saul’s palace (which David had previously attended without fail, as a son-in-law belonging to the royal family). There had to be some plausible excuse arranged for his absence; so this was furnished by David’s alleged summons to Bethlehem in order to join with the rest of his family in celebrating the new moon festival in the household of Jesse.



Unlike the previous example (1 Sam. 16:2), there seems to have been no such summons from David's oldest brother, Eliab, even though such an invitation would have been quite reasonable and justified on the part of the family in Bethlehem. Yet as the story unfolds, it is quite clear that David never went to Bethlehem after he found out that Saul was bent on having him killed. It is highly doubtful whether David would have gone home even if he had learned from Jonathan that Saul had relented in his hostility; David probably would have made his way back to the palace, instead. We can only conclude that this appointment to join the family in Bethlehem was a sheer concoction on David's part. And even though Jonathan accurately repeated what David had said to him by way of a request to be excused from attending the king's table, Jonathan, of course, knew that it was a mere subterfuge. And yet we can hardly fault Jonathan in this, for had he told his father all that he knew about the matter and the full content of his conversation with David, he would have been guilty of the basest betrayal of his trusting friend, who was also the chosen king of Israel according to Yahweh's own decision. David's blood would have been on Jonathan's head. As it was, he nearly lost his own life as he tried to defend David's rights before his father's fury; and Jonathan had to beat a hasty retreat when Saul attempted to pin him against the wall with his spear (1 Sam. 20:33).

**1 Samuel 21 records the sorry choice David made in fleeing to the town of Nob,** where the high priest, Ahimelech, served at the tabernacle of the Lord. David should never have brought that community into such terrible danger from the wrath of the king, and his brief visit there brought on him the guilt of their subsequent massacre at the hands of Saul's agents, under the leadership of the despicable Doeg (22:18–19). In fairness to David, it may well be that he did not foresee the extreme to which Saul would go in slaughtering all those innocent priests. But after the atrocity was accomplished and Abiathar brought him the sorrowful tidings, David had to acknowledge how inexcusably guilty he was when he lied to Ahimelech about his mission at Nob and gave the priest no opportunity to choose whether he was willing to court death for David's sake.

**In this entire episode David involved himself in the greatest guilt—as he himself recognized afterward** “Then David said to Abiathar, ‘I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have brought about the death of every person in your father's household’ ” (1 Sam. 22:22, NASB). But as for the Lord's involvement in this entire tragedy, there is really no indication whatever that He condoned David's deception toward Ahimelech. The only mitigation of David's guilt was that he really had not thought ahead about what harm he was going to cause to others when he sought refuge at Nob. But, in retrospect, David should have turned in some other direction when he fled from Saul. If David had really looked to the Lord for guidance, he might have found safety at Engedi or some other remote wilderness to which he later resorted. He certainly was out of the will of God when he lied his way into Nob and made off with the sword of Goliath.

It is interesting to notice that Jesus later used David's example at Nob, where he and his followers partook of the week-old showbread when they were starving, even though that bread was intended for the priests alone (Matt. 12:3–4). Our Lord seems to imply that under those unusual circumstances, David was justified in doing that, since the preservation of human life was even more important than strict observance of the ritual law. But even so, David certainly suffered the deepest humiliation when he allowed panic to lead him to King Achish at Gath, **instead of waiting on the Lord for His guidance.** David only succeeded in putting his life into even greater danger when he sought refuge with the ungodly Philistines. He only escaped from that peril by pretending to be hopelessly demented while he was in the palace of Achish, with the result that they utterly despised him and drove him from their borders like some wild animal (1 Sam. 21:13–15).

**In 1 Samuel 27:8–12 we read of a long-continued deception David practiced toward King Achish.** After he had been allowed to set up his headquarters in Ziklag (as a vassal or ally of Achish of Gath), David supported himself and his six hundred followers by raiding the tribesmen of the Negeb (the Geshurites, Girzites, and Amalekites) and slaughtering the entire population of every community that he invaded. The purpose of this bloody practice was to keep any survivors from informing the Philistines at Gath that David was not really attacking the Jerahmeelites and Judeans, as he claimed he was doing, but was actually raiding non-Israelite communities that were on good terms with the Philistines (vv. 11–12). He managed to keep Achish from ever finding out the truth about his activities and made him believe that he had become an enemy of his own countrymen by preying on their villages and carrying off their livestock.

After this review of those sorry episodes in the early career of David, we must recognize that God did not favor and protect the son of Jesse on account of his occasional deceptions or his occasional hardness toward pagan enemies (like the Ammonites in 2 Sam. 12:31). On the contrary, God put David through an arduous educative process of suffering, uncertainty, and danger, because He found in him an instrument well suited to deliver his nation from their heathen foes and to establish a strong and stable government in fulfillment of His ancient promise to Abraham (Gen. 15:18–21). It was not because of his virtue and his good deeds that God chose David for his role of leadership but because of his great faith. Despite the episodes where he failed to trust the Lord completely or to seek His guidance as carefully as he should have, David gave his heart to the Lord sincerely and made it his chief purpose and desire to do the will of God and glorify His name.



BGT 1 Samuel 21:4 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) κα ν ν ε ε σ ν π τ ν χ ε ρ σου π ν τ ε ρ τ ο ι δ ς ε ς χ ε ρ μου τ ε ρ ε θ ν

LXE 1 Samuel 21:3 And now if there are under thy hand five loaves, give into my hand what is ready.

KJV 1 Samuel 21:3 Now therefore what is under thine hand? give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present.

NET 1 Samuel 21:3 Now what do you have at your disposal? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever can be found."

CSB 1 Samuel 21:3 Now what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread or whatever can be found."

ESV 1 Samuel 21:3 Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever is here."

NIV 1 Samuel 21:3 Now then, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever you can find."

NLT 1 Samuel 21:3 Now, what is there to eat? Give me five loaves of bread or anything else you have."

NRS 1 Samuel 21:3 Now then, what have you at hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever is here."

NJB 1 Samuel 21:4 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) Meanwhile, if you have five loaves of bread to hand, give them to me, or whatever there is.'

NAB 1 Samuel 21:4 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) Now what have you on hand? Give me five loaves, or whatever you can find."

YLT 1 Samuel 21:3 and now, what is there under thy hand? five loaves give into my hand, or that which is found.'

- **on hand:** 1Sa 21:4 Jdg 9:29 Isa 3:6
- [1 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DAVID SEEKS BREAD FOR HIMSELF AND MEN

**Now therefore, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever can be found-** If I were Doeg listening to this conversation, I would wonder why does the king's man on a mission not come with sufficient supplies, especially since he is so close to the king's residence? David's story has a "[fishy smell](#)" about it!

**THOUGHT** - How should David have attempted to feed and equip himself and his men without engaging in deceit? What would a walk of faith have looked like in this predicament? Do we ever feel boxed in as if obedience is not even an option? In short, is David now walking (or fleeing) by sight or by faith? Has David forgotten the great Name of God, [Jehovah Jireh: The LORD Will Provide](#)? Have you forgotten that Name?

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**John Kitto - Daily Bible Illustrations** - It seems to us, that from the time of his parting with Jonathan—if not, indeed, from the time of his leaving Naioth—David had lost some of his trust and confidence in God. In contemplation of the implacable hatred with which he was pursued, and the dangers which beset all his movements; and in the face of the now publicly avowed intention to destroy him—his heart failed him, and he no longer rested secure in the confidence of the Lord's all-sufficient protection. He felt that his position was altered. Hitherto he had to meet, or rather to evade, what had been the private, unreasoning, and fluctuating antipathy of Saul. But now, the king no longer had any reserves or restraints; he had publicly denounced him as marked for slaughter—publicly declared his belief that he was a traitor who aimed at the crown, and with whom no terms were any longer to be kept. The fact, that he had been anointed by Samuel was now publicly known—even the Philistines knew it; and David could not but feel, that the public knowledge of that fact laid upon him heavy responsibilities, from which he had been before exempt; and that it was impossible now to hope for any reconciliation with a prince of Saul's temper, or to expect any safety within his reach. He might have reflected, that all these things did but tend to bring his claims and destination into public notice; and that the pursuing hatred of the king was in fact but the means of working out the plan of the Lord's providence towards him, and offered no real ground of discouragement or fear to one who believed that He was well able to accomplish all the purposes of his will. His plain course had

been, "by patient continuance in well doing," to put to shame the calumnies of malicious men; and, while taking all reasonable care for his own safety, to honor the Lord by the confidence evinced in the sufficiency of his protection. But it was not so. He began to look to the matter in its simply human points of view,—and then he began to despair—to be afraid. He who had subdued the lion and the bear—he who stood up against the giant, whose very presence dismayed the armies of Israel, now at last quailed at the fear of Saul; and having lost his shield of faith, he became, like the shorn Samson, "weak as other men," and has left us a memorial of what the best of men may become when left to themselves.

This is the view we take of the transactions now immediately before us. We have indeed met with elaborate and ingenious vindications of David's proceedings throughout, in which very learned and worthy men have labored to show in what degree it is lawful to lie and to deceive,—thereby compromising the sacred interests of truth and righteousness, in order to vindicate the character of Jesse's son. Now, the character of David is very dear to us, and he has ever been the object of our sympathy, our admiration, and our love. But truth is dearer to us than even the character of David; and we must not consent to call evil good, and to put darkness for light, because the evil was David's and the darkness David's. If we were to set about to prove that all David did was right, and the best that could be done, we should not only contradict the Scripture, but have work enough upon our hands. Far be it from us to claim for him that which belongs to One only of all who ever walked the earth. Let us admit the errors and weaknesses of David, as they occur, and our task becomes easy, and his history becomes consistent and clear; but let us uphold him through good and evil, through "the bitter and the sweet," and we soon find ourselves "in wandering mazes lost," and our perceptions of the broad landmarks between truth and error very painfully disordered.

Then, we regard David as under a spiritual cloud from the time he left Jonathan, onward to a point which we shall in the proper place indicate. This cloud, we first trace distinctly in his declaration to Jonathan, that there was but "a step between him and death." Now there were as many steps between him and death then as at any other time; but an excessive fear had come upon him, which for the time made him forgetful of God, and urged him to seek his safety by any feasible means, whether right or wrong.

So, first he comes to Nob, with not only a lie, but with a whole nest of lies, in his mouth—the more heinous when we consider the place in which, and the person to whom, they were used—and when we recollect the danger into which they were calculated to bring that friendly and venerable person, and did bring him and his, even unto death; whereas, had he been sincere and candid with the high-priest, there can be little doubt that he would have found means of discharging the duties of hospitality and assistance, without any apparent compromise of his duty to his sovereign. As it was, David, aware that the priest would be astonished to see a person of his rank arrive alone—without the usual guard and attendants, with whom he had usually been seen at that place—prepared an ingenious tale to delude the pontiff. He told him that he was upon most urgent and private business for the king, citing the very words which, as he said, Saul had used in intrusting this secret mission to him; and his servants, he alleged, had been directed to meet him at a certain place. This, of course, left the high-priest to understand, that whatever aid or assistance was rendered to him, would be advancing the king's service.

The unsuspecting high-priest, whose name was Ahimelech, finding David wanted bread, went so far as to give him some of that which had just been taken (at the commencement of the Sabbath) from the table of the shew-bread in the tabernacle, when the new bread had been laid on, and which, in strictness, it was not lawful for any but the priests to eat. There was no other; and we might be surprised at this, did we not know that bread was prepared from day to day. On any other day, bread might have been baked to meet any want that arose; but this could not be done on the Sabbath, and there was hence no bread to be had but the shew-bread, which would have sufficed for the use of the priests themselves on that day.

Having been furnished with bread, David intimated that in his haste he had left the court without a sword, and expressed a wish that one might be provided for him. He was told there was no sword but that of Goliath, which was wrapped up in a cloth, and laid up in the tabernacle. This David claimed, and it was given to him. This fact seems to prove, that in Israel swords were not worn even by military men when not on actual service or a journey.

David was not the only person detained at Nob over the Sabbath day. There was also present one Doeg, a proselyte of Edom, high in the confidence of Saul, and holding the post of chief herdsman, that is, having the management of this branch of the king's property. He was arrested, by the arrival of the Sabbath, on his way to Gibeah, and not therefore aware of the recent occurrences, and did not find any ground for question or interference. He knew, however, that David was in growing disfavor with his master, and he watched narrowly all that passed. David himself was well acquainted with the malignant temper of this man, and himself confessed afterwards, that the time he was misleading the high-priest, he was aware that the attention shown to him at Nob, would, through the presence of Doeg, bring them to ruin. "I knew it," he says, with bitter remorse, "I knew it that day when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul; I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house." Yes, it was no less. They did perish. When Saul was inquiring about David, and was lamenting that none would or could tell whither he had gone, Doeg related that he had seen him cherished by the priests at Nob, but he did not state the representations from David under which that assistance had been given. On hearing this, the king sent for all the priests, and on their arrival vehemently accused Ahimelech of being in a conspiracy with David against him. The high-priest repelled the charge with dignity and force, declaring that he was, at

the time, utterly ignorant of there being any cause of complaint against him. But the king would not be convinced; and his dreadful words were, "Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou and all thy father's house." And forthwith he ordered the guard to fall upon them, condescending to give a reason, "Because their hand is also with David, and because they knew that he fled, and did not show it me." But for once he was not obeyed. No hand moved against the priests of the Lord. If the king had been wise, he would have seen from this the danger of proceeding with this horrid purpose. But he was not wise; he would not be instructed. In his obstinate ferocity, he told Doeg to execute his purpose; and that person, assisted probably by his men, and not awed by the considerations which weighed upon the minds of native Israelites, turned upon them, and slew in that one day no fewer than "four score and five persons that did wear a linen ephod."

From that day Saul was a doomed and ruined man. The atrocious massacre; filled every human and religious mind with disgust and horror, and it made the priestly body throughout the whole land, and in all its departments, inveterately hostile, and led them to look towards David as the instrument of their security and vengeance. Abiathar, the son, and virtual successor, of the murdered high-priest, escaped to him, and by his presence, with the means of officially consulting the Lord, gave weight and dignity to his position, so that the public attention became more and more directed to him, while Saul declined daily in public estimation; and sunk more and more, day by day, into the deepest glooms of horror and despair.

**1 Samuel 21:4 The priest answered David and said, "There is no ordinary bread on hand, but there is consecrated bread; if only the young men have kept themselves from women."**

BGT 1 Samuel 21:5 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) κα πεκρθη ερες τ Δαυιδ κα επεν ο κ ε σ ν ρτοι β βηλοι π τ ν χερ μου τι λλ ρτοι γιοι ε σ ν ε πεφυλαγμα τ παιδ ρι σιν π γυναικ ς κα φ γεται

LXE 1 Samuel 21:4 And the priest answered David, and said, There are no common loaves under my hand, for I have none but holy loaves: if the young men have been kept at least from women, then they shall eat them.

KJV 1 Samuel 21:4 And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women.

NET 1 Samuel 21:4 The priest replied to David, "I don't have any ordinary bread at my disposal. Only holy bread is available, and then only if your soldiers have abstained from sexual relations with women."

CSB 1 Samuel 21:4 The priest told him, "There is no ordinary bread on hand. However, there is consecrated bread, but the young men may eat it only if they have kept themselves from women."

ESV 1 Samuel 21:4 And the priest answered David, "I have no common bread on hand, but there is holy bread-- if the young men have kept themselves from women."

NIV 1 Samuel 21:4 But the priest answered David, "I don't have any ordinary bread on hand; however, there is some consecrated bread here--provided the men have kept themselves from women."

NLT 1 Samuel 21:4 "We don't have any regular bread," the priest replied. "But there is the holy bread, which you can have if your young men have not slept with any women recently."

NRS 1 Samuel 21:4 The priest answered David, "I have no ordinary bread at hand, only holy bread-- provided that the young men have kept themselves from women."

NJB 1 Samuel 21:5 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) The priest replied to David, 'I have no ordinary bread to hand; there are only consecrated loaves of permanent offering -- provided that the men have kept themselves from women?'

NAB 1 Samuel 21:5 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) But the priest replied to David, "I have no ordinary bread on hand, only holy bread; if the men have abstained from women, you may eat some of that."

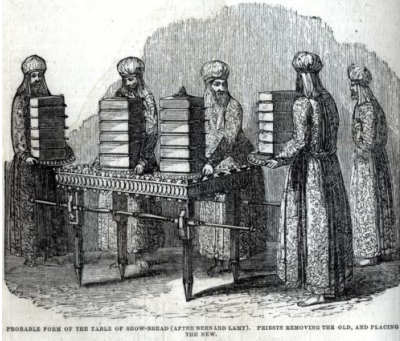
YLT 1 Samuel 21:4 And the priest answereth David, and saith, 'There is no common bread under my hand, but there is holy bread; if the youths have been kept only from women.'

- **consecrated bread:** 1Sa 21:6 Ex 25:30 Lev 24:5-9 Mt 12:3,4
- **if the young:** Ex 19:15 Zec 7:3 1Co 7:5
- [1 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passages:**

Exodus 25:30+ "You shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before Me at all times.

Leviticus 24:5-9+ "Then you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it; two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. 6 "You shall set them in two rows, six to a row, on the pure gold table before the LORD. 7 "You shall put pure frankincense on each row that it may be a memorial portion for the bread, even an offering by fire to the LORD. 8 "Every sabbath day he shall set it in order before the LORD continually; it is an everlasting covenant for the sons of Israel. 9 "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 LORD'S offerings by fire, his portion forever."



Priests Changing Showbread each Sabbath

## THE ONLY AVAILABLE BREAD: HOLY BREAD

The priest answered David and said, "There is no ordinary (profane, common - [chol](#); Lxx = bebelos - ritually unfit) bread on hand, but there is consecrated ([qodesh](#); [hagios](#) = set apart from common use) bread; if only the young men have kept themselves from women - As providence would have it, the only available bread was "holy" bread! Consecrated bread (commonly known as "[showbread](#)" or "bread of presence") was by Mosaic law reserved for the priests and was not for laymen but only by Aaronic priests. (Lev 24:9+, cf Ex 29:32,22) Note that even at this very early stage as a fugitive, David had other men with him.

**Bergen** - Receiving food from others while on a journey is a time-honored tradition in the Middle East (cf. Ge 18:3–8; 19:3; Jdg 19:20–21), so David's request was not exceptional. As a vested Aaronic priest, Ahimelech possessed authority to interpret and apply Torah guidelines to specific cases and could do so with some latitude. Since food was necessary for life and David and his men had no food, it was consistent with Torah principles to provide David and his men the means to sustain their lives.

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**Ordinary** (profane, common) ([02455](#)) [chol](#) is a noun which describes that which is profane, common or ordinary. **Chol** is derived from the verb [chalal](#). **Chol** is that which is not holy or set apart and thus not to be used for sacred worship or service. It is therefore not surprising that **chol** is always used in opposition to [qodesh](#) the noun meaning a holy thing, that which has been set apart for sacred use and which is not to be subjected to any use deemed profane or common.

**Consecrated** (holy, most holy, holy things, sanctuary) ([06944](#)) [qodesh](#) is a masculine noun which means set apart, distinct, unique. **Qodesh** describes that which has been consecrated or set apart for sacred use and was not to be used for common or profane tasks. If it were used for profane things, in simple terms, it became "not holy." It is fitting that the first OT use of **qodesh** was in God's instruction to Moses - "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is **holy** ground." (Ex 3:5). NET Note on Ex 3:5 "What made a mountain or other place holy was the fact that God chose that place to reveal himself or to reside among his people. Because God was in this place, the ground was different – it was holy." About 65x **qodesh** with the definite article is translated as "**sanctuary**" (NAS) (Ex 30:24, Ex 36:1, 3-4, etc) and describes a "building dedicated in service to God, a place in which the LORD is normally present when ritual and moral purity are practiced." (Swanson) In Isaiah 35:8 **qodesh** describes the "highway of **holiness**" which in the Millennium is the way leading the redeemed (Isa 35:9) back to Jerusalem, the throne of Messiah.

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**SHOWBREAD.** Heb. lehem happānîm, lit. 'bread of the face', i.e. bread set before the face or presence of God (Ex. 25:30; 35:13; 39:36, etc.) or lehem hamma'areket, lit. 'bread of ordering' (1 Ch. 9:32, etc.). After Moses had received divine instructions concerning the making of a table, dishes, spoons, covers and bowls for the holy place of the tabernacle, he was directed to place 'showbread' on the table. This arrangement was never to cease (Ex. 25:30). The **showbread** consisted of twelve baked cakes, made of fine flour, each containing two-tenths of an ephah (\*WEIGHTS AND MEASURES). These were set in two rows, six to a row (ma'areket Lev. 24:6). Upon each row (lit. 'the row', Lev. 24:7) of cakes frankincense was placed 'as a memorial' (le'azkārâ) and was

offered by fire to the Lord (Lev. 24:7). It was the duty of the priest each sabbath day to place fresh or hot bread on the table (1Sa. 21:6). The old cakes then became the perquisite of Aaron and his sons who ate them in the holy place because they were 'most holy' (Lev. 24:5–9). It was these loaves that David requested of Ahimelech, the priest, for himself and his men (1 Sa. 21:1–6; cf. Mt. 12:4; Mk. 2:26; Lk. 6:4).

The position of the table upon which the showbread was placed was in the holy place on the N side of the tabernacle opposite the lampstand (Ex. 26:35). The table was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold and bordered with a golden crown. It had a ring at each corner for the rods by which it was carried (Ex. 25:23–28). According to the original commandment it never failed to appear in the appointed place of God's worship (2 Ch. 4:19; 13:11). The Kohathites had charge of the showbread (1 Ch. 9:32).

The passages referred to do not themselves indicate the significance of the showbread, but it is possible to infer from these data that God is man's provider and sustainer, and that man lives constantly in the presence of God. This truth makes it obligatory for man to offer his life to God (Rom. 12:1). (D Freeman - [see online New Bible Dictionary](#))

**1 Samuel 21:5 David answered the priest and said to him, "Surely women have been kept from us as previously when I set out and the vessels of the young men were holy, though it was an ordinary journey; how much more then today will their vessels be holy?"**

BGT 1 Samuel 21:6 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) κα πεκρθη Δαυιδ τ ερε κα επεν ατ λλ π γυναικ ς  
πεσχ μεθα χθ ς κα τρτην μραν ν τ ξελθε ν με ε ς δ ν γ γονε π ντα τ παιδ ρια γνισμ να κα ατ δ ς  
β βηλος δι τι γιασθ σεται σ μερον δι τ σκε η μου

LXE 1 Samuel 21:5 And David answered the priest, and said to him, Yea, we have been kept from women for three days: when I came forth for the journey all the young men were purified; but this expedition is unclean, wherefore it shall be sanctified this day because of my weapons.

KJV 1 Samuel 21:5 And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel.

NET 1 Samuel 21:5 David said to the priest, "Certainly women have been kept away from us, just as on previous occasions when I have set out. The soldiers' equipment is holy, even on an ordinary journey. How much more so will they be holy today, along with their equipment!"

CSB 1 Samuel 21:5 David answered him, "I swear that women are being kept from us, as always when I go out to battle. The young men's bodies are consecrated even on an ordinary mission, so of course their bodies are consecrated today."

ESV 1 Samuel 21:5 And David answered the priest, "Truly women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition. The vessels of the young men are holy even when it is an ordinary journey. How much more today will their vessels be holy?"

NIV 1 Samuel 21:5 David replied, "Indeed women have been kept from us, as usual whenever I set out. The men's things are holy even on missions that are not holy. How much more so today!"

NLT 1 Samuel 21:5 "Don't worry," David replied. "I never allow my men to be with women when they are on a campaign. And since they stay clean even on ordinary trips, how much more on this one!"

NRS 1 Samuel 21:5 David answered the priest, "Indeed women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition; the vessels of the young men are holy even when it is a common journey; how much more today will their vessels be holy?"

NJB 1 Samuel 21:6 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) David replied to the priest, 'Certainly, women have been forbidden to us, as always when I set off on a campaign. The men's things are clean. Though this is a profane journey, they are certainly clean today as far as their things are concerned.'

NAB 1 Samuel 21:6 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) David answered the priest: "We have indeed been segregated from women as on previous occasions. Whenever I go on a journey, all the young men are consecrated-- even for a secular journey. All the more so today, when they are consecrated at arms!"

YLT 1 Samuel 21:5 And David answereth the priest, and saith to him, 'Surely, if women have been restrained from us as heretofore in my going out, then the vessels of the young men are holy, and it is a common way:

and also, surely to-day it is sanctified in the vessel.'

GWN 1 Samuel 21:5 David answered the priest, "Of course women have been kept away from us as usual when we go on a mission. The young men's bodies are kept holy even on ordinary campaigns. How much more then will their bodies be holy today?"

BBE 1 Samuel 21:5 And David in answer said to the priest, Certainly women have been kept from us; and as has been done before when I have gone out the arms of the young men were made holy, even though it was a common journey; how much more today will their arms be made holy.

- **the vessels:** Ac 9:15 1Th 4:3,4 2Ti 2:20,21 1Pe 3:17
- in a manner: Lev 24:9
- **how much more then today will their vessels be holy.** Lev 8:26
- [1 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DAVID AND HIS MEN ARE HOLY

**David answered the priest and said to him, "Surely women have been kept ([atsar](#); Lxx = [apechomai](#) used in 1Pe 2:11+) from us as previously when I set out** - Note that **kept** is the same Hebrew verb ([atsar](#)) used to describe Doeg in 1Sa 21:7 as "**detained**". **NLT** = "I never allow my men to be with women when they are on a campaign"**NET** = "Certainly women have been kept away from us, just as on previous occasions when I have set out." Having sexual relations within the past few days made one ceremonially (ritually) unclean and would prohibit the priest from giving them the consecrated bread.

Although David was alone, clearly men had already joined with him, for our Lord Jesus says "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and **he and his companions** became hungry." (Mk 2:25).

**And the vessels of the young men were holy ([qodesh](#); [hagiazo](#) = were purified), though it was an ordinary journey; how much more then today will their vessels *be holy* - **NJB** = "Though this is a profane journey, they are certainly clean today as far as their things are concerned." **NLT** = "And since they stay clean even on ordinary trips, how much more on this one!" **CSB** = "so of course their bodies are consecrated today." **GWN** = "The young men's bodies are kept holy even on ordinary campaigns. How much more then will their bodies be holy today?" Vessels is surely a metaphorical description of their bodies. I like that thought - our bodies are to be holy vessels, vessels set apart from the defiled culture and surrendered to God for His use as He desires (cp 1Co 6:19, 20+, 2Ti 2:21+) Note David was "**holy**" regarding women, but he was not "**wholly holy!**" David had just knowingly lied and yet now he affirms that he and his men are "**holy.**"**

**THOUGHT** - Can we not see in David's words a distinction between external and internal, between ritual versus relationship (I say *relationship* because sin separates us from God, from a sense of fellowship and communion with our Father)? Dear reader, perhaps your life is pristine on the outside to all who know you, but you are harboring some secret sins in your heart. You appear "clean" to others, but you are filthy to the eyes of God! None of us is perfect in regard to the internal aspects of our relationship to God (that is called "glorified!"), so we all praise God for His mercy and His provision of the "cleansing blood" of His Son (1Jn 1:7+) that washes us white as snow (Isa 1:18+), when we bring the hidden things into the light (i.e., confess what He already knew was true - 1Jn 1:9+).

[Anderson](#) to comment "You can always tell someone who is lying because here is LIE #2. He uses the word "indeed" (NIV) as a great affirmation, and then concludes his lie by saying, "How much more so today!"

**William MacDonald** - David said that his men were not only clean, but that they were holy (set apart) by virtue of their special mission. Shakespeare was right: "Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive!" (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**Wycliffe Bible Commentary** on **vessels** - Ewald understood this to refer to the young men's bodies, as in 1 Thess 4:4. The men were ceremonially clean; so they were fit to partake of holy things. Ahimelech departed from the Levitical law and observed the higher commandment of love to a neighbor (Lev 19:18). When Mk 2:26 assigns this action to the days of Abiathar, the high priest, the statement rests upon the copyist's memory, in which Ahimelech is confounded with his son Abiathar. It is also possible that the son acted as coadjutor to his father, as Eli's sons apparently did (cf. 1 Sam 4:4). (Borrow [Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#))

Trials never weaken us.

They only show us that we are weak



**Cyril Barber** comments that "It has been said that trials never weaken us. They only show us that we are weak. Through his experiences, David came to know his own weaknesses and learned firsthand the danger of taking his eyes off the Lord. Left to himself, he resorted to carnal expediency. The events through which he passed, showed him the wretchedness of such self-dependence. Through David's experience, we learn something of what it is to suffer wrongfully, to be unjustly deprived of love and companionship of one's wife and trusted friend, and to be forced to endure social ostracism and economic hardship. Under such conditions of anxiety, loneliness, and the constant fear of betrayal, the strongest heart would fail, and the most stoic spirit would be inclined to give way to either resentment or despair. David shows us that the response to injustice is never to seek revenge, nor to doubt God's providence. First we must be rooted in a strong sense of belonging to God the Father so that no matter what storms arise, we trust ourselves entirely to His care. Through His inner working, we are given the ability or feeling of competence to face each God-appointed task with confidence, no matter how difficult it may appear." ([Books of Samuel - The Sovereignty of God](#))

**1 Samuel 21:6 So the priest gave him consecrated bread; for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence which was removed from before the LORD, in order to put hot bread in its place when it was taken away.**

BGT 1 Samuel 21:7 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ Ἀβιμελεχ εἰς τοὺς ῥητοὺς τὸ ἄρτος τῆς προθέσεως  
τι οὐκ ἔμελλεν ἔσθαι ἄρτος ἐκεῖ, ἀλλὰ ἄρτοι τοῦ προσώπου οὗ φημι νοικέω προσώπου κυρίου παρατεθέντων θερμὸν  
μῆρ λαβέντων αὐτοὺς

LXE 1 Samuel 21:6 So Abimelech the priest gave him the shewbread; for there were no loaves there, but only the presence loaves which had been removed from the presence of the Lord, in order that hot bread should be set on, on the day on which he took them.

KJV 1 Samuel 21:6 So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.

NET 1 Samuel 21:6 So the priest gave him holy bread, for there was no bread there other than the bread of the Presence. It had been removed from before the LORD in order to replace it with hot bread on the day it had been taken away.

CSB 1 Samuel 21:6 So the priest gave him the consecrated bread, for there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence that had been removed from the presence of the LORD. When the bread was removed, it had been replaced with warm bread.

ESV 1 Samuel 21:6 So the priest gave him the holy bread, for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence, which is removed from before the LORD, to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away.

NIV 1 Samuel 21:6 So the priest gave him the consecrated bread, since there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence that had been removed from before the LORD and replaced by hot bread on the day it was taken away.

NLT 1 Samuel 21:6 Since there was no other food available, the priest gave him the holy bread-- the Bread of the Presence that was placed before the LORD in the Tabernacle. It had just been replaced that day with fresh bread.

NRS 1 Samuel 21:6 So the priest gave him the holy bread; for there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence, which is removed from before the LORD, to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away.

NJB 1 Samuel 21:7 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) The priest then gave him what had been consecrated, for the only bread there was the loaves of permanent offering, which is taken out of Yahweh's presence, to be replaced by warm bread on the day when it is removed.

NAB 1 Samuel 21:7 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) So the priest gave him holy bread, for no other bread was on hand except the showbread which had been removed from the LORD'S presence and replaced by fresh bread when it was taken away.

YLT 1 Samuel 21:6 And the priest giveth to him the holy thing, for there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence which is turned aside from the presence of Jehovah to put hot bread in the day of its being taken away.

- **gave him:** Mt 12:3,4 Mk 2:25-27 Lu 6:3,4

- **bread:** Lev 24:5-9
- [1 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Mark 2:25-27+ And He \*said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions became hungry; 26 how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests, and he also gave it to those who were with him?" 27 Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.

Leviticus 24:5-9+ "Then you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it; two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. 6 "You shall set them in two rows, six to a row, on the pure gold table before the LORD. 7 "You shall put pure frankincense on each row that it may be a memorial portion for the bread, even an offering by fire to the LORD. 8 "Every sabbath day he shall set it in order before the LORD continually; it is an everlasting covenant for the sons of Israel. 9 "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 LORD'S offerings by fire, his portion forever."

1 Thessalonians 4:4 that each of you know how to possess his own **vessel** in sanctification and honor,

**So** - Term of conclusion. The priest heard that David and his men were on a special mission from the king and were hungry and were ritually clean, so he concludes he could give them the consecrated bread.

**the priest gave him consecrated ([qodesh](#)) bread; for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence** (see [showbread](#)) **which was removed from before the LORD ([Jehovah - Yahweh](#)), in order to put hot bread in its place when it was taken away** - The Septuagint translates **consecrated ([qodesh](#))** as "bread of the presence (Lxx = [prothesis](#) = literally "a placing before")" which is synonymous with "**bread of the Presence**" (Lxx = [prosopon](#) = face) both terms speaking of this bread being before the face of Yahweh. "Hot bread" was put out before the face of the LORD weekly in the Tabernacle. [As alluded to above](#) "It was the duty of the priest **each sabbath day to place fresh or hot bread on the table** (1Sa. 21:6). The old cakes then became the perquisite of Aaron and his sons who ate them in the holy place because they were 'most holy' (Lev. 24:5-9). It was these loaves that David requested of Ahimelech, the priest, for himself and his men (1Sa. 21:1-6; cf. Mt. 12:4; Mk. 2:26; Lk. 6:4)."

When moral and ceremonial obligations come into conflict, the ceremonial gives way to the moral.

[Michael Andrus](#) - Under normal circumstances, Jesus says, you shouldn't generally break religious rules, but **people** are more important than **things**, and one must **live by the spirit of the Law, not the letter!**

**Wycliffe Bible Commentary** on **bread of the Presence** (KJV = shewbread) - called because it was solemnly placed as an offering in the presence of Jehovah. A golden table for the shewbread in Solomon's Temple is mentioned in 1Ki 7:48; and the form of the table, as it existed in Herod's Temple, is preserved in the sculptures on the Arch of Titus at Rome. The shewbread was renewed every Sabbath, and the loaves that remained were to be eaten by the priests in the Holy Place. Jesus referred to this incident (Mt 12:3, 4; Mk 2:25, 26; Lk 6:3-5), to show that when moral and ceremonial obligations come into conflict, the ceremonial gives way to the moral. The high priest was bound to preserve David's life, even at the expense of a ceremonial rule. (Borrow [Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#))

**John Davis** - According to the law, the old bread was to be eaten by the priest and only in the holy place (Lev. 24:9); however, an exception was made in this situation. The whole transaction was not carried out in secret, and was openly witnessed by a man who would ultimately bring destruction to the city of Nob. (Borrow [Israel: from conquest to exile : a commentary on Joshua-2 Kings](#))

**Eugene Merrill** points out that "David's eating illustrated a concession that the Law permitted—life is more holy than bread (Matt. 12:7-8). (Borrow [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Old Testament](#))

[J. Vernon McGee](#) points out, "In giving David and his men the bread, the priest was breaking the letter of the law, but not the spirit of the law. You will recall that the Pharisees challenged the Lord Jesus Christ about breaking the law, which He did not do. The Lord refuted their accusations by referring to this incident in the life of David."

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[Michael Andrus](#) - The point I would like to draw from this little vignette is that we too may experience a wilderness of physical deprivation. For us it is probably not going to be caused by hunger or a lack of ammunition. It will more likely come in the form of financial disaster or medical emergency or loss of employment. Sometimes these trials come one on top of another and can be overwhelming. The world calls it "bad luck," but that is the vocabulary of fatalism not faith. If there is a sovereign God, what others

call “luck” is really His providence being worked out according to His perfect plan.

But why does God include the wilderness of physical deprivation as part of His plan? Sometimes it may be discipline for disobedience in our lives. But more often, I think, God brings trials across our paths to test our metal and strengthen us for what lies ahead. David, for sure, was not experiencing hunger in the wilderness because of sin in his life; on the contrary, he was there because he was a righteous man running from a wicked king, but all the while God was preparing Him for greater service. Brokenness, as a matter of fact, is a requirement for exceptional service, and there's no place like the wilderness to experience brokenness.

I don't know when David wrote the 23rd Psalm, but this and many other Psalms provide his answer to the wilderness of physical deprivation. Read Psalm 23.....Do you know the Lord as your shepherd, your guide, your protector, your provider? He's always available when you find yourself in the wilderness of physical deprivation. He may not relieve the pain immediately, but He will walk with you through it and teach you lessons you could learn in no other way.

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#### **QUESTION - [Was it wrong for David to eat the showbread in 1 Samuel 21:1–6?](#)**

**ANSWER** - In 1 Samuel 21, David is on the run from [Saul](#). David comes to the town of Nob, where the [tabernacle](#) was, and meets with Ahimelech the priest. David asks for food, but Ahimelech has nothing but the showbread, which was consecrated for use in the tabernacle. Despite the law that reserved the showbread exclusively for the sons of Aaron (Leviticus 24:9), “the priest gave him the consecrated bread, since there was no bread there except the bread of the Presence that had been removed from before the Lord and replaced by hot bread on the day it was taken away” (1 Samuel 21:6).

The issue of David eating the [showbread](#) comes up in Jesus' response to the Pharisees when they accuse Him of breaking the Sabbath. His disciples had been picking some kernels of grain and eating them as they walked through a field (Matthew 12:1–8; Mark 2:23–28; Luke 6:1–5). The [Pharisees](#) objected: “Look!” they said to Jesus. “Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:2).

In response, Jesus cites 1 Samuel 21: “Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread—which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests” (Matthew 12:3–4). Jesus seems to use what David did regarding the showbread as a justification for what His disciples were doing. If that is the case, then David must have been in the right. There are several views on if or why it was allowable for David to eat the showbread.

Some have postulated that, since this was the old bread for the priests to eat, not fresh bread currently in use, the priests could give it to someone else. However, there is nothing in the law regarding the showbread that indicates that the priests were allowed to give it away—they were supposed to eat it (Leviticus 24:8–9).

Later in the narrative of 1 Samuel, Saul accuses the priest of “inquiring of God” for David (1 Samuel 22:13). This fact leads some to suggest that the priest asked for and received special permission from the Lord to give the bread to David. However, the text is not clear that the priest did actually inquire of the Lord for David, much less that the inquiry was about bread and that the Lord responded affirmatively. This view goes beyond anything even remotely suggested in the text.

Third, some suggest that, in the case of an emergency, the ceremonial rules could be set aside for the “greater good.” David seems to appeal to the priest on this basis, and, ultimately, this may have been why the priest gave him the bread. The priest did make sure that David and his men had “kept themselves from women” (1 Samuel 21:4–5), as sexual relations would have made them [ceremonially unclean](#) for the day (see Leviticus 15:18).

Finally, it is possible that both David and the priests simply have an inadequate understanding of the law. They both seem to assume that, if David's men are in a state of ritual purity, then eating the showbread would be proper. (Of course, it is also possible that this was simply a quick justification that would not have held up under scrutiny.)

If Jesus had never commented on this incident, there would be little question about David's actions. In fleeing for his life, he lied to a priest, tricked him perhaps, and ate bread that was not meant for him. While David was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14), he had many failures and shortcomings, and he is not an example to follow in every instance.

The words of Jesus seem to make clear that David was violating the law by eating the showbread. Jesus says it was unlawful: “He went into the house of God, and he and his companions broke the law by eating the sacred loaves of bread” (Matthew 12:4NLT). Taken at face value, these words show that David was a lawbreaker.

On the other hand, it is possible that Jesus was using irony when He said David did what was “not lawful.” Jesus could have been using what today we call “air quotes.” In the next verse, Jesus also says that the priests “desecrate” the Sabbath in the performance

of their Sabbath-day duties (Matthew 12:5). It is obvious that, when Jesus uses the word *desecrate*, He is speaking tongue-in-cheek. Could He be doing the same thing with the description *not lawful* in verse 4?

As Jesus pointed out, priests work on the [Sabbath](#), so, clearly, there are some exceptions to the Sabbath-day rule (Matthew 12:5). Could this also imply that there are some “common sense” exceptions to other laws—such as the one regarding the special bread that David ate? In Matthew 12:7 Jesus quotes from the Old Testament: “I desire mercy not sacrifice” (Hosea 6:6). This suggests that alleviating human suffering is more important than following the letter of the law. Yes, David broke the letter of the law, but those in need received mercy.

In a parallel passage, Jesus states, “The Sabbath was [made for man](#), not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). In other words, the Sabbath was designed to serve and benefit man, not the other way around. Caring for human needs takes precedence over keeping the letter of the law. Jesus uses this principle of caring for others as a rationale for healing on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:9–14). This line of reasoning corresponds with the third view, above: in cases of emergency or to extend mercy, the ceremonial rules can be bent. There’s no need to stand on ceremony when someone is in distress.

In the same context, Jesus also points out that He is Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8; Luke 6:5). That is, He is the One who makes the rules—a definite claim to deity. As [Lord of the Sabbath](#), He can determine what is allowable on the Sabbath. Certainly, God could have granted David special permission to eat the showbread, just as Jesus could grant special permission for the disciples to pick and eat grain on the Sabbath.

Jesus’ main point seems to be that the Pharisees are being hypocritical nitpickers. What David did was not lawful, yet they saw David as a great hero. What Jesus’ disciples did was lawful since they were not truly harvesting grain but simply plucking some grains to munch on as they walked along. The Pharisees did not condemn David for actually breaking the law, but they were willing to condemn Jesus for doing something that was actually allowable.

If the Pharisees justified David in eating the showbread because of the “greater good,” then they should have no problem with what Jesus did. If the Pharisees justified David on the premise that God could have given him special permission, then they should have no problem with Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, who had the authority to make exceptions. If they had no problem with David, a flawed man doing something unlawful, then they should have no problem with David’s greater Son doing something they did not like, but which was legal. Ultimately, Jesus’ commentary is not on what David did but on the Pharisees’ opinion of David versus their treatment of Jesus, the Son of David.

It seems clear that, when David ate the showbread, he broke the law, as he did many other times in other ways. God overlooked David’s sins in view of the final sacrifice that would be offered on the cross (Romans 3:25–26).

There are many places in the Old Testament where the biblical characters do things that are neither condemned nor commended. In such instances, we must be careful about using their actions as patterns to follow. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### **QUESTION - [Why does Jesus call Abiathar the high priest in Mark 2:26, when 1 Samuel 21 indicates it was Ahimelech?](#)**

**ANSWER** - In Mark 2:26, Jesus refers to “Abiathar the high priest” who was on hand when David and his men ate the showbread from the tabernacle in Nob. This statement has raised some interpretive questions because, in 1 Samuel 21, Ahimelech seems to have been the high priest who helped David, not Abiathar.

In Mark 2, Jesus has a discussion with the Pharisees, who were critical of Jesus and His disciples for “harvesting grain” on the Sabbath—in point of fact, the disciples were simply plucking some heads of grain to munch on as they walked through a grainfield (Mk 2:23). In defending the lawfulness of His disciples’ action, Jesus cited the Old Testament story of David and Abiathar (or was it Ahimelech?) at the tabernacle (Mark 2:25–26; cf. 1 Samuel 21:1–6).

In 1 Samuel 21, David approaches “Ahimelech the priest” in Nob and asks for provisions for his men (1Sa 21:1–5). David and his men were on the run from Saul, but David keeps that fact from Ahimelech. Ahimelech gives David some of the [“bread of the Presence”](#) (verse 6) and then, at David’s request, gives him Goliath’s sword, which was being kept there in Nob (1Sa 21:8–9). Later, when King Saul summons the priests to Gibeah for interrogation, Ahimelech is the priests’ spokesman (1Sa 22:6–14). The passage implies that Ahimelech is the chief priest during the time David fled from Saul. To explain why Jesus spoke of Abiathar as the high priest during that time, several theories have been put forward:

- 1) Since Abiathar was the son of Ahimelech (2Sa 8:17), it is possible that both men took part in high priestly duties. We see a similar arrangement in the time of Eli, when Eli’s sons seemed to have shared his duties (1Sa 4:4); and in the time of Christ, when [Annas and his son-in-law Caiaphas](#) both served in the role of high priest (Luke 3:2; John 18:13).

2) Abiathar was more closely associated with David than Ahimelech was. Abiathar was present when David came to the tabernacle, and he was the sole survivor of [Doeg the Edomite's](#) slaughter of the priests of Nob (1 Samuel 22:18–20). Abiathar immediately showed his loyalty to David: he brought the ephod to David and later oversaw the transport of the ark of the covenant to David and was a long-time high priest during David's reign (1 Samuel 23:6–9; 2 Samuel 15:29).

3) Abiathar, being present in Nob when David visited the tabernacle, is called the “high priest” in anticipation of his future title. We often do this very type of thing; for example, we may speak familiarly of “President Eisenhower” giving the order to invade Normandy on D-Day, although D-Day was almost nine years before Eisenhower was inaugurated President.

Mark 2:26 is a difficult passage, but Jesus was not in error, and He did not contradict 1 Samuel 21. There are workable explanations for why Jesus called the high priest Abiathar, and His words in Mark 2 can be reconciled with the Old Testament account. [GotQuestions.org](#)

#### Related Resources:

- [Who was Abiathar in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

### 1 Samuel 21:7 Now one of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's shepherds.

BGT 1 Samuel 21:8 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) κα κε ν ν τ ν παιδαρ ων το Σαουλ ν τ μ ρ κε ν συνεχ μενος νεεσσαραν ν πιον κυρ ου κα νομα α τ Δωηκ Σ ρος ν μων τ ς μι νους Σαουλ

LXE 1 Samuel 21:7 And there was there on that day one of Saul's servants detained before the Lord, and his name was Doeg the Syrian, tending the mules of Saul.

KJV 1 Samuel 21:7 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 chiefest of the herdmen that belonged to Saul.

NET 1 Samuel 21:7 (One of Saul's servants was there that day, detained before the LORD. His name was Doeg the Edomite, who was in charge of Saul's shepherds.)

CSB 1 Samuel 21:7 One of Saul's servants, detained before the LORD, was there that day. His name was Doeg the Edomite, chief of Saul's shepherds.

ESV 1 Samuel 21:7 Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD. His name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's herdsmen.

NIV 1 Samuel 21:7 Now one of Saul's servants was there that day, detained before the LORD; he was Doeg the Edomite, Saul's head shepherd.

NLT 1 Samuel 21:7 Now Doeg the Edomite, Saul's chief herdsman, was there that day, having been detained before the LORD.

NRS 1 Samuel 21:7 Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD; his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's shepherds.

NJB 1 Samuel 21:8 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) Now one of Saul's servants happened to be there that day, detained in Yahweh's presence; his name was Doeg the Edomite and he was the strongest of Saul's shepherds.

NAB 1 Samuel 21:8 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) One of Saul's servants was there that day, detained before the LORD; his name was Doeg the Edomite, and he was Saul's chief henchman.

YLT 1 Samuel 21:7 And there is a man of the servants of Saul on that day detained before Jehovah, and his name is Doeg the Edomite, chief of the shepherds whom Saul hath.

- **detained:** Jer 7:9-11 Eze 33:31 Am 8:5 Mt 15:8 Ac 21:26,27
- **Doeg:** 1Sa 22:9 Ps 52:1
- **shepherds:** 1Sa 11:5 Ge 13:7,8 26:20 1Ch 27:29 2Ch 26:10
- [1 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



## Related Passage:

Psalm 52:1 For the choir director. A Maskil of David, when **Doeg the Edomite** came and told Saul and said to him, "David has come to the house of Ahimelech." Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? The lovingkindness of God endures all day long.

## DASTARDLY DOEG DESCRIBED

**Dastardly** often implies behavior that is both cowardly and treacherous or skulking or outrageous. a dastardly attack on unarmed civilians

**Now one of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained** ([atsar](#); Lxx- [sunecho](#) - can mean hold in custody) **before the LORD** ([Jehovah - Yahweh](#)); **and his name was Doeg** ("fearful," "anxious") **the Edomite, the chief of Saul's shepherds** - This somewhat parenthetical detail will **come front and center** in the next chapter as **Doeg** reveals to Saul David's interaction with the priests. Is this just "bad luck" or part of God's providence? (There is no such thing as luck with our sovereign God!) **NAB** paraphrases **Doeg** as one of "Saul's chief henchman." As the story unfolds, Doeg certainly fulfills the criteria of a spy and an assassin! The English translation of the Septuagint has Doeg was "tending the mules of Saul." **GWN** paraphrases "detained" as "was obligated to stay in the LORD's presence." Another version has "He had been made to stay at the holy tent for a while." (1Sa 21:7NIRV) What does this mean? Why was **Doeg** being made to remain in the LORD'S presence? Commentators are not in agreement. Charles Ryrie has one reasonable explanation commenting that "Doeg was detained at the sanctuary at Nob as a proselyte or because of a vow, a need for cleansing, or because he was suspected of leprosy (Lev 13:4)." (Borrow [Ryrie Study Bible](#)) Doeg may be an Edomite from Saul's victory over Edom in 1Sa 14:47.

**John Walton** on **chief of Saul's shepherds** - Doeg the Edomite is probably a mercenary in the employ of Saul. Many translations allow a slight emendation, rendering "runner" for this word. This would fit well with his function as a royal messenger or spy, whose job was to carry instructions throughout the kingdom and report unusual happenings like David's visit to Nob. A similar use for royal messengers is found in the Mari texts. Nevertheless, chief of shepherds is a common administrative designation, used, for instance, in the titles of the scribe who copied the Ugaritic Myth of Baal and Mot. ([IVP Background Commentary](#))

**Don Anderson** poses an interesting reason for **Doeg** being **detained** - He has been detained before the Lord on this occasion in order to teach the lesson to David of the high cost of lying." Ed comment - Certainly Doeg was not there by accident but by the sovereignty of God, so there is truth in Anderson's comment.

**John Davis** - The question has been raised as to why an Edomite would be present at a place like this, and holding the position of "chiefest of the herdman that belonged to Saul". Three views have been suggested in solving this problem. The first is that Doeg was a proselyte and therefore had won acceptance in the royal court of Saul as a religious functionary. Another view is that the term "Edomite" is used only as geographical designation and Doeg was, in effect, an Israelite who had lived in Edom. The final suggestion is that Doeg was one of many captives brought back as a result of Saul's campaign recorded in 1Sa 14:47.(Borrow [Israel: from conquest to exile : a commentary on Joshua-2 Kings](#))

**Brian Bell** - Beware, sin is expensive! - (1Sa 22:22) God may forgive & restore you, but the consequences of your sin may involve not only you but others who are innocent.

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**Detained** (checked, restricted, retained)[06113](#)) [atsar](#) to restrain, retain, hold back, shut in, to keep in slavery, to keep from, to prevent (Ge 16:2). Of stopping something like plague (Nu 16:48, 30, 25:8). Shutting up the heavens (Dt 11:17). Refers to one enslaved or kept in bondage (Dt 32:36). To bind as in prison (2Ki 17:4). This same verb **atsar** is used in 1Sa 21:5 to describe David's men as having "kept" themselves from women.

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## QUESTION - [Who was Doeg the Edomite?](#)

**ANSWER** - Doeg the Edomite is first mentioned in 1 Samuel 21:7 and described as a servant of [King Saul](#). Doeg is called Saul's chief shepherd, which probably means he was in charge of all the servants tending Saul's animals. Doeg was an Edomite, not a Hebrew. Israel had been at war with Edom, so Doeg may have entered Saul's service as either a captive or a traitor to his people (1 Samuel 14:47).

Doeg was an evil man. Although he pretended to serve Israel, he served only himself. One day while David was running from Saul, he stopped to seek assistance at the tabernacle in Nob, and it so happened that Doeg was also at the tabernacle that day, "detained before the Lord" (1 Samuel 21:7). It could be that Doeg was at the tabernacle because it was the sabbath day, and he could travel



no farther without breaking the law; or it could be that he was there to offer a sacrifice to complete a vow or to be ceremonially cleansed. Regardless of why Doeg was there, this was a fateful encounter with David.

At the tabernacle, the priest Ahimelech gave David and his men some [consecrated bread](#) from the table of showbread (1 Samuel 21:6) and Goliath's sword (verses 8–9). Doeg witnessed all this and later told Saul of David's whereabouts: "I saw the son of Jesse come to Ahimelech son of Ahitub at Nob. Ahimelech inquired of the Lord for him; he also gave him provisions and the sword of Goliath the Philistine" (1 Samuel 22:9–10). By sharing this information while Saul was in a petulant mood, Doeg placed all the Lord's priests in peril. King Saul summoned Ahimelech and his family and, when they stood before the king, charged them with treason. "Then the king ordered the guards at his side: 'Turn and kill the priests of the Lord, because they too have sided with David. They knew he was fleeing, yet they did not tell me'" (verse 17).

Saul's Israelite guards refused to murder God's anointed priests, so the king turned to Doeg the Edomite and told him to kill them. The wicked Doeg may have seen this as an opportunity to ingratiate himself with the king, so he murdered eighty-five priests, but he did not stop there. Doeg continued the slaughter by wiping out the entire population of Nob, the city where David had sought help: "He also put to the sword Nob, the town of the priests, with its men and women, its children and infants, and its cattle, donkeys and sheep" (1 Samuel 22:19).

One priest, a son of Ahimelech, escaped and ran to join David's band of men. He told David what had happened. Sorrowful, David replied, "That day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, I knew he would be sure to tell Saul. I am responsible for the death of your whole family. Stay with me; don't be afraid. The man who wants to kill you is trying to kill me too. You will be safe with me" (1 Samuel 22:22–23).

Doeg the Edomite was a self-seeking, bloodthirsty man and an enemy of God. After the incident at Nob, David wrote Psalm 52: "Why do you boast of evil, you mighty hero? Why do you boast all day long, you who are a disgrace in the eyes of God? . . . You love evil rather than good, falsehood rather than speaking the truth" (Psalm 52:1, 3). Destruction is promised for the Doegs of the world: "Surely God will bring you down to everlasting ruin; . . . he will uproot you from the land of the living" (verse 5). In contrast, the man who follows the Lord has hope for the future: "But I am like an olive tree flourishing in the house of God; I trust in God's unfailing love for ever and ever" (verse 8). [GotQuestions.org](#)

**1 Samuel 21:8 David said to Ahimelech, "Now is there not a spear or a sword on hand? For I brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's matter was urgent."**

BGT 1 Samuel 21:9 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) κα ε πεν Δαυιδ πρ ς Αβιμελεχ δ ε σπιν ντα θα π τ ν χε ρ σου δ ρυ ομφα α τι τ ν ομφα αν μου κα τ σκε η ο κ ε ληφα ν τ χειρ μου τι ν τ μα το βασιλ ως κατ σπουδ ν

LXE 1 Samuel 21:8 And David said to Abimelech, See if there is here under thy hand spear or sword, for I have not brought in my hand my sword or my weapons, for the word of the king was urgent.

KJV 1 Samuel 21:8 And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste.

NET 1 Samuel 21:8 David said to Ahimelech, "Is there no sword or spear here at your disposal? I don't have my own sword or equipment in hand due to the urgency of the king's instructions."

CSB 1 Samuel 21:8 David said to Ahimelech, "Do you have a spear or sword on hand? I didn't even bring my sword or my weapons since the king's mission was urgent."

ESV 1 Samuel 21:8 Then David said to Ahimelech, "Then have you not here a spear or a sword at hand? For I have brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste."

NIV 1 Samuel 21:8 David asked Ahimelech, "Don't you have a spear or a sword here? I haven't brought my sword or any other weapon, because the king's business was urgent."

NLT 1 Samuel 21:8 David asked Ahimelech, "Do you have a spear or sword? The king's business was so urgent that I didn't even have time to grab a weapon!"

NRS 1 Samuel 21:8 David said to Ahimelech, "Is there no spear or sword here with you? I did not bring my sword or my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste."

NJB 1 Samuel 21:9 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) David then said to Ahimelech, 'Have you no spear or sword here to hand? I did not bring either my sword or my weapons with me, because the king's business was

urgent.'

NAB 1 Samuel 21:9 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) David then asked Ahimelech: "Do you have a spear or a sword on hand? I brought along neither my sword nor my weapons, because the king's business was urgent."

YLT 1 Samuel 21:8 And David saith to Ahimelech, 'And is there not here under thy hand spear or sword? for neither my sword nor my vessels have I taken in my hand, for the matter of the king was urgent.'

GWN 1 Samuel 21:8 David asked Ahimelech, "Don't you have a spear or a sword here? I didn't take either my spear or any other weapon because the king's business was urgent."

- [1 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DAVID CONTINUES HIS DECEPTION

**David said to Ahimelech, "Now is there not a spear or a sword on hand? For I brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me** - As noted earlier, this definitely a cause for some suspicion of David as what warrior would go on a mission with his weapons? David, how about a sling, a stone, and the Lord of Hosts? (Read 1Sa 17:50+)

**because the king's matter was urgent** - [Liar, liar, pants on fire](#) is what I used to tell my children when they lied blatantly! **Because** is a term of explanation as to why David brought no weapons. Sadly David tells another lie. What was urgent was his need to flee Naioth while Saul and his men were prophesying and God's Spirit was providing David an opportunity to escape. Sin is a little like "compound interest," for a little time goes by and we only "compound" our problem with another sin!

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### RIGHT QUICK The king's business required haste. 1 Samuel 21:8. - Vance Havner

When I was a boy, my father had a habit of calling me to do things with the summons, "Come, right quick!" I didn't mind the come but the right quick irritated me sometimes. He didn't mean, "Take your time, think it over, come if you feel like it." I had the impression that I had better feel like it! Father considered himself to be the head of the house and the rest of us were inclined to agree with him. I didn't talk back. We didn't have much dialogue in those days! The big word with God is now. If we are going to get anything done for Him, we had better get at it now. He is the I Am, the Eternal Contemporary. And the time is short. He would have us come and go and do right quick!

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### Robert Neighbor - "Because the King's business required "haste." (1 Sam. 21:8.)

The King's command, thou must obey it,  
Begin to do, not to delay it,  
Strike in your stake;  
Don't tarry till you feel more like it,  
Don't disobey, if you dislike it,  
Your duty shake;  
Just say, "I will," and start to do it,  
The King will surely see you through it,  
So undertake.

David said to Abimelech, "The king's business required haste." When the Queen of England asked a merchant to go on a journey for the crown, he is said to have demurred, complaining that his own business interests were at stake. The Queen is reputed to have replied, "You attend to my business, and I will attend to yours." When God speaks to us, there is no place for quibbling. It is ours not to reason why, it is ours but to do, and, if necessary, to die.

One other thing: Obedience must be prompt. Obedience delayed, is obedience robbed of its glory. To hesitate is to impugn the wisdom, or to question the authority of our Lord.

The angel said to Philip, "Arise and go." "And he arose and went." When the call from Macedonia came to Paul in a vision by night, Paul, loosing from Troas, came with a straight course to Samothracia, and on to Philippi, Macedonia's chief city.

Jesus Christ never turned aside from the work His Father had given Him to do until He could say, "I have finished the work"; then, He lay down His armor and went back to the Father.

The servant who wrapped his pound in a napkin brought sorrow to his Lord and lost his reward. Let us not be classed among the "do-nothings."

Help me to do it all, not part;  
To do it with a willing heart,  
To do it ere I must depart  
    To be with Thee;  
May naught assigned be left undone,  
And nothing stopped when scarce begun;  
May ev'ry fight be fully won,  
    And then, with Thee.

**1 Samuel 21:9** Then the priest said, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah, **behold**, it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod; if you would take it for yourself, take it. For there is no other except it here." And David said, "There is none like it; give it to me."

BGT 1 Samuel 21:10 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) κα ε πεν ερε ς δο ομφα α Γολιαθ το λλοφ λου ν π ταξας ν τ κοιλ δι Ηλα κα ατ νειλημ νη ν ματ ε τα την λ μψ σεαυτ λαβ τι ο κ σπιν τ ρα π ρεξ τα της ντα θα κα ε πεν Δαιιδ δο ο κ σπιν σπερ ατ δ ς μοι α τ ν

LXE 1 Samuel 21:9 And the priest said, Behold the sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou smotest in the valley of Ela; and it is wrapt in a cloth: if thou wilt take it, take it for thyself, for there is no other except it here. And David said, Behold, there is none like it; give it me.

KJV 1 Samuel 21:9 And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is no other save that here. And David said, There is none like that; give it me.

NET 1 Samuel 21:9 The priest replied, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you struck down in the valley of Elah, is wrapped in a garment behind the ephod. If you wish, take it for yourself. Other than that, there's nothing here." David said, "There's nothing like it! Give it to me!"

CSB 1 Samuel 21:9 The priest replied, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the Valley of Elah, is here, wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you want to take it for yourself, then take it, for there isn't another one here." "There's none like it!" David said. "Give it to me."

ESV 1 Samuel 21:9 And the priest said, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you struck down in the Valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you will take that, take it, for there is none but that here." And David said, "There is none like that; give it to me."

NIV 1 Samuel 21:9 The priest replied, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the Valley of Elah, is here; it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. If you want it, take it; there is no sword here but that one." David said, "There is none like it; give it to me."

NLT 1 Samuel 21:9 "I only have the sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah," the priest replied. "It is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod. Take that if you want it, for there is nothing else here." "There is nothing like it!" David replied. "Give it to me!"

NRS 1 Samuel 21:9 The priest said, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah, is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod; if you will take that, take it, for there is none here except that one." David said, "There is none like it; give it to me."

NJB 1 Samuel 21:10 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) The priest replied, 'The sword of Goliath the Philistine whom you killed in the Valley of the Terebinth is here, wrapped in a piece of clothing behind the ephod; if you care to take it, do so, for that is the only one here.' David said, 'There is nothing like that one; give it to me.'

NAB 1 Samuel 21:10 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) The priest replied: "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the Vale of the Terebinth, is here (wrapped in a mantle) behind an ephod. If you wish to take that, take it; there is no sword here except that one." David said: "There is none to match it. Give it to me!"

YLT 1 Samuel 21:9 And the priest saith, 'The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou didst smite in the valley of Elah, lo, it is wrapped in a garment behind the ephod, if it thou dost take to thyself, take; for there is none other save it in this place.' And David saith, 'There is none like it -- give it to me.'

GWN 1 Samuel 21:9 The chief priest answered, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the Elah Valley, is here. It is wrapped in a cloth behind the priestly ephod. If you want to take it, take it. There's no other weapon here." David said, "There's none like it. Let me have the sword."

- **The sword:** 1Sa 17:51-54
- **the valley:** 1Sa 17:2,50
- **behold:** 1Sa 31:10
- **behind:** Ex 28:6-14
- [1 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Ahimelech Giving the Sword of Goliath to David  
[Aert de Gelder](#)

## DAVID SECURES GOLIATH'S SWORD

**Then the priest said, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah, behold, it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod; if you would take it for yourself, take it. For there is no other except it here."**

**MacArthur** on behind the ephod says it "was kept in the place for storing the sacred vestments ("the ephod") deposited there as a memorial to divine goodness in the deliverance of Israel." (Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**And David said, "There is none like it; give it to me."** - The sword undoubtedly weighed more than most normal swords since it had been Goliath's for war.

**Krummacher** points out, "And David said, 'There is none like it; give it to me.' The priest then gave it to him. Once the shepherd sling alone was necessary for our hero. Now he asks for that sword which had not even availed him, for whose giant hand it had been fabricated. And besides, he says of it, 'There is none like it,' as if the victory were connected with a weapon and did not depend on the arm of the Lord alone. Poor David. But patience, the Lord will yet know how to lead him back into the right path."

**McGee** points out, "It is interesting that David could use the sling shot when he was a youngster, but he has been in the king's palace a long time. Perhaps he has lost his cunning with the slingshot. Now he needs a sword and he uses Goliath's sword because it is available."

**John Walton** on **behind the ephod** - The ephod, as described in Exodus 28:6–14, was a garment worn by the high priest. In the ancient Near East the ephod was one of the garments used to clothe the image of the deity. Since no image is mentioned here, another alternative is that it hung on a stand of some sort (also a possible explanation of Gideon's ephod in Jdg 8:24–27). With the ark still out of the picture, the ephod may have become the holiest relic of the sanctuary. Captured articles of power such as Goliath's sword would therefore be kept there (just as the ark had been put in the temple of Dagon, 1Sa 5:2). ([IVP Background Commentary](#))

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### The Old Sword - Ian Paisley - A Text a Day

"And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is no other save that here. And David said, There is none like that; give it me." 1 Samuel 21:9

God has two great witnesses—two in Scripture is the number of witness—THE INCARNATE WORD THE HOLY SON, THE INSPIRED WORD THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

Both are unique. Both are always under attack. They are closely inter-related. They bear the same titles. To reject One is to reject the Other. They stand and fall together. The Bible is the Old Sword not of man but of God.

The Bible an Inexplicable Fact

The Bible is here. That cannot be denied. It dwells amongst us. No other book is like it or can be like it. It is indestructible. If it were not it would have been destroyed long since.

The Bible an Inexhaustible Fulness

It is light. It is DIVINE light (Genesis 1:3 and Matthew 4:16). It is DIVIDING light (Exodus 10:23 and Matthew 5:14). It is DOMINATING light (Leviticus 24:2 and Matthew 5:15).

On the inexhaustible fulness of the divine, dividing and dominating light of Holy Scripture. See Psalm 119:105.

The Bible an Inextinguishable Fire

"Is not my word like as afire" Jeremiah 23:29.

As fire destroys, purges, warms and energises so does the inextinguishable fire of the Holy Word of God. The Bible is a fire of God's kindling and can never be put out. It is the bush which burns and is always ablaze.

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### **F B Meyer - 1 Samuel 21:9 There is none like that; give it me**

What David said of the sword of Goliath we may say of Holy Scripture—the sword of the Spirit— “There is none like that.”

There is no book like the Bible for those convinced of sin.— The Word of God assures the sinner of God's love in Christ, whilst it refuses to condone a single sin, or excuse one shortcoming. The Bible is as stern as conscience herself against sin, but as pitiful as the heart of God to the sinner. It, moreover, discloses the method by which the just God becomes the justifier of those who believe.

There is no book like the Bible for the sorrowful.— It tells of the Comforter; it reminds us that in all our sorrow God also is sad; it points to the perfect plan according to which God is working out our blessedness; it insists that all things are working together for good; it opens the vision of the blessed future, where all the griefs and tears of men shall be put away forever.

There is no book like the Bible for the dying.— “Read to me,” said Sir Walter Scott, on his dying bed, to his friend. “What shall I read?” “There is only one book for a dying man,” was the answer; “read to me from the Bible.” The Book which tells of the Lord, who died and rose again; of the mansions which He has gone to prepare; of the reunion of the saints; of the fountains of water of life— is the only pillow on which the dying head can rest softly.

In these days of debate and doubt there is no such evidence for the Divine authority of the Bible as that which accrues from its perpetual use, whether in our own life, or in the conviction of the ungodly.

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### **Norman Geisler - go to page 151 in [When Critics Ask](#) - 1 SAMUEL 21:9—Was Goliath's armor kept in David's tent or in Nob?**

**PROBLEM:** In this text the sword of Goliath was located in Nob (cf. 1Sa 21:1). However, in 1 Samuel 17:54 it says David “put his [Goliath's] armor in his tent.”

**SOLUTION:** At first it was placed in his tent, but later it was taken to Nob. The two verses speak of different times.

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### **1 Samuel 21:10 Then David arose and fled that day from Saul, and went to Achish king of Gath.**

BGT 1 Samuel 21:11 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) κα ὤκεν ατν ατ κα ν στη Δαυιδ κα φυγεν ν τ μ ρ κε ν κ προσ που Σαουλ κα λθεν Δαυιδ πρ ς Αγγου ς βασιλ α Γεθ

LXE 1 Samuel 21:10 And he gave it him; and David arose, and fled in that day from he presence of Saul: and David came to Anchus king of Geth.

KJV 1 Samuel 21:10 And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath.

NET 1 Samuel 21:10 So on that day David arose and fled from Saul. He went to King Achish of Gath.

CSB 1 Samuel 21:10 David fled that day from Saul's presence and went to King Achish of Gath.

ESV 1 Samuel 21:10 And David rose and fled that day from Saul and went to Achish the king of Gath.

NIV 1 Samuel 21:10 That day David fled from Saul and went to Achish king of Gath.

NLT 1 Samuel 21:10 So David escaped from Saul and went to King Achish of Gath.

NRS 1 Samuel 21:10 David rose and fled that day from Saul; he went to King Achish of Gath.

NJB 1 Samuel 21:11 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) David journeyed on and that day fled out of Saul's reach, going to Achish king of Gath.

NAB 1 Samuel 21:11 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) That same day David took to flight from Saul, going to

Achish, king of Gath.

YLT 1 Samuel 21:10 And David riseth and fleeth on that day from the face of Saul, and cometh in unto Achish king of Gath;

GWN 1 Samuel 21:10 That day David left. He was still fleeing from Saul when he came to King Achish of Gath.

- fled: 1Sa 27:1 1Ki 19:3 Jer 26:21
- Achish: or, Abimelech, 1Sa 27:2 Ps 34:1 \*title
- [1 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## INSTEAD OF FLEEING TO GOD HE FLEES TO GODLESS GATH!

**Then** - The marks progression in the narrative. We might subtitle this section David ["throws all caution to the wind"](#) and even that is a [euphemistic statement](#)! Absolutely reckless, foolish and stupid might be more accurate designations! David's fleeing to Gath reminds us of the modern ["witness protection program"](#) as he was just trying to blend it, but that was not about to happen (recall David had an extra big sword)!

**Getz** comments that "One sin led to another—then led to tragedy. David escaped because of his scheme, but in the process he caused the death of hundreds of innocent people. What a price to pay for disobedience and lack of trust in God!" (Borrow [David: God's man in faith and failure](#))

**Brian Bell** - Fear of Saul temporarily replaced faith in the Lord! Fear is always the enemy of Faith! But Fear is always the enemy of Faith! - To believe God, to rest in the Word, to enjoy the promises of God is to conquer our fear. a) No wonder when fear comes in the door, faith flies out the window! Here we have a good man in bad company! - Why did he go here? I hate to admit but sometimes a persecuted Christian gets better treatment from the enemies of God's people than from his own Christian friends. It was the king of Judah who imprisoned Jeremiah & the king of Babylon who set him free! We glory in our wonderful gospel of love & mercy for the unsaved, but we usually act as if we have no gospel for the saint who has been tripped by the devil!

**John Davis** - After David's conversation with Jonathan it became apparent that to remain in Israel at this point would be most precarious Saul's hatred and malice had reached such an intense level that David's life and the life of his friends would be in severe danger if he remained in the reach of Saul. He fled southwest to the country of the Philistines and came to the city of Gath which was ruled by Achish. In Psalm 34, Achish is given the name Abimelech, which was probably the standing title of Philistine princes at Gath. Another explanation of the two names is that the Philistine name was Achish and the Semitic form of the name was Abimelech. The journey from Nob to Gath would have been a distance of about thirty miles. It is very doubtful that Saul would think of looking for David in a Philistine city. Also, David was rather well acquainted with the countryside, for it was there he had obtained the dowry for his wife by a victory over the Philistines. (Borrow [Israel: from conquest to exile : a commentary on Joshua-2 Kings](#))

**David arose and fled that day from Saul, and went to Achish king of Gath** - David now head 30-35 miles southwest to Achish. Note that the TSK entry has Achish or Abimelech (the significance of which is discussed in following passages). [See #5 on map above](#) for city of **Gath**. Why **Gath**? Clearly that is not one place Saul would expect David would flee and certainly would not follow him there! But as the story unfolds we see that may not have been David's best choice. There is no word that he asked the LORD where he should flee next.

What a picture - David has Goliath's sword ("none like it") and he is strolling into Goliath's hometown! What is David thinking at this point?

**Theodore Epp** points out, "It was only about a year before this that David had slain the giant. Now he sought safety at the court of Achish and entered with Goliath's sword in his hand. If David had reason to fear for his life in the court of Saul, he had equal reason to fear in the court of Achish. David was reaping what he had sown in leaving the sanctuary provided by Samuel and letting fear plan his movements. Had David stayed with Samuel, no harm would have come to Ahimelech and his fellow priests. But David's presence among them, of which they were entirely innocent, proved to be their death warrant."

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**Michael Andrus** - Gath is a city, one of the five cities of the Philistines, so it is not wilderness in the ordinary sense of the term. But it is certainly a **spiritual wilderness**. David is looking for a place to survive, and he is counting on the old saying that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." Since the Philistines are at war with Saul, and since Saul is trying to kill David, he is hopeful that the Philistines will accept him and provide him sanctuary. I see two trials here for David: fear and shame. He is genuinely afraid for his life, because he has been identified as an enemy and is in the custody of the ruthless Philistines. But then in order to escape he



resorts to a shameful deception. There are times when we too will encounter the wilderness of fear, and perhaps even of shame. The fear may be caused by an enemy or by a circumstance that overwhelms us. We may be sidelined by the fear of the unknown, or maybe the fear of failure. And sometimes to escape from fear we will do shameful things. Forgetting that God is for us, we may choose to fight fear in our own power. I have counseled with young people who had such a fear of loneliness that they would violate every moral standard they held deeply just to obtain or keep a relationship. I know adults who have such a fear of poverty that they will do shameful things to gain financial security. And I know people of every age who have such a fear of being hurt that they will hide who they really are from everyone so that no one can ever love them deeply enough to hurt them. There is a Psalm David wrote at the time he was in the custody of the Philistines in Gath. I want you to turn to it with me—Psalm 56. The headings of the Psalms are very ancient, and in the absence of good evidence otherwise, I think we should assume they are historical. This one says that David wrote it “when the Philistines had seized him at Gath.”

Be merciful to me, O God, for men hotly pursue me;  
all day long they press their attack.  
My slanderers pursue me all day long;  
many are attacking me in their pride. (Psalm 56:1-2+)

That describes the situation, but then David gives the answer to fear, and it seems obvious that he has learned a lesson. He doesn't tell us, “When you find yourself in a fearful situation, act like an idiot as I did at Gath.” He now says, instead,

When I am afraid, I will trust in you.  
In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust;  
I will not be afraid."  
What can mortal man do to me? (Psalm 56:3-4+)

The appropriate response when facing the wilderness of fear and shame is to trust in God. Put your faith in His Word. Recognize that no mortal man can shave one day off your life, because your days were all numbered in God's book before one of them came to be (Psalm 139:16), and no one can guide or defend you like He can, because He is our light and our shield (Psalm 27: 1, 28:7).

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1 Samuel 21:10-22:2 Master Of Redemption

As I glanced through the mail, some words on a card from a charitable organization caught my eye: WE NEED YOUR DISCARDS! The meaning was straightforward and simple: Whatever you don't want, we'll take. Those household items you call rubbish, rejects, throwaways, and junk, we'll use to help people in need.

While thinking about such a collection of castoffs, I recalled something I had read in the book of 1 Samuel. A company of desperate men gathered around an uncrowned king who was running for his life. The 400 men who joined David at the cave of Adullam were in distress, in debt, and discontented. Each one faced difficulty and discouragement. "So [David] became captain over them" (1 Samuel 22:2).

In many ways, Christians are a collection of desperate people who have answered the invitation of Jesus: "Come to Me" (Matthew 11:28). By faith, we acknowledge Christ as our Captain, Savior, Leader, and Lord. We come as we are so that we can become what He wants us to be.

If you feel like a moral or spiritual discard, come to Jesus. Loners and losers are welcome at the door. The crucified and risen Christ is the master of redemption for all who turn to Him.—David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries. Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Christ asks thee for nothing—  
Come just as thou art;  
Come sinful, come guilty,  
Come give Him thy heart.  
—Anon.

Jesus came to save the lost, the last, and the least.

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### Unusual Places Psalm 40:1-8

Walking past my barn one day, I heard a frantic chirping inside. When I investigated, I found a poor blue jay beating its wings against the window. Had it not cried and chirped, I would not have heard, but its cry for help prompted me to come, open the door wide, and allow it to fly out to freedom.

God's children get themselves into some unusual places and unhappy circumstances. Consider the following incidents:

- Jonah in a fish's belly, running from God (Jonah 2:1)
- David in enemy territory, acting insane (1Sa 21:10-15)
- Abram in Egypt, lying about his wife (Gen. 12:10-13)
- Lot in Sodom, living with the wicked (Ge 13:12,13)
- Elijah in the desert, wallowing in self-pity (1Ki. 19:4)
- Peter in a courtyard, denying his Lord (Lk 22:55-62)

God's children should not be found in such circumstances, but all too often they are. Are you in a place you shouldn't be today? Are you far from God, feeling defeated, trapped, and unhappy? Then cry out to the Lord, confess your sin, and be restored by His abundant mercy (1Jn. 1:9). He is waiting to hear your cry of repentance. — M. R. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

There is only One who knows  
All the answers to my woes;  
He will all my needs supply  
When in faith to Him I cry.  
--Morgan

No place is beyond the reach of God's grace.

**1 Samuel 21:11 But the servants of Achish said to him, "Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of this one as they danced, saying, 'Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands?'"**

BGT 1 Samuel 21:12 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) κα ε παν ο πα δες Αγγους πρ ς α τ ν ο χ ο το ς Δαυιδ βασιλε ς τ ς γ ς ο χ το τ ξ ρχον α χορε ουσαι λ γουσαι π ταξεν Σαουλ ν χιλι σιν α το κα Δαυιδ ν μυρι σιν α το

LXE 1 Samuel 21:11 And the servants of Anchus said to him, Is not this David the king of the land? Did not the dancing women begin the son to him, saying, Saul has smitten his thousand, and David his ten thousands?

KJV 1 Samuel 21:11 And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?

NET 1 Samuel 21:11 The servants of Achish said to him, "Isn't this David, the king of the land? Isn't he the one that they sing about when they dance, saying, 'Saul struck down his thousands, But David his tens of thousands?'"

CSB 1 Samuel 21:11 But Achish's servants said to him, "Isn't this David, the king of the land? Don't they sing about him during their dances: Saul has killed his thousands, but David his tens of thousands?"

ESV 1 Samuel 21:11 And the servants of Achish said to him, "Is not this David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances, 'Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands?'"

NIV 1 Samuel 21:11 But the servants of Achish said to him, "Isn't this David, the king of the land? Isn't he the one they sing about in their dances: " 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands?'"

NLT 1 Samuel 21:11 But the officers of Achish were unhappy about his being there. "Isn't this David, the king of the land?" they asked. "Isn't he the one the people honor with dances, singing, 'Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands?'"

NRS 1 Samuel 21:11 The servants of Achish said to him, "Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances, 'Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands?'"

NJB 1 Samuel 21:12 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) Achish's servants said to him, 'Is not this David, the king of the country? Was it not of him that they sang as they danced: Saul has killed his thousands, and David his tens of thousands?'

NAB 1 Samuel 21:12 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) But the servants of Achish said, "Is this not David, the king of the land? During their dances do they not sing, 'Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands'?"

YLT 1 Samuel 21:11 and the servants of Achish say unto him, 'Is not this David king of the land? is it not of this one they sing in dances, saying, 'Saul smote among his thousands, and David among his myriads?'

GWN 1 Samuel 21:11 Achish's officers asked, "Isn't this David, the king of his country? He's the one they used to sing about in the dances: 'Saul has defeated thousands but David tens of thousands.'"

- **the servants:** Ps 56:1 \*title
- **the king:** 1Sa 16:1 1Sa 18:7,8 1Sa 29:5
- [1 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

1 Samuel 18:7+ The women sang as they played, and said, "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands." 8 Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?"

1 Samuel 29:5 "Is this not David, of whom they sing in the dances, saying, 'Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands'?"

### DAVID RECOGNIZED AS "PERSONA NON GRATA!"

**Persona non grata** - In diplomacy, a persona non grata (Latin: "person not welcome", plural: personae non gratae) is a status applied by a host country to foreign diplomats to remove their protection of diplomatic immunity from arrest and other types of prosecution.

**But the servants of Achish said to him, "Is this not David the king of the land?-** No [flying under the radar](#) for David! Fascinating that the pagans know that in fact this was the king in the wing, so to speak! And they recognized his face even in an era with "social media!" Were their "Wanted Poster" with David's picture plastered all around Philistia? Probably not, but regardless he was well known! And think about the sword David carried. It was undoubtedly bigger than a normal sword and would have even been difficult to conceal. But there is no evidence David attempted to conceal it.

David clearly understood that he was recognized and had stirred up a veritable hornet's nest.

**Did they not sing of this one as they danced, saying, 'Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands'?"** - David's reputation as a mighty warrior had spread throughout the land (and all that without CNN, FOX or texting!) His "hit song" had played on the Philistine stations and was well known!

**THOUGHT** - But wait a minute before you condemn David. Examine your own heart. Have you taken refuge from the dangers you've found in the path of God's will in the company of His enemies? Have you, as David did, feigned your behavior in order to escape the consequences of your failure to walk with God? Then from heaven's standpoint, you are behaving like a madman. Watch a Christian who has panicked in God's will, whose has allowed doubts and fears to overcome his faith and is running away from God. Listen to his conversation, so utterly irrational. How empty is his talk; how hollow his laughter; how tense his manner; how strained his countenance.

**Brian Bell** - All he had left was his self-respect...well, until that was stripped away also when he faked insanity. a) What an undignified moment in the life of a man who had been anointed by the spirit of God! How utterly unworthy of his calling was his behavior! b) But, we can probably all think of a time where we panicked in God's will & found ourselves acting like a complete fool! 2. From national hero to madman! a) From pats on the back, to looking over his back, because of the fear of getting stabbed in the back. Israel's Most Wanted! 3. Now his enemies discarded him. Would God also abandon him? 4. It's easy to lose 20-20 spiritual vision. It's easy to develop a spiritual squint, to see things in the wrong perspective, & to start to panic. But I'm glad the bible turns the key & opens the door to the inner shrine of this man's life & shows us - A changed behavior but a fixed heart on God! - Whatever happened to David in Gath caused him to acknowledge the inadequacies of his own wisdom & brought him to a place where he again placed his confidence in the Lord. Ps.56 was his prayer for God's help - Ps.34 was his hymn of praise. a) Ps.34 also shares that he did a lot of praying while in Gath. See Ps 34:4,6,15b,17,18. He learned that the fear of the Lord conquers every other fear!

Oswald Chambers wrote that "the remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you fear God, you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God, you fear everything else.

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### **Charles Swindoll - LOW TIDES Psalm 55**

The smoky tones of Peggy Lee's voice occasionally blow across my mind: "Is that all . . . is that all there is . . . ?" With no bitterness intended, I ask that haunting question in the backwash of certain situations.

How much like the tide we are! When our spirits are high, we are flooded with optimism, hope, and expectation. But when low, our jagged barnacles of disappointment, discouragement, and disillusionment are exposed. We struggle to maintain an even keel as the rough winds jerk our sails.

Like the pull of the sea, some of our low tides are almost predictable.

Is that all . . . is that all there is to victory?

Elijah asked that. And he was fresh off a great victory at Carmel! It's hard to believe 1 Kings 18 and 19 are connected. Vulnerable and frightened, he suffered the low tide that often follows victory, perhaps the cruelest dart in the devil's quiver.

Is that all . . . is that all there is to vision?

Paul asked that. Having taken gigantic strides into the vast regions of Asia, he was caught at low tide. He freely admits this to his friends at Corinth: "For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life" (2 Cor. 1:8).

Is that all . . . is that all there is to valor?

David asked that when, after proving himself a dedicated warrior, unmatched for bravery in Israel's ranks, he was forced to flee from Saul. Reeling in fear and despair, David even disguised himself as insane before the king of Gath. The once-exalted warrior now "scribbled on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva run down into his beard" (1 Sam. 21:13).

Low tide . . . how painful yet how essential. Without it, we cannot have high tide. Without it, there would be no need for Elishas to minister to victoryless Elijahs . . . no need for visionaries to fall in dependence on their faces before God . . . no need for the valiant to be reminded of their Source of strength.

Is that all . . . is that all there is to low tides?

No, there is more, much more, most of which can never be described . . . only discovered.

When it seems like that's all there is, remember all you have in Him.

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### **1 Samuel 21:11-15 When I'm Afraid**

David fled from the home of the priests in Nob with Saul in hot pursuit. He made his way to Gath, the home of his enemies, where he was instantly recognized and brought before King Achish.

David's fame was celebrated everywhere in story and song. He had slain thousands of Philistines (1 Samuel 21:11), a reputation established at the expense of bereaved Philistine women and children. Here was an opportunity to take revenge.

David lost his nerve. In terror, he "pretended madness . . . , scratched on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva fall down on his beard" (v.13). Achish dismissed him with contempt: "Shall this fellow come into my house?" (v.15). Broken and utterly humiliated, David fled to Adullam in Judah. Close by was a hill honeycombed with caves. Into one of those holes he crept-alone.

As he experienced the solitude of that cave, at the nadir of his life and surrounded by enemies, David began to reflect on God's tender, faithful love. "When I am afraid, I will trust in You," he wrote (Psalm 56:3). "You number my wanderings; put my tears into Your bottle" (v.8).

Perhaps you're "in a cave" today. You too can say, "In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid" (v.11)—David H. Roper

I have no reason to fear,  
For Jesus my Savior is near;  
I'll trust the Lord and His power  
To save and to keep me each hour.

Loneliness is being unaware of the One who is with us everywhere.

## 1 Samuel 21:12 David took these words to heart and greatly feared Achish king of Gath.

BGT 1 Samuel 21:13 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) καθετο Δαυιδ τα ματα εν τω καρδι α το κα φοβθη σφδρα π προσ που Αγγους βασιλ ως Γεθ

LXE 1 Samuel 21:12 And David laid up the words in his heart, and was greatly afraid of Anchus king of Geth.

KJV 1 Samuel 21:12 And David laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath.

NET 1 Samuel 21:12 David thought about what they said and was very afraid of King Achish of Gath.

CSB 1 Samuel 21:12 David took this to heart and became very afraid of King Achish of Gath,

ESV 1 Samuel 21:12 And David took these words to heart and was much afraid of Achish the king of Gath.

NIV 1 Samuel 21:12 David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish king of Gath.

NLT 1 Samuel 21:12 David heard these comments and was very afraid of what King Achish of Gath might do to him.

NRS 1 Samuel 21:12 David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of King Achish of Gath.

NJB 1 Samuel 21:13 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) David pondered on these words and became very frightened of Achish king of Gath.

NAB 1 Samuel 21:13 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) David took note of these remarks and became very much afraid of Achish, king of Gath.

YLT 1 Samuel 21:12 And David layeth these words in his heart, and is exceedingly afraid of the face of Achish king of Gath,

GWN 1 Samuel 21:12 When David realized what they had said, he was terrified of King Achish of Gath.

- **took:** Ps 119:11 Lu 2:19,51
- **greatly feared:** 1Sa 21:10 Ge 12:11-13 26:7 Ps 34:4 56:3
- [1 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**David took these words to heart** - The picture is of David pondering what they were saying about him. His conclusion was that they were not likely to put out the welcome mat for him! And what town was David in? Gath, Goliath's home town! Do you think Goliath may have had a few surviving, seething relatives that would love to have David's head as a trophy on their walls? That's rhetorical of course. As an aside, one wonders where David had stored Goliath's head which would later make an appearance as David's trophy and memorial to Jehovah's victory?

**and greatly feared Achish king of Gath** - As a result of thinking about the implications, David began to focus on the "big A" (Achish) and took his eyes off of his big God and God's will! The opposite of faith is fear. Fear is the result of being out of God's will! It appears David's faith sunk and his fear rose! Fear is always the enemy of faith in our lives. Here we see David's faith in God's protection being replaced by the fear of man and thus making a foolish trip to godless Gath! Remember that these are the first days of God's 10-12 year course of training David's faith in Him. And we don't see him quickly resorting to prayer as he does at later times of testing. But he is just beginning God's class on testing and adversity!

One recalls his words to Jonathan in 1Sa 20:3 that "truly as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, there is hardly a step between me and death."

**Arthur Pink** points out, "Abraham's deception was discovered, Peter's attempt to conceal his discipleship, his very speech betrayed him, so here David was quickly recognized; and thus it will be with us. And mercifully is this the case, for God will not have his own to settle down among and enjoy the friendship of his enemies." ([Chapter 9 - Flight to Ziklag](#))

This is a strange story about David; and yet it is not strange, in that it is so true to human experience. Fear and faith are constantly antagonistic. The triumph of the one is always the defeat of the other. This is the record of a period in the life of David when fear triumphed over faith. In fear of Saul he fled to Achish, the enemy of the people of God. There he was filled with fear of Achish, and we have the sad picture of God's anointed man feigning madness in order to protect himself. There can be no question that these were days of great strain for David; and judging simply on the ground of what man is able to endure in his own strength, we cannot wonder that the tension reacted upon him. But there was no need for him to depend upon himself. Faith might have triumphed over fear of Saul. Had it done so, he would never have sought refuge with Achish, and would not have been reduced to such unworthy expedients for securing safety. Surely all these things were written for our learning; and while the experience of David calls out our sympathy, because we have so often yielded to fear, and then resorted to foolish methods to find escape from danger, nevertheless the lesson which is patent is that we have no right to take refuge from any peril among those who are the enemies of the Divine purpose. That means, finally, that fear is wrong. Faith in God is the strength of righteous action, and there is no reason for any other attitude of mind than that of perfect confidence in Him.

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### **Our only Comfort - Peter Kennedy - Generation to Generation**

"David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish king of Gath. So he pretended to be insane in their presence; and while he was in their hands he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard."—1 Samuel 21:12-13

A certain madness and sadness occurs when we lose our trust in Christ. David Hume was a popular philosopher in the eighteenth century. His works on the natural history of religion look at different cultures and argue that the belief in many gods was the first religion. He saw belief in one God as an evolutionary development. He asserted that fear was the true cause for religion and neither belief in one God nor many gods really mattered.

But David Hume's philosophical world took a tumble when his mother fell gravely ill. She was a Christian yet foolishly followed her son's teachings. On her deathbed she wrote, "Dear son, my health has forsaken me. I am failing rapidly; I cannot live much longer. My philosophy affords me no comfort in my distress. I have lost the hope and comfort of religion and am sinking in despair. You can offer me something that will replace the hope of religion that I have lost. Hurry home, I beseech you, to comfort me, or at least write me what consolation you can afford in the hour of death." Hume hurried home, but he did not have any philosophical speculations to comfort his dying mother.

Our only comfort in stressful times is Jesus Christ. Do you trust Him with your whole life? In prayer thank the Lord that He is faithful when you are not. Thank Him that He comforts when there is no other comfort.

"A great many men say, 'Oh, I have profound reverence and respect for God.' Yes, profound respect, but not faith. Why, it is a downright insult."—D. L. Moody

**1 Samuel 21:13 So he disguised his sanity before them, and acted insanely in their hands, and scribbled on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva run down into his beard.**

BGT 1 Samuel 21:14 (follows Hebrew numbering) κα λλο ωσεν τ πρ σωπον ατο ν πιον ατο κα προσεποι σατο ν τ μ ρ κε ν κα τυμπ νιζεν π τα ς θ ραι ς τ ς π λεω ς κα παρεφ ρετο ν τα ς χερ σ ν α το κα πιπτεν π τ ς θ ρα ς τ ς π λη ς κα τ σ ελα α το κατ ρρει π τ ν π γω να α το

LXE 1 Samuel 21:13 And he changed his appearance before him, and feigned himself a false character in that day; and drummed upon the doors of the city, and used extravagant gestures with his hands, and fell against the doors of the gate, and his spittle ran down upon his beard.

KJV 1 Samuel 21:13 And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard.

NET 1 Samuel 21:13 He altered his behavior in their presence. Since he was in their power, he pretended to be insane, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting his saliva run down his beard.

CSB 1 Samuel 21:13 so he pretended to be insane in their presence. He acted like a madman around them, scribbling on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard.

ESV 1 Samuel 21:13 So he changed his behavior before them and pretended to be insane in their hands and made marks on the doors of the gate and let his spittle run down his beard.



NIV 1 Samuel 21:13 So he pretended to be insane in their presence; and while he was in their hands he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard.

NLT 1 Samuel 21:13 So he pretended to be insane, scratching on doors and drooling down his beard.

NRS 1 Samuel 21:13 So he changed his behavior before them; he pretended to be mad when in their presence. He scratched marks on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle run down his beard.

NJB 1 Samuel 21:14 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) When their eyes were on him, he played the madman and, when they held him, he feigned lunacy. He drummed his feet on the doors of the gate and let his spittle run down his beard.

NAB 1 Samuel 21:14 S (**follows Hebrew numbering**) o, as they watched, he feigned insanity and acted like a madman in their hands, drumming on the doors of the gate and drooling onto his beard.

YLT 1 Samuel 21:13 and changeth his behaviour before their eyes, and feigneth himself mad in their hand, and scribbleth on the doors of the gate, and letteth down his spittle unto his beard.

GWN 1 Samuel 21:13 So he changed his behavior when he was in their presence and acted insane as long as he was under their authority. He scribbled on the doors of the city gate and let his spit run down his beard.

- **disguised:** Ps 34:1 Pr 29:25 Ec 7:7
- [1 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Psalms 34:1 A Psalm of David **when he feigned madness before Abimelech**, who drove him away and he departed. I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

**NET NOTE** - In this song of thanksgiving the psalmist praises God for delivering him from distress. He encourages others to be loyal to the Lord, tells them how to please God, and assures them that the Lord protects his servants. The psalm heading appears to refer to the account in 1Sa 21:10–15 which tells how David, fearful that King Achish of Gath might kill him, pretended to be insane in hopes that the king would simply send him away. The psalm heading names the king Abimelech, not Achish, suggesting that the tradition is confused on this point. However, perhaps "Abimelech" was a royal title, rather than a proper name. S

Psalms 56:1 For the choir director; according to Jonath elem rehokim. A Mikhtam of David, **when the Philistines seized him in Gath**. Be gracious to me, O God, for man has trampled upon me; Fighting all day long he oppresses me.

Proverbs 29:25 The fear of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.

Ecclesiastes 7:7 (5 Ec 7:7) - [Copy][Go][to List]

(7:7) For oppression makes a wise man mad, And a bribe corrupts the heart.

### Scrabble Board

## FEAR MORPHS INTO FEIGNED INSANITY!

**So he disguised his sanity before them, and acted insanely in their hands, and scribbled** (KJV - scrabbled) **on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva run down into his beard** - No, David was not playing an ancient version of [Scrabble](#)! Scrabble makes sense out of letters, but David's letters made nonsense! And this is a man after God's own heart? Yes, but his heart is being trained (today we call it progressive sanctification!) Here David resorts to his own insanity scheme to orchestrate deliverance (an "Oscar winning" dramatic performance), rather than run into the strong tower of the Name of the Lord, where he had previously experienced deliverance and safety (Pr 18:10+). Was this be the one God had called "a man after His own heart?"

**MacArthur** points out that "Drooling in one's beard was considered in the East an intolerable indignity, as was spitting in another's beard. (Borrow [The MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Eugene Merrill** adds an interesting comment that "David pretended to be insane and so escaped Philistine reprisal (vv. 11-13). This is in line with the practice of the ancient world to regard the insane as being in some sense an evil portent and so exempt from harm lest the gods be provoked. (Borrow [Bible Knowledge Commentary - Old Testament](#))

**Wycliffe Bible Commentary** on **scribbled** (KJV = scabbled) - Made meaningless marks. The lxx reads, *beat or drummed*, from a word which sounds like (but is not written like) the Hebrew for "scrabble." (Borrow [Wycliffe Bible Commentary](#))

**THOUGHT** - Before we condemn David, we ought to think about our own lives. Haven't we ever lost perspective? Haven't we ever come to the moment that we are unable to remember God's promises and provisions? Haven't we ever taken things into our own hands and made a mess of it? And at the same time hurt those closest to us, cause innocent people to suffer, to also present a bad witness for Christ? We all have to be honest and say that at some time we have really blown it bad. ([Anderson](#))

**1 Samuel 21:14 Then Achish said to his servants, "Behold, you see the man behaving as a madman. Why do you bring him to me?"**

BGT 1 Samuel 21:15 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) κα ε πεν Αγχους πρ ς το ς πα δας α το δο δετε νδρα π λημπτον να τ ε σηγ γετε α τ ν πρ ς με

LXE 1 Samuel 21:14 And Anchus said to his servants, Lo! ye see the man is mad: why have ye brought him in to me?

KJV 1 Samuel 21:14 Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore then have ye brought him to me?

NET 1 Samuel 21:14 Achish said to his servants, "Look at this madman! Why did you bring him to me?"

CSB 1 Samuel 21:14 "Look! You can see the man is crazy," Achish said to his servants. "Why did you bring him to me?"

ESV 1 Samuel 21:14 Then Achish said to his servants, "Behold, you see the man is mad. Why then have you brought him to me?"

NIV 1 Samuel 21:14 Achish said to his servants, "Look at the man! He is insane! Why bring him to me?"

NLT 1 Samuel 21:14 Finally, King Achish said to his men, "Must you bring me a madman?"

NRS 1 Samuel 21:14 Achish said to his servants, "Look, you see the man is mad; why then have you brought him to me?"

NJB 1 Samuel 21:15 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) Achish said to his servants, "You can see that this man is mad. Why bring him to me?"

NAB 1 Samuel 21:15 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) Finally Achish said to his servants: "You see the man is mad. Why did you bring him to me?"

YLT 1 Samuel 21:14 And Achish saith unto his servants, 'Lo, ye see a man acting as a madman; why do ye bring him in unto me?'

GWN 1 Samuel 21:14 Achish said to his officers, "Look at him! Don't you see that he's insane? Why bring him to me?"

- is mad: or, playeth the madman, Ec 7:7
- [1 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

David Feigning Insanity Before Achish

### **ACHISH SEEMS CONVINCED OF DAVID'S DECEPTION!**

**Then Achish said to his servants, "Behold, you see the man behaving as a madman. Why do you bring him to me -** This is a sad testimony. God had delivered a giant into his hands, and yet now David seems paralyzed by fear of a normal sized king.

**THOUGHT-** Why is David not calling upon the LORD of hosts? One has to wonder if he had called on Him, would the LORD have led him to Gath (just wondering)? Do we call upon the LORD before we make a wacky decision like David (just wondering)?

**Michael Bentley** offers some interesting insights on backsliding (See my article on Backsliding) noting that...

Those who turn aside from following the Lord are sometimes called **backsliders**. They are still Christians who know Jesus as their Savior (**Ed comment**: This is an important caveat -- because a backsliding believer may be indistinguishable from a backsliding non-believer -- at least for a period of time), but they have lost the close intimacy and affection for Him which they once enjoyed (cp Rev 2:4). Instead of rejoicing in their Savior's love for them and living radiant lives, they have become miserable and dejected. Instead of being a wonderful testimony to the goodness of God; it is now difficult to see the difference between them and the people of the world. In short, they are a **bad advertisement for Christianity**. A person who is in a backsliding state is the most miserable of people because he (or she) was once in a right relationship with the Lord, saved from sin, yet has fallen away from the blessedness of rejoicing in salvation (cf Ps 32:3-4-[note](#)). The person who is not a Christian is not so miserable because he has never known the joy of the Lord (cf Ps 51:8-[note](#), Ps 51:12-[note](#)), but the backslider has; that is why his condition is so serious (**Ed**: And so sad!)

Some backsliders indicate their sad state by quickly exploding in temper (as Saul did in 1Sa 20:30) when things go wrong, some go very quiet and become moody, and others start talking in an animated fashion about nothing in particular. From the time that David slew Goliath, everything seemed to have gone wrong for King Saul. David knew that he was in danger, so after several attempts on his life he ran away; and he kept on running away (see 1Sa 21:1, 10).

We, too, have days when we want to get away from everyone. We are tempted to give up our church allegiance and leave all the worrying and care to others. Pastors are particularly prone to this feeling. The sheer stress of life can cause great depression. That is how we find David in 1Sa 21 and 1Sa 22. Sad to say, in his poor spiritual state, he started to drift away from God. His faith in the Lord, which had once been so firm and strong had now become weak and flabby. ([Michael Bentley; Face2Face with David Vol. 1: Encountering the Man after God's Heart](#))

**1 Samuel 21:15 "Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this one to act the madman in my presence? Shall this one come into my house?"**

BGT 1 Samuel 21:16 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) λαττο μαι πιλ μπτων γ τι ε σαγει χατε α τ ν  
πιλημπτε εσθαι πρ ς με ο το ς ο κ ε σελε σεται ε ς ο κ αν

LXE 1 Samuel 21:15 Am I in want of madmen, that ye have brought him in to me to play the madman? He shall not come into the house.

KJV 1 Samuel 21:15 Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad man in my presence? shall this fellow come into my house?

NET 1 Samuel 21:15 Do I have a shortage of fools, that you have brought me this man to display his insanity in front of me? Should this man enter my house?"

CSB 1 Samuel 21:15 Do I have such a shortage of crazy people that you brought this one to act crazy around me? Is this one going to come into my house?"

ESV 1 Samuel 21:15 Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to behave as a madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?"

NIV 1 Samuel 21:15 Am I so short of madmen that you have to bring this fellow here to carry on like this in front of me? Must this man come into my house?"

NLT 1 Samuel 21:15 We already have enough of them around here! Why should I let someone like this be my guest?"

NRS 1 Samuel 21:15 Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?"

NJB 1 Samuel 21:16 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) Have I not enough madmen, without your bringing me this one to weary me with his antics? Is he to join my household?"

NAB 1 Samuel 21:16 (**follows Hebrew numbering**) Do I not have enough madmen, that you bring in this one to carry on in my presence? Should this fellow come into my house?"

YLT 1 Samuel 21:15 A lack of madmen have I, that ye have brought in this one to act as a madman by me! doth this one come in unto my house?'

- [1 Samuel 21 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passages:** see [2 psalms below](#) Psalm 56 that parallel David's time at Gath. Beloved, if you read these psalms with the description of David's actions in 1 Samuel 22, you will gain a new perspective on those psalms. In effect, they act like David's "commentary" on these events he experienced in Gath. As you read them, note the titles of the two psalms as they give us a clue as to the timing of when they were written. Below are the two introductory titles. As you read them, you can discern that most likely David wrote Psalm 56 first and then wrote Psalm 34.

Psalm 56:1 ([Spurgeon's comments](#)) For the choir director; according to Jonath elem rehokim. A **Mikhtam** of David, when the Philistines seized him in Gath. Be gracious to me, O God, for man has trampled upon me; Fighting all day long he oppresses me.

Psalm 34:1 ([Spurgeon's comments](#)) **A Psalm of David when he feigned madness before Abimelech**, who drove him away and he departed. I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

## ACHISH IS CONVINCED AND INSULTED

**Do I lack madmen ([shaga](#)), that you have brought this one to act the madman ([shaga](#)) in my presence? Shall this one come into my house?"** - Achish's question implies that he does not have a paucity of "madmen!" Achish's wording is interesting - he says David is playing or acting the madman. Was he suspicious David was putting on an "Oscar winning" performance. The fact that David departed in 1Sa 22:1 supports that David's acting job was convincing enough to drive him out of Gath (Ps 34:1)! This is David's third "scheme" to escape danger (His "arrow-gram" scheme in 1Sa 19, his lies to Ahimelech in 1Sa 20, and now his faking insanity before Achich). There is no evidence of consulting God in any of these "schemes." And to a degree they all "worked" (albeit with tragic consequences in Nob!) and David escaped to live another day.

**THOUGHT** - When we are in a trial, an adversity, an affliction (which is either sent by or allowed by Yahweh - those are the only two choices!), do we resort to our own schemes like David, which sometimes even seem to "deliver" us as David was delivered? If so, we miss the golden opportunity to get on our knees and inquire of the LORD as to His plan of escape or His power to strengthen us to endure the trial (cf 1Co 10:13+)! The next time you are tested like this, consider "testing" (not presumptively, but in full faith in) God's sufficient grace and power to see you through the test. James tells us what the glorious result of this approach will be writing "that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." (James 1:3-4+) As Warren Wiersbe says we need to remember that "When God puts His own people into the furnace, He keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the thermostat. He knows how long and how much!" Trust Him in the test! (I'm preaching to myself beloved!)

As [Anderson](#) quips "Basically, Achish is saying, Call the paddy wagon. Pack him up and ship him out of here! It is just at this point in David's life that he wrote two of his best psalms: Psalm 56 and Psalm 34."

**Gen Getz** points out that "Following his experience in enemy territory, David wrote a psalm, [Psalm 34](#), that reflects a much different picture than what we've seen thus far." What Had David Learned? We're not told how long it took David to confess his sins and be restored to fellowship with God. However, we know it eventually happened. Psalm 34 speaks volumes, since David probably composed these thoughts while sitting alone in that cave. Read against the backdrop of what we've learned about David's sins, it is self-explanatory. David focuses back on God and His power—not on himself and his own abilities. He wanted to warn others so they wouldn't make the same mistakes." Getz sums Ps 34 this way Ps 34:1-3 Remain Humble!, Ps 34:4-7 - Keep Praying! Ps 34:8-10 - Trust God! Ps 34:11-14 - Be Honest!; Ps 34:15-18- Be Righteous!; Ps 34:19-22 - Rest in God! During this period in David's life, he was spiritually and emotionally confused. His circumstances and pressures became a maze of bewilderment. He couldn't "see the forest for the trees." Somehow he couldn't seem to remember either God's previous promises or provisions. And even God's immediate care and concern seemed blurred and out of focus. Rather than responding to God's supernatural help by trusting the Lord to help him escape Saul's death traps, David took matters into his own hands. He schemed and connived. As usually happens in such cases, matters got worse. True, David's schemes helped him escape death. But the ultimate results were tragic: (1) Because of his first scheme, David and his beloved friend Jonathan were separated, never to see each other again. (2) His second scheme cost many innocent people their lives and brought guilt into his own life. (3) His third scheme stands out as a miserable testimony before the pagan king of Gath and his people. (Borrow [David: God's man in faith and failure](#) )

**Theodore Epp** - While walking in faith and in the fear of the Lord, David had destroyed Goliath. The king of Achish, however, was no Goliath, yet David, being out of fellowship with the Lord was full of fear. Though he had the giant's sword in his possession while in Gath, it gave him no courage or reassurance. This whole trend of affairs started with doubt and ended in Gath with David being chased from the king's presence. What a poor testimony David left behind him in Gath. He was humiliated and God was dishonored."

God whispers to us in our pleasures, but he shouts to us in our pain.

-- C S Lewis

**Bob Roe** comments "The wilderness experiences in our lives are deliberately designed by God to form us into men or women of maturity. As C. S. Lewis says, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, but he shouts to us in our pain." Pain is God's megaphone to get our attention. So our struggles and stresses, which can be emotional, physical or spiritual, are God's way of telling us, "I'm going to make you into a man after my own heart. Don't fight it. Just allow me to mold you and shape you into the image of Christ." So we will see David have experiences and attitudes that we have. We will see him angry with God, obeying God, making it big, plunging to the depths. We will see all the peaks and valleys that a normal person experiences. This is God's man we are watching, a "man after his own heart." It is a comforting thing.

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**Act the madman** (07696)(shaga) is a verb which means to be mad, behave as if mad or demented and when used as a verbal noun refers to a mad fellow or madmen. It means to be insane, demented or mad.

**Victor Hamilton** - The verb **shāga'** appears seven times in the OT, five times as a Pual participle, and twice in the Hithpael, as a participle (1 Samuel 21:14) and as an infinitive construct (1 Samuel 21:15). Etymologically the root has been connected with Arabic saga'a'a "the (ceaseless) cooing of pigeons," or Assyrian šēgu "to howl, rage." Of the five uses of shāga' in the Pual, three of them are found as derogatory names for prophets. First, the disciple of Elisha who anoints Jehu as Israel's king is referred to as a "madman" (meshūggā', 2 Kings 9:11) by the army officers. Second, Shemaiah, one of the Babylonian exiles, was enraged by Jeremiah's words on the length of the deportation and wrote back to the officialdom at Jerusalem regarding "this crazy fellow" (Jeremiah 29:26). Third, Hosea was the butt of similar innuendoes for he too was referred to as mad and "raving" (Hosea 9:7). It is unlikely that this designation refers to the mode of speech of the prophets, i.e. anything from inarticulate muttering to ecstatic babbling. More likely, it is the content of their speech that causes the mockery, a content antagonistic to the optimists of the day. Too much should not be made of the proposed identification, both in connotation and form, between Hebrew meshūggā and the Akkadian word muḫḫum "diviner" from a root meaning "to rave, become frenzied," (A. Malamut, Supp VT 15, 1966, pp. 210-11). Only in 1 Samuel 21:14-15, relating David's performance before King Achish, is the verb associated with behavior that borders on the imbecilic. This may be comparable to 1 Cor. 14:23, "Will they not say you are mad?" (see online [Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament](#))

**Shaga - 6v - act the madman(1), behaving as a madman(1), demented(1), driven mad(1), mad fellow(1), madman(1), madmen(1).** Dt. 28:34; 1Sa 21:14; 1Sa 21:15; 2Ki 9:11; Jer 29:26; Hos. 9:7

Deuteronomy 28:34 "You shall **be driven mad** by the sight of what you see.

1 Samuel 21:14 Then Achish said to his servants, "Behold, you see the man **behaving as a madman**. Why do you bring him to me?

1 Samuel 21:15 "Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this one to **act the madman** in my presence? Shall this one come into my house?"

2 Kings 9:11 Now Jehu came out to the servants of his master, and one said to him, "Is all well? Why did this **mad fellow** come to you?" And he said to them, "You know very well the man and his talk."

Jeremiah 29:26 "The LORD has made you priest instead of Jehoiada the priest, to be the overseer in the house of the LORD over every **madman** who prophesies, to put him in the stocks and in the iron collar,

Hosea 9:7 The days of punishment have come, The days of retribution have come; Let Israel know this! The prophet is a fool, The inspired man is **demented**, Because of the grossness of your iniquity, And because your hostility is so great.

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**Gene Getz applies the principles in this section to our lives** - Have you ever lost perspective, and become unable to remember God's promises and provisions in your own life? Do even the Lord's daily miracles, such as health and strength, sometimes seem unrelated to the supernatural? Have you ever taken matters into your own hands and made a mess of things? At times like these we—like David—hurt those closest to us, cause innocent people to suffer, and bring reproach on the name of Jesus Christ. It's also at times like these that we begin to allow dishonesty to creep into our lives. Our first scheme may include just a little white lie, but our

next step leads to a boldfaced one. Before we know it, we're in so deep we're feigning something we are not. We've moved from telling lies to living them. Remember these principles

**Principle 1. Turning to God is always the right choice.** True, David blew it! He failed God miserably! But David also turned from his sin and once again acknowledged the Lord. Maybe you too are a man after God's heart, but you've blown it. In a state of anxiety and fear you've taken matters into your own hands. In the process, you've been dishonest and matters have gone from bad to worse. You know you're living out of the will of God.

There's no better time to remember David. In a lonely cave, he came to his senses. He refocused his life. He confessed his sin. And so can you—wherever you find yourself. There is no darkness that God's love and grace cannot penetrate! Remember that there is forgiveness in Jesus Christ. The Savior has already made atonement for your sins. Believe it, accept it, and appropriate that forgiveness by acknowledging your sin and turning from it. Remember the words of the Apostle John: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

**Principle 2. Trusting God goes hand in hand with our own responsibility.** Remember that trusting God doesn't mean we are not responsible. When David took on Goliath, he had a plan. But that plan was born in prayer and undergirded by faith. David knew he could do nothing without God's help. Furthermore, at that time David was straightforward and honest. He gave glory and honor to God.

If you have made some decisions as a result of this study, you too may wish to write a "psalm" reflecting the differences in your life, just as David did. If you do, share it with your closest friend! The following New Testament verses present God's standard for our relationships with others. How does your life measure up? Check yourself! Underscore any area where you fall short. Then select one area you've underlined and set a goal. For example, you may underline "do not cause anyone to stumble" because you know this is something you tend to do. -- Ephesians 4:25, 1Th 4:11-12, 1 Peter 2:12. (Borrow [David: God's man in faith and failure](#) )

## TWO PSALMS RELATED TO DAVID'S TIME AT GATH Psalm 34 and Psalm 56

**Bob Deffinbaugh** (see full discussion [Psalm 34: Fear of the LORD](#)) gives an interesting introduction to Psalms 34 and 56 -

Were it not for the superscription to this psalm, Psalm 34 could be read as a beautiful response of praise and instruction based upon some unknown incident in which David was delivered from danger. Our difficulty in understanding the psalm arises from its historical setting: [\(104\)](#) **"A Psalm of David when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him away and he departed."** [\(105\)](#) I am immediately troubled by these words. Should David have been in Gath? Is his feigned insanity consistent with the dignity of the office of a king? Should God be praised because David pretended to be insane and thus escaped danger? Should others be taught (cf. Ps 34:11-22) on the basis of this kind of behavior? How can a psalm which condemns deceit (Ps 34:13) be based upon the actions of a deceiver?

One might reason that these questions surface because of an inaccurate perception of the incident referred to in the superscription. [\(106\)](#) Actually the opposite is true. The more one studies 1 Samuel 21:10-15 in context, the more distressing becomes David's conduct when he was pursued by Saul. While I had previously viewed this time in David's life as one of spiritual vitality and personal piety, a more careful study reveals that he was a man with feet of clay. Since the superscription is intended to turn our attention to the historical setting of the psalm, let us begin by considering David's conduct as he fled from Saul. We will approach this broadly at first, looking at the context in which 1 Samuel 21:10-15 is found, and then consider the incident in Gath specifically.

The death of Goliath and the rout of the Philistines (1 Sam. 17) quickly swept David from obscurity to renown as a military hero. The women of Israel sang, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Sam. 18:7). The popularity of David surpassed Saul, making the king extremely jealous (1Sa 18:8-9). Saul began to look upon David as his rival, and eventually he was marked out for death (cf. 1Sa 18:10-11, 1Sa 20-29).

Just as Saul sinfully responded to David's popularity, David also reacted wrongly to the danger occasioned by Saul's murderous intentions. **Deception became David's way of dealing with danger.** The events leading up to Psalm 34 begin in 1 Samuel 19—when David escaped Saul's assassination plot (1Sa 19:10). He fled Saul's spear, being lowered from a window by Michal, his wife. She then (at David's instruction?) deceived her father. To allow time for David to escape, Michal placed a dummy made from a household idol in his bed (1Sa 19:11-17). Sometime later David was expected to sit at Saul's table to celebrate the feast of the new moon. Fearing for his life he asked Jonathan to lie about his absence from the festivities. Jonathan falsely explained to his father that David had gone to offer a sacrifice for his family at Bethlehem (1Sa 20:6+).



Later David fled to Nob. There Ahimelech the priest questioned David as to why he appeared alone. David fallaciously replied to the priest that Saul had commissioned him to carry out an urgent task and that he was to rendezvous with his men at an appointed place (1Sa 21:1-2). David requested provisions and a weapon from Ahimelech. He was given some of the consecrated bread (107) and the sword he had taken from Goliath.

David's flight to Nob was costly. Along with eighty-four other priests, Ahimelech was executed at Saul's command. Saul's paranoid purge included the slaughter of the men, women, children and cattle of Nob (1Sa 22:6-19+). (108) David acknowledged to Abiathar, the only son of Ahimelech to survive the massacre at Nob, that he was morally responsible for the slaughter (1Sa 22:22).

How was it possible for David, in the words of Psalm 34, to "seek and pursue peace" (Ps 34:14) with a sword? When David went out to do battle with Goliath he said that he did not require a sword for the Lord was on his side:

"This day the Lord will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the Lord's and He will give you into our hands" (1 Sam. 17:46-47+).

God was not only able to deliver David from Goliath without a sword, but He could also protect David from the treachery of Saul without David resorting to the use of Goliath's sword. In 1 Samuel 19 we are told that David fled to Samuel at Ramah, after which the two of them went to stay in Naioth (1Sa 19:18+). Saul heard that David was at Naioth and dispatched forces to arrest him. On three occasions Saul's arresting forces were confronted by Samuel and a company of prophets; they were overcome by the Spirit of God so that they prophesied. Those men who were under the control of the Holy Spirit could not lay a hand on God's anointed. Finally, Saul personally led his forces, only to prophesy himself (1Sa 19:23-24). Without a sword or a spear, God was able to spare David's life. **Why, then, did David feel it urgent that he arm himself with a weapon?**

In 1 Samuel 25 we find David and his men living in the wilderness of Paran (1Sa 25:1+). There David gave Nabal's shepherds protection without requiring payment. He therefore requested from Nabal a token of his appreciation (1Sa 25:5-8). Nabal foolishly denied this request, refusing to acknowledge that David was the coming king of Israel, as his wife Abigail testified (1Sa 25:30). David impetuously set out to attack Nabal, intending to kill him and every male heir. Only by the wise and godly intervention of Abigail was David turned from his act of vengeance (1Sa 25:9-35). (109) Surely David was not "seeking peace" in the way he instructed others to do in Psalm 34.

One final incident must be mentioned before we turn to David's first flight to Gath in 1 Samuel 21. David made a second flight to Achish in Gath in 1 Samuel 27+. **In this instance it is very clear that David fled to this Philistine city out of fear and unbelief**

Then David said to himself, "Now I will perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than to escape into the land of the Philistines. Saul then will despair of searching for me any more in all the territory of Israel, and I will escape from his hand" (1 Sam. 27:1+).

In contemporary terms, David must have thought, "Better Red than dead." David fled to the Philistines because he didn't believe God could spare his life any other way.

**David's actions were based upon pragmatism rather than on principle** He was willing to make an alliance with Israel's enemies in order to feel safe and secure. The Philistines who once fled from David, the warrior of Israel (1 Sam. 17:50-52), were now David's allies to whom he looked for protection from Saul. In order to win Achish's favor, David convinced him that he was conducting raids upon Israelite towns, while actually he was attacking the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites (1Sa 27:8-12). David even told Achish that he would fight with him against the Israelites (1Sa 28:1-2) which it appeared he was willing to do until a protest was raised by the Philistine commanders (1Sa 29:1-5).

These events provide a backdrop for David's predicament in 1 Samuel 21. **In all previous incidents, violence and deception seem to have been more the rule than the exception.** In continued flight from Saul David left Judah for Gath, the hometown of Goliath (1 Sa 17:4,23) and one of the five principal cities of the Philistines (cf. Josh. 13:3; 1Sa 6:17; 17:52). David apparently wished to remain anonymous, but such hopes were futile. He was soon recognized as the rightful king of Israel and a great military hero about whom songs were sung by the Israelite women (1Sa 21:11). These things were all reported to Achish, king of Gath.

**The superscription to Psalm 56 suggests that David was placed under house arrest.** David probably wondered if he was doomed to spend his life as the prisoner of Achish. After all, Israel and the Philistines were enemies and at war as nations. David was the enemy's king (1Sa 21:11), or at least was going to be. And David was the one who had put their hometown hero Goliath to death. Things did not look good for David. It is not without reason that we are told, **"David took these words to heart, and greatly feared Achish king of Gath"** (1Sa 21:12).

An ingenious plan then came to David's mind. Concealing his sanity, David began to manifest the symptoms of a lunatic. He scribbled on the walls and drooled down his beard (1Sa 21:13). How could such a maniac possibly pose a threat to Achish? In his present state of mind David would not be an asset to Achish in any armed conflict with Israel (cf. 1Sa 21:15; 1Sa 29:1ff). The result was that David departed, not voluntarily as 1Sa 22:1 might allow, but by force. The superscription to Psalm 34 indicates that this Philistine king "drove him away."

I do not find it possible to praise David for the deception which characterized his actions while fleeing from Saul (cf. also 1Sa 27:8-12). Neither can I excuse David's fraudulence in these events on the grounds of [situational ethics](#), reasoning that in this "time of war" deceit was allowable. (110) While Kidner attempts to minimize the wrong done here by referring to David's deception as "abject clowning," (111) I find this an inadequate explanation. Let us be honest; this is not the same kind of "deception" we practice when we leave a light on in the house at night, allowing the burglar to conclude that we are home. This was deliberate lying. David's actions, or at least some of them, were wrong. Not only are we hard-pressed to praise David for his cunning, we are caused to wonder how it is possible to praise God for David's deliverance as Psalm 34 urges us to do. How can we possibly take seriously the instruction which David gives in the psalm? How are we to harmonize the situation of 1 Samuel 21:10-15 with the words of Psalm 34?

The solution to our problem is not to be found in the Book of 1 Samuel. It is not even to be found in Psalm 34. The key to our dilemma is contained in Psalm 56, which begins with these words:

"For the choir director; according to Jonath elem rehokim. A Mikhtam of David, when the Philistines seized him in Gath."

A look at Psalm 56, apparently based on the same event in David's life, will help us to see the folly of David's fears from which God delivered him: "When I am afraid, I will put my trust in Thee. In God, whose word I praise, in God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid. What can mere man do to me?" (Ps. 56:3-4, cf. also Ps 56:10-11).

In 1 Samuel 21:12 we read:

"And David took these words to heart, and greatly feared Achish king of Gath."

It was David's **fear of Saul** that prompted him to flee to Gath to seek the protection of the Philistines (cf. 1Sa 27:1). It was David's dread of man which caused him to deceive others with his lips (e.g. 1 Sam. 20:5-6; 21:1-2, etc.). It was David's panic that led him to the conclusion that he must feign madness before Abimelech if he were to survive. Psalm 56 focuses on David's fears, which prompted him to flee from Judah and to seek to preserve his life by deception. In Psalm 56 I believe David came to see his problem as that of fearing man rather than God. With a renewed trust in God (a fear of God), David now realizes that "mere man" (Ps 56:4, 11) can do nothing against him while God is his defense (Ps 56:3-4, 9-11).

It is my opinion that the sequence of events recorded in 1 Samuel 21 and Psalms 34 and 56 was something like this:

Out of fear of Saul, David fled to Gath. He attempted to live in that city without revealing his identity, but was soon discovered (cf. 1 Sam. 21:11). When Achish learned of David's identity and reputation as a soldier, he seized him (superscription, Psalm 56). Under house arrest, David began to ponder his situation and realized he was in grave danger (cf. 1Sa 21:12). David acted as though he was insane and was expelled from Gath. The king looked back upon these events at a point in time and came to understand that he had acted out of the fear of man and not out of the fear of God (cf. Ps 56:3-4, 10-11). He was humbled before God and wrote Psalm 56 as his confession and vow of trust. Finally, Psalm 34 was penned to praise God for His deliverance (in spite of his deception and sin) and to teach the principles pertaining to the "fear of the Lord" which David had learned through this painful experience.

**Psalm 34 must therefore be interpreted in light of the additional revelation of Psalm 56.** We need not attempt to excuse David's sin, because he confessed it and expressed his renewed trust in God. When we read Psalm 34 we understand that it was written by the same man who has already acknowledged his sin and is forgiven. The trust of which David speaks in Psalm 34 is that which he reaffirmed in Psalm 56. The key to our understanding of the relationship of Psalm 34 to 1 Samuel 21 is that David was forgiven and renewed as a result of his experience described in Psalm 56.

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**ANOTHER QUESTION THAT ARISES FROM PSALM 34 IS WHY IS THE NAME ABIMELECH INSTEAD OF ACHISH? Below are 2 explanations.**

**(1) Gleason Archer - [see page 247 in New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties](#) - Should not the name in the title to Psalm 34 be Achish rather than Abimelech?**

The title to Psalm 34 reads: "A Psalm of David; when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him away and he departed"

(NASB). This is probably a reference to the episode related in 1 Samuel 21:13, when in order to escape arrest as an enemy of the Philistines, David pretended before King Achish of Gath that he had become insane. Reluctant to treat him like a responsible wrongdoer, King Achish ordered him to be expelled from the city and sent away. The appearance of the name “Abimelech” instead of “Achish” may be an error on the part of the editors of the Psalter, who added the titles to the Psalms for which titles are supplied. On the other hand, the biography of King David was known to the Hebrew people better than that of any other king of Israel; and it is most unlikely that this kind of a blunder could have been made by a knowledgeable editor of a later generation.

It is far more likely that the reference to Abimelech was no blunder at all, but actually refers to a second name of King Achish. Just as Gideon also bore the name of Jerubbaal (Judg. 6:32; 7:1, etc.), Solomon was also named Jedidiah (2 Sam. 12:25), and Zedekiah was also called Mattaniah (2 Kings 24:17), so also the kings of the Philistines may have borne more than one name. Actually the earliest Philistine king ever mentioned in Genesis was King Abimelech of Gerar (20:2), followed later in the time of Isaac by Abimelech II (26:1). It would seem that Abimelech became a kind of recurrent dynastic name, a little like “Darius” in Persia (the first Darius actually bore the name Spantadata before his coronation in 522, and the personal name of Darius the Mede [Dan. 5:31; 6:1; 9:1] was probably Gubaru [Dareyawes was probably a throne-name meaning “Royal One”]). All the kings of Egypt bore at least two names (the nesu-bity name, which was a personal name; and a sa-Ra’ name, which was a dynastic title, often recurring in the titulary of members of the same dynastic chain); so it should occasion no surprise if some of the Philistine kings, profoundly influenced by the culture of their neighboring super-power, followed a similar practice.

No other names of Philistine kings are given in the Old Testament except the two already mentioned, Abimelech and Achish. Assyrian sources, however, mention an Aziri or Azuri, king of Ashdod (Pritchard, ANET, p. 286), whom Sargon II replaced by his younger brother, Ahimiti and Sidqia, king of Ashkelon, preceded by Rukibtu and succeeded by Sharruludari (ibid., p. 287), along with Padi, king of Ekron, whom Sennacherib restored to his throne as a loyal vassal. At the same period Sillibel was king of Gaza (ibid., p. 288). Essarhaddon mentioned Mitinti as king of Ashkelon (ibid., p. 291) and Ikausu as king of Ekron—and very significantly, also, an A-himilki (the same name as Ahimelech, and very close to Abimelech in formation) as king of Ashdod. This furnishes a strong degree of likelihood that names like Abimelech persisted among Philistine royalty from the eleventh to the eighth century B.C.

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(2) **Norman Geisler** - [see page 208 in When Critics: A Popular Handbook of Bible Difficulties](#): - PSALM 34—Why does the subtitle of this Psalm have the name Abimelech when the name should be Achish?

**PROBLEM:** The subtitle of Psalm 34 states, “A Psalm of David when he pretended madness before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed.” However, David’s act of madness, recorded in 1 Samuel 21:13, took place before Achish, not Abimelech. Is this an error?

**SOLUTION:** It must be remembered that the titles and subtitles of the various psalms were not part of the original, inspired psalms. Therefore, it is possible that those who added these titles made an error in this instance. Others have proposed that perhaps Abimelech was another name for Achish. It was not an uncommon practice in ancient times to have two names. Gideon was also named Jerubbaal (Jdg 6:32; 7:1), and Solomon also went by the name Jedidiah (2Sa 12:25). It is possible that the name Abimelech was a recurring name in a certain dynasty of the Philistines.

## Psalm 34:1-22

- 1 A Psalm of David when he feigned madness before Abimelech, who drove him away and he departed.  
I will bless the LORD at all times;  
His praise shall continually be in my mouth.
- 2 My soul will make its boast in the LORD;  
The humble will hear it and rejoice.
- 3 O magnify the LORD with me,  
And let us exalt His name together.
- 4 I sought the LORD, and He answered me,  
And delivered me from all my fears.
- 5 They looked to Him and were radiant,  
And their faces will never be ashamed.
- 6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him  
And saved him out of all his troubles.
- 7 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him,  
And rescues them.

8 O taste and see that the LORD is good;  
How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

9 O fear the LORD, you His saints;  
For to those who fear Him there is no want.

10 The young lions do lack and suffer hunger;  
But they who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing.

11 Come, you children, listen to me;  
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

12 Who is the man who desires life  
And loves length of days that he may see good?

13 Keep your tongue from evil  
And your lips from speaking deceit.

14 Depart from evil and do good;  
Seek peace and pursue it.

15 The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous  
And His ears are open to their cry.

16 The face of the LORD is against evildoers,  
To cut off the memory of them from the earth.

17 The righteous cry, and the LORD hears  
And delivers them out of all their troubles.

18 The LORD is near to the brokenhearted  
And saves those who are crushed in spirit.

19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous,  
But the LORD delivers him out of them all.

20 He keeps all his bones,  
Not one of them is broken.

21 Evil shall slay the wicked,  
And those who hate the righteous will be condemned.

22 The LORD redeems the soul of His servants,  
And none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned.

## TREASURY OF DAVID

C H SPURGEON

### PSALM 34

**Title.** Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed. Of this transaction, which reflects no credit upon David's memory, we have a brief account in 1 Samuel 21:1-15. Although the gratitude of the psalmist prompted him thankfully to record the goodness of the Lord in vouchsafing an undeserved deliverance, yet he weaves none of the incidents of the escape into the narrative, but dwells only on the grand fact of his being heard in the hour of peril. We may learn from his example not to parade our sins before others, as certain vainglorious professors are wont to do who seem as proud of their sins as old Greenwich pensioners of their battles and their wounds. David played the fool with singular dexterity, but he was not so real a fool as to sing of his own exploits of folly. In the original, the title does not teach us that the psalmist composed this poem at the time of his escape from Achish, the king or Abimelech of Gath, but that it is intended to commemorate that event, and was suggested by it. It is well to mark our mercies with well carved memorials. God deserves our best handiwork. David in view of the special peril from which he was rescued, was at great pains with this Psalm, and wrote it with considerable regularity, in almost exact accordance with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This is the second alphabetical Psalm, the twenty-fifth being the first.

**Division.** The Psalm is split into two great divisions at the close of Psalms 34:10, when the Psalmist having expressed his praise to God turns in direct address to men. The first ten verses are A HYMN, and the last twelve A SERMON. For further assistance to the reader we may subdivide thus: In Psalms 34:1-3, David vows to bless the Lord, and invites the praise of others; from Psalms 34:4-7 he relates his experience, and in Psalms 34:8-10 exhorts the godly to constancy of faith. In Psalms 34:1-14, he gives direct exhortation, and follows it up by didactic teaching from Psalms 34:15-22 to the close.

## EXPOSITION by C H Spurgeon

**Ver. 1. I will bless the Lord at all times.** He is resolved and fixed, **I will**; he is personally and for himself determined, let others so as they may; he is intelligent in head and inflamed in heart --he knows to whom the praise is due, and what is due, and for what and when. To Jehovah, and not to second causes our gratitude is to be rendered. The Lord hath by right a monopoly in his creatures praise. Even when a mercy may remind us of our sin with regard to it, as in this case David's deliverance from the Philistine monarch was sure to do, we are not to rob God of his meed of honour because our conscience justly awards a censure to our share in the transaction. Though the hook was rusty, yet God sent the fish, and we thank him for it. **At all times**, in every situation, under every circumstance, before, in and after trials, in bright days of glee, and dark nights of fear. He would never have done praising, because never satisfied that he had done enough; always feeling that he fell short of the Lord's deservings. Happy is he whose fingers are wedded to his harp. He who praises God for mercies shall never want a mercy for which to praise. To bless the Lord is never unseasonable. **His praise shall continually be in my mouth**, not in my heart merely, but in my mouth too. Our thankfulness is not to be a dumb thing; it should be one of the daughters of music. Our tongue is our glory, and it ought to reveal the glory of God. What a blessed mouthful is God's praise! How sweet, how purifying, how perfuming! If men's mouths were always thus filled, there would be no repining against God, or slander of neighbours. If we continually rolled this dainty morsel under our tongue, the bitterness of daily affliction would be swallowed up in joy. God deserves blessing with the heart, and extolling with the mouth--good thoughts in the closet, and good words in the world.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Title.** *Abimelech* was king of Gath, the same with Achish, 1 Samuel 21:20: who either had two names, or this of Abimelech, as it should seem, was a common name to all the kings of the Philistines (see Genesis 20:2 Genesis 20:26:8); as Pharaoh was to the Egyptian kings and Caesar to the Roman emperors: the name signifies a *father king*, or *my father king*, or a *royal father*; as kings should be the fathers of their country: before him *David changed his behaviour*, his taste, sense, or reason; he imitated a madman. *John Gill*.

**Whole Psalm.** (This Psalm is alphabetical.) The Alphabetical Psalms, the *psalmi abcedarii*, as the Latin fathers called them, are nine in number; and I cannot help thinking it is a pity that, except in the single instance of the hundred and nineteenth, no hint of their existence should have been suffered to appear in our authorised version. I will not take it upon me to affirm, with Ewald, that no version is faithful in which the acrostic is suppressed; but I do think that the existence of such a remarkable style of composition ought to be indicated in one way or another, and that some useful purposes are served by its being actually reproduced in the translation. No doubt there are difficulties in the way. The Hebrew alphabet differs widely from any of those now employed in Europe. Besides differences of a more fundamental kind, the Hebrew has only twenty-two letters, for our twenty-six; and of the twenty-two, a considerable number have no fellows in ours. An exact reproduction of a Hebrew acrostic in English version is therefore impossible. *William Binnie, D.D.*

**Whole Psalm.** Mr. Hapstone has endeavoured to imitate the alphabetical character of this Psalm in his metrical version. The letter answering to F is wanting, and the last stanza begins with the letter answering to R. One verse of his translation may suffice--

"At all times bless Jehovah's name will I;  
His praise shall in my mouth be constantly:  
Boast in Jehovah shall my soul henceforth;  
Hear it, ye meek ones, and exult with mirth."

**Ver. 1. I will bless the Lord at all times.** Mr. Bradford, martyr, speaking of Queen Mary, at whose cruel mercy he then lay, said, If the queen be pleased to release me, I will thank her; if she will imprison me, I will thank her; if she will burn me, I will thank her, etc. So saith a believing soul: Let God do with me what he will, I will be thankful. *Samuel Clarks's "Mirror."*

**Ver. 1.** Should the whole frame of nature be unhinged, and all outward friends and supporters prove false and deceitful, our worldly hopes and schemes be disappointed, and possessions torn from us, and the floods of sickness, poverty, and disgrace overwhelm our soul with an impetuous tide of trouble; the sincere lover of God, finding that none of these affects his portion and the object of his panting desires, retires from them all to God his refuge and hiding place, and there feels his Saviour incomparably better, and more than equivalent to what the whole of the universe can ever offer, or rob him of; and his tender mercies, unexhausted fulness, and great faithfulness, yield him consolation and rest; and enable him, what time he is afraid, to put his trust in him. Thus we find the holy psalmist expressing himself: **I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.** *William Dunlop.*

**Ver. 1.** S. Basil tells us that the praise of God, once rightly impressed as a seal on the mind, though it may not always be carried out into action, yet in real truth causes us perpetually to praise God. *J. M. Neal's Commentary.*

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 1.** Firm resolution, serious difficulties in carrying it out, helps for its performance, excellent consequences of so doing.

Six questions. --*Who?* "I." *What?* "Will bless." *Whom?* "The Lord." *When?* "At all times." *How? Why?*

**Ver. 1.** Direction for making a heaven below.

## **WORK UPON THE THIRTY-FOURTH PSALM**

*Meditations upon the XXXIV. Psalme*, in Sir RICHARD BAKER'S Works.

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### **Shakespeare Missed It**

I will bless the Lord at all times. — Psalm 34:1

Today's Scripture: Psalm 145:1-21

According to William Shakespeare in *The Merchant of Venice*, mercy drops down like "gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed; it blesseth him that gives and him that takes."

Shakespeare was right about the double blessing that mercy provides. Our merciful deeds bless the person to whom we stretch out a hand of loving-kindness. Not only that, we ourselves benefit when we act mercifully. We experience our Lord's promise: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt. 5:7).

But Shakespeare missed the third recipient of blessing—God! When in our Savior's name we practice Christlike caring, God is praised. He is honored when we show mercy.

As amazing as that may be, it is biblical truth. God is not without emotion. What we do or fail to do affects Him. Our actions either bring Him pleasure or grieve Him deeply. God delights in our adoring recognition of His goodness, and He is saddened when we serve our own selfish interests (Prov. 11:20; Heb. 13:15-16).

The blessings of Christlike mercy flow not only from the giver to the receiver and back again, but to the very heart of God. Acts of mercy are acts of praise. By: Vernon Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Thee we would be always blessing,  
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above,  
Pray and praise Thee without ceasing,  
Glory in Thy perfect love.  
—Wesley

Giving of ourselves to others gives joy to God.

---

### **Holding Me Up**

I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you. Isaiah 41:13

Today's Scripture & Insight: Psalm 34:1-7

After I no longer went on family road trips with my parents, it became a rare occasion to visit my grandparents who lived hundreds of miles away from us. So one year, I decided to fly to visit them in the small town of Land O'Lakes, Wisconsin, for a long weekend. As we drove to the airport for my return flight, Grandma, who had never flown, began to express her fears to me: "That was such a small plane you flew on . . . There's nothing really holding you up there, is there? . . . I would be so afraid to go up that high."

By the time I boarded the small aircraft, I was as fearful as the first time I had flown. What exactly is holding up this plane, anyway?

Irrational fears, or even legitimate ones, don't need to terrify us. David lived as a fugitive, afraid of King Saul who relentlessly pursued him because he was jealous of David's popularity with the people. David found true solace and comfort only in his relationship with God. In Psalm 34 he wrote: "I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears" (v. 4).

Our Father in heaven is all-wise and all-loving. When fear starts to overwhelm us, we need to stop and remember that He is our God and He will always hold us up. By: Cindy Hess Kasper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))



My fears sometimes overwhelm me, Father. Yet I know that You are here with me. May Your perfect love cast out my fear and still my troubled heart!

When we believe that God is good, we can learn to release our fears.

## Psalm 34:2

### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 2. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord.** Boasting is a very natural propensity, and if it were used as in this case, the more it were indulged the better. The exultation of this verse is no mere tongue bragging, "*the soul*" is in it, the boasting is meant and felt before it is expressed. What scope there is for holy boasting in Jehovah! His person, attributes, covenant, promises, works, and a thousand things besides, are all incomparable, unparalleled, matchless; we may cry them up as we please, but we shall never be convicted of vain and empty speech in so doing. Truly he who writes these words of comment has nothing of his own to boast of, but much to lament over, and yet none shall stop him of his boast in God so long as he lives.

**The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.** They are usually grieved to hear boastings; they turn aside from vauntings and lofty speeches, but boasting in the Lord is quite another matter; by this the most lowly are consoled and encouraged. The confident expressions of tried believers are a rich solace to their brethren of less experience. We ought to talk of the Lord's goodness on purpose that others may be confirmed in their trust in a faithful God.

### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 2. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord.** Not like the boasting of the Pharisee, so hateful in the eyes of God, so offensive in the ears of the humble; for *the humble can hear this boasting and be glad*, which they would never do if it were not conformable to the rules of humility. Can any boasting be greater than to say, "I can do all things"? Yet in this boasting there is humility when I add, "In him that strengtheneth me." For though God likes not of boasting, yet he likes of this boasting, which arrogates nothing to ourselves, but ascribes all to him. *Sir Richard Baker.*

**Ver. 2-6.** There is somewhat very striking and pleasing in the sudden transitions, and the change of persons, that is observable in these few verses. "**My soul shall boast; ""The humble shall hear; ""I sought the Lord; ""They looked to him; ""This poor man cried.**" There is a force and elegance in the very unconnectedness of the expressions, which, had they been more closely tied by the proper particles, would have been in a great measure lost. Things thus separated from each other, and yet accelerated, discover, as Longinus observes, the earnestness and the vehemency of the inward working of the mind; and though it may seem to interrupt, or disturb the sentence, yet quickens and enforces it. *Samuel Chandler, D.D.*

### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 2.** The commendable boaster and his gratified audience.

We may boast of the Lord, in himself, his manifestations of himself, his relationship to us, our interest in him, our expectations from him, etc.

The duty of believers to relate their experience for the benefit of others.

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Thank the Lord when trouble comes,  
His love and grace expressing;  
Grateful praise will strengthen faith,  
Turn trials into blessing.  
—DCE

An attitude of gratitude can make your life a beatitude.

## Psalm 34:3

### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 3. O magnify the Lord with me.** Is this request addressed to the humble? If so it is most fitting. Who can make God great but those who feel themselves to be little? He bids them help him to make the Lord's fame greater among the sons of men. Jehovah is infinite, and therefore cannot really be made greater, but his name grows in manifested glory as he is made known to his creatures, and thus he is said to be magnified. It is well when the soul feels its own inability adequately to glorify the Lord, and therefore stirs up others to the gracious work; this is good both for the man himself and for his companions. No praise can excel that which lays us prostrate under a sense of our own nothingness, while divine grace like some topless Alp rises before our eyes and sinks us lower and lower in holy awe. **Let us exalt his name together.** Social, congregated worship is the outgrowth of one of the natural instincts of the new life. In heaven it is enjoyed to the full, and earth is like heaven where it abounds.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUIANT SAYINGS

**Ver. 2-6.** There is somewhat very striking and pleasing in the sudden transitions, and the change of persons, that is observable in these few verses. **"My soul shall boast; ""The humble shall hear; " "I sought the Lord; ""They looked to him; ""This poor man cried."** There is a force and elegance in the very unconnectedness of the expressions, which, had they been more closely tied by the proper particles, would have been in a great measure lost. Things thus separated from each other, and yet accelerated, discover, as Longinus observes, the earnestness and the vehemency of the inward working of the mind; and though it may seem to interrupt, or disturb the sentence, yet quickens and enforces it. *Samuel Chandler, D.D.*

**Ver. 3.** Venema remarks that after the affair with Achish, we are told in 1 Samuel 22:1, "His brethren, and all his father's house went down to the cave Adullam unto him, "and these, together with those who were in debt, and discontented with Saul's government, formed a band of four hundred men. To these his friends and comrades, he relates the story of his escape, and bids them with united hearts and voices extol the Lord. *C. H. S.*

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 3.** Invitation to united praise.

**Ver. 3.** *Magnifying* --or making great the work of God, a noble exercise.

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#### Unashamed Loyalty

Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together. Psalm 34:3

Today's Scripture & Insight: Psalm 34:1–4

Sports fans love to sing their teams' praises. By wearing logos, posting notes on Facebook about their beloved teams, or talking about them with friends, fans leave no doubt where their loyalty stands. My own Detroit Tigers caps, shirts, and conversations indicate that I am right there with those who do this.

Our sports loyalties can remind us that our truest and greatest loyalty must be to our Lord. I think of such unashamed loyalty when I read Psalm 34, where David draws our attention to Someone vastly more vital than anything else on earth.

David says, "I will extol the Lord at all times" (v. 1), and we are left to wonder about the gaps in our lives when we live as if God is not our source of truth, light, and salvation. He says, "His praise will always be on my lips" (v. 1), and we think about how many times we praise things of this world more than we praise Him. David says, "My soul shall make its boast in the Lord" (v. 2 nkjv), and we realize that we boast about our own small successes more than what Jesus has done for us.

It's not wrong to enjoy our teams, our interests, and our accomplishments. But our highest praise goes to our Lord. "Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together" (v. 3). By: Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, help me to have Your praise be on my lips and to boast in You. Help me to keep my focus on You.

Loyalty is the test of true love.

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#### Psalm 34:4

#### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 4. I sought the Lord, and he heard me.** It must have been in a very confused manner that David prayed, and there must have

been much of self sufficiency in his prayer, or he would not have resorted to methods of such dubious morality as pretending to be mad and behaving as a lunatic; yet his poor limping prayer had an acceptance and brought him succour: the more reason for then celebrating the abounding mercy of the Lord. We may seek God even when we have sinned. If sin could blockade the mercy seat it would be all over with us, but the mercy is that there are gifts even for the rebellious, and an advocate for men who sin.

**And delivered me from all my fears.** God makes a perfect work of it. He clears away both our fears and their causes, all of them without exception. Glory be to his name, prayer sweeps the field, slays all the enemies and even buries their bones. Note the egoism of this verse and of those preceding it; we need not blush to speak of ourselves when in so doing we honestly aim at glorifying God, and not at exalting ourselves. Some are foolishly squeamish upon this point, but they should remember that when modesty robs God it is most immodest.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 2-6.** See Psalms on "Psalms 34:2" for further information.

**Ver. 4. I sought the Lord, and he heard me.** God expects to hear from you before you can expect to hear from him. If you restrain prayer, it is no wonder the mercy promised is retained. Meditation is like the lawyer's studying the case in order to his pleading at the bar; when, therefore, thou hast viewed the promise, and affected thy heart with the riches of it, then fly thee to the throne of grace, and spread it before the Lord. *William Gurnall.*

**Ver. 4. He delivered me from all my fears.** To have delivered me from all my troubles had been a great favour, but a far greater to deliver me from all my fears; for where that would but have freed me from present evil, this secures me from evil to come; that now I enjoy not only tranquillity, but security, a privilege only of the godly. The wicked may be free from trouble, but can they be free from fear? No; God knows, though they be not in trouble like other men, yet they live in more fear than other men. Guiltiness of mind, or mind of the world, never suffers them to be secure: though they be free sometimes from the fit of an ague, yet they are never without a grudging; and (if I may use the expression of poets) though they feel not always the whip of Tysiphone, yet they feel always her terrors; and, seeing the Lord hath done this for me, hath delivered me from all my fears, have I not cause, just cause, to magnify him, and exalt his name? *Sir Richard Baker.*

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 4.** *Confessions of a ransomed soul.* Simple, honouring to God, exclude merit, and encourage others to seek also.

**Ver. 4.** *Four stages, "sought, "heard, "delivered."*

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#### Feelings-Deficient

I sought the Lord, and He heard me. — Psalm 34:4

Today's Scripture: Psalm 62

Mallory doesn't feel loved by God. She received Jesus as her Savior several years ago and is confident that she is forgiven and will spend eternity with Him. She believes what God says in His Word, but she would also like to feel loved.

Her friends give her what she thinks is a pat answer: "It's not about feelings! Just believe and the feelings will come later." She says, "Okay, but when is later?" She believes she's "feelings-deficient."

God created us in His image to have emotions, so the longing to feel loved is legitimate and good. One way that many of us sense we're loved is when someone talks with us and listens to us.

God provides those needs in our relationship with Him too. He speaks through His Word to our heart (Heb. 4:12), and He wants us to pour out our heart to Him about everything (Ps. 62:8)—even our longing to feel His love. Besides a relationship with Him, He daily gives us our breath, clothing, food, and shelter. Like the psalmist, we can find Him to be our "rock" and "refuge" as we trust Him (vv.2,7).

God loves us. Now, we walk by faith. One day, when we're in His very presence, we'll never again be feelings-deficient. By: Anne Cetas ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Thinking It Through

Read these passages about God's love for you:

Jeremiah 31:3; John 15:9-11; 1 John 4:9-10.

What can you thank God for today?

Knowing that God loves us comes by faith; feeling His love for us comes by relationship.

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## [Free from Fear Part 4](#)

I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. —Psalm 34:4

Fear sneaks into my heart without permission. It paints a picture of hopelessness and steals my peace. What am I fearful about? Safety of my family or the health of loved ones. The loss of a job or a broken relationship. Fear turns my focus inward and reveals an untrusting heart.

When these fears and worries strike, how good it is to read David's prayer in Psalm 34: "I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears" (v. 4). And how does God deliver us from our fears? When we "look to him" (v. 5), we trust Him to be in control. Then David mentions a different type of fear—a deep respect and awe of the One who surrounds us and delivers us (v. 7). We can take refuge in Him because He is good (v. 8).

This awe of His goodness helps put our fears into perspective. When we remember who God is and how much He loves us, we can relax into His peace. In seeking the Lord we can be delivered from our fears. —Keila

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## **Sending Out an SOS**

I sought the Lord, and he answered me. Psalm 34:4

Today's Scripture & Insight: Psalm 34:1–10

When the hut of a settler in a mountainous region of Alaska caught fire, the settler was left without adequate shelter and with few provisions in the coldest state in the US—in the middle of a frigid winter. Three weeks later, the man was finally rescued when an aircraft flew over and spied the large SOS he had stamped out in the snow and darkened with soot.

The psalmist David was certainly in dire straits. He was being pursued by jealous King Saul who sought to kill him. And so he fled to the city of Gath, where he pretended to be insane in order to preserve his life (see 1 Samuel 21). Out of those events emerged Psalm 34, where David cried out in prayer to God and found peace (vv. 4, 6). God heard his pleas and delivered him.

Are you in a desperate situation and crying out for help? Be assured that God still hears and responds to our desperate prayers today. As with David, He's attentive to our distress calls and takes away our fears (v. 4)—and sometimes even saves us "out of [our] troubles" (v. 6).

Scripture invites us to "cast [our] cares on the Lord and he will sustain [us]" (Psalm 55:22). When we turn our difficult circumstances over to God, we can trust that He'll provide the help we need. We're secure in His capable hands. By: Alyson Kieda ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When have you felt peace after crying out to God? When has He rescued you from a desperate situation?

Loving Father, thank You for hearing my prayers and bringing comfort, peace—whatever I need most. And thank You especially for rescuing me from my sin.

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## **Put Your Fears To Rest**

I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. — Psalm 34:4

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34:1-10

It was the night before Steven would lose his adenoids and tonsils to a surgeon's scalpel. Being 9 years old, he was fearful of what the next day would bring. The old "You get to have all the ice cream you can eat" line had worn itself out. Steven knew he was in for some tough days ahead.

Then the phone rang. It was our pastor, Jim Jeffery, calling Steven from an airport while on an out-of-town trip. When Steven got off the phone, he proudly announced, "Pastor Jeffery prayed with me on the phone!"

Later, after Steven had recovered from the surgery, he went to Pastor Jeffery to thank him for the phone call. He told him something he hadn't told us: "After you prayed with me on the phone, I wasn't scared anymore."

Prayer is a powerful tool whether we pray alone or with others. The psalmist cried out to the Lord and was delivered from his fears (Ps. 34:4). In Steven's case, prayer helped a young boy who feared an unknown tomorrow. In your case, it may help you understand

God's mysterious ways when you lose a job, a relationship falters, a child goes wayward, or your faith seems small.

Share your concerns with others, and talk to the Father together. It's a great way to put your fears to rest. By: Dave Branon [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Because you prayed with me today,  
My fear began to melt away;  
I knew that Jesus heard our prayer,  
And I was really in His care.  
—Hess

We tap into God's power through prayer.

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## He's Waiting

I sought the Lord, and He heard me. — Psalm 34:4

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34:1-15

Jane Welsh, secretary to Scottish essayist Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), married him and devoted her life to him and his work. He loved her deeply but was so busy with his writing and speaking that he often neglected her. Some time into their marriage, she became ill and suddenly died.

In a new book by John Ortberg, I read that after the funeral Thomas went alone to Jane's room and looked at her diary. He found these words she had written about him: "Yesterday he spent an hour with me and it was like heaven. I love him so." On another day, she wrote, "I have listened all day to hear his steps in the hall, but now it is late. I guess he will not come today." He wept brokenly, realizing his neglect of her and her desire just to talk with him.

As I read that, I couldn't help but think, God loves me dearly and waits for me to fellowship with Him. How many days do I forget Him?

The Lord welcomes our worship, our prayer, our praise. He has told us in His Word to pray all the time (1 Thess. 5:17). As He did with the church in Laodicea in Revelation 3, Christ knocks on the door of our heart and patiently waits (v.20). He listens attentively for our call, our cry, our prayer. How often does He wait in vain? By: David C. Egener ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We can know that God is watching,  
Always present, everywhere,  
And with hope and joy and patience  
He is waiting for our prayer.  
—Roworth

Talk with God—He longs to hear from you.

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## The Remedy For Fear

I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. — Psalm 34:4

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34:1-10

In his first inaugural speech in 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt, the newly elected president of the US, addressed a nation that was still reeling from the Great Depression. Hoping to ignite a more optimistic outlook regarding that economic crisis, he declared, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself!"

Fear often shows up in our lives when we are at risk of losing something—our wealth, health, reputation, position, safety, family, friends. It reveals our innate desire to protect the things in life that are important to us, rather than fully entrusting them to God's care and control. When fear takes over, it cripples us emotionally and saps us spiritually. We're afraid to tell others about Christ, to extend our lives and resources for the benefit of others, or to venture into new territory. A fearful spirit is more vulnerable to the enemy, who tempts us to compromise biblical convictions and to take matters into our own hands.

The remedy for fear, of course, is trust in our Creator. Only when we trust the reality of God's presence, power, protection, and provision for our lives can we share the joy of the psalmist, who said, "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears" (Ps. 34:4). By: Joe Stowell ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All](#)

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Day by day and with each passing moment,  
Strength I find to meet my trials here;  
Trusting in my Father's wise bestowment,  
I've no cause for worry or for fear.  
—Berg

Trust in the Lord is the cure for a fearful spirit.

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## Free from Fear

I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Psalm 34:4

Today's Scripture & Insight: Psalm 34:1–10

Fear sneaks into my heart without permission. It paints a picture of helplessness and hopelessness. It steals my peace and my concentration. What am I fearful about? I'm concerned about the safety of my family or the health of loved ones. I panic at the loss of a job or a broken relationship. Fear turns my focus inward and reveals a heart that sometimes finds it hard to trust.

When these fears and worries strike, how good it is to read David's prayer in Psalm 34: "I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears" (v. 4). And how does God deliver us from our fears? When we "look to him" (v. 5), when we focus on Him, our fears fade; we trust Him to be in control. Then David mentions a different type of fear—not a fear that paralyzes, but a deep respect and awe of the One who surrounds us and delivers us (v. 7). We can take refuge in Him because He is good (v. 8).

This awe of His goodness helps put our fears into perspective. When we remember who God is and how much He loves us, we can relax into His peace. "Those who fear him lack nothing" (v. 9), concludes David. How wonderful to discover that in the fear of the Lord we can be delivered from our fears. By: Keila Ochoa ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, I'm aware of my worries and fears, and I place them in Your hands. Give me peace as I face the day.

Ask God to free you from your fears.

## Psalm 34:5

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### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 5. They looked unto him, and were lightened.** The psalmist avows that his case was not at all peculiar, it was matched in the lives of all the faithful; they too, each one of them on looking to their Lord were brightened up, their faces began to shine, their spirits were uplifted. What a means of blessing one look at the Lord may be! There is life, light, liberty, love, everything in fact, in a look at the crucified One. Never did a sore heart look in vain to the good Physician; never a dying soul turned its darkening eye to the brazen serpent to find its virtue gone. **And their faces were not ashamed.** Their faces were covered with joy but not with blushes. He who trusts in God has no need to be ashamed of his confidence, time and eternity will both justify his reliance.

### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Ver. 2-6. See Psalms on "Psalms 34:2"** for further information.

**Ver. 5. They looked unto him.** The more we can think upon our Lord, and the less upon ourselves, the better. Looking to him, as he is seated upon the right hand of the throne of God, will keep our heads, and especially our hearts, steady when going through the deep waters of affliction. Often have I thought of this when crossing the water opposite the old place of Langholm. I found, when I looked down on the water, I got dizzy; I therefore fixed my eyes upon a steady object on the other side, and got comfortably through. *David Smith, 1792-1867.*

### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 5.** The power of a faith look.

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Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy; no shadow of shame will darken their faces. —Psalm 34:5

As a young woman, Nannie H. Burroughs wanted to be a teacher. She applied for a position, only to be told of the DC school system's preference for the "lighter skinned Blacks." She later attributed her drive to open her own school to this insult and injustice. Burroughs went on to organize the International Council of Darker Women to uplift African American women, and became a dynamic force in the Civil Rights movement. Her rejection as a young adult could have hindered her from moving forward; instead, she let God use her experiences to fuel her work.

African Americans have many painful stories to tell of being judged, rejected, and overlooked because of skin color, hair texture, or facial features. Many struggle with poor self-image. But when we bring our pain to God, we can begin to heal in the face of His truth.

God knit each of us together, tracing the outline of our form and choosing the hue to color in the lines (Psalm 139:13–16). The Lord grieves when the precious person He made is despised. Our identity wounds need to find healing so we can be the person He made us to be.

As David confessed, the faces of those who turn to Him "are radiant . . . never covered with shame" (Psalm 34:5). In Him, we find the courage to be a testimony to the One who loves us. —Victoria McAfee

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## Radiant Christians

They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed. — Psalm 34:5

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34:1-10

Psalm 34 breathes with the spirit of exuberant confidence and faith in God. The Lord, said David, delivers us from all our fears (v.4). Not only that, but those who look up to Him with a heaven-born confidence reflect the light of His countenance so that they become radiant (v.5). The inner joy bubbles over and reveals itself in their eyes and face.

A woman who was more than 80 years old wrote to me some years ago and related a personal experience that had profoundly influenced her life.

She said, "I recall that when I was a child, I used to watch a precious old saint in church as with closed eyes he sang with head thrown back and with tears trickling down over a perfectly radiant face, 'Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing!' Sometimes he sang in tune and sometimes way off, but nobody cared because he sang with his whole heart. I don't remember a single word he ever said, but I was profoundly impressed by his face. I wanted to be a Christian like that. Since then I have often prayed, 'O Father, help me to be a radiant Christian.'"

Take a look in the mirror. Does your face radiate a good testimony for Jesus Christ? By: Henry G. Bosch [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

You don't have to tell how you live each day,  
You don't have to say if you work or pray,  
A tried, true barometer serves in its place:  
However you live, it will show in your face!  
—Anon.

The face is a mirror of the heart—Do people see Jesus in you?

## Psalm 34:6

### EXPOSITION

#### Ver. 6. This poor man cried.

Here he returns to his own case. He was poor indeed, and so utterly friendless that his life was in great jeopardy; but he cried in his heart to the protector of his people and found relief. His prayer was a cry, for brevity and bitterness, for earnestness and simplicity, for artlessness and grief; it was a poor man's cry, but it was none the less powerful with heaven, for **the Lord heard him**, and to be heard of God is to be delivered; and so it is added that the Lord **saved him out of all his troubles**. At once and altogether David was clean rid

of all his woes. The Lord sweeps our griefs away as men destroy a hive of hornets, or as the winds clear away the mists. Prayer can clear us of troubles as easily as the Lord made riddance of the frogs and flies of Egypt when Moses entreated him. This verse is the psalmist's own personal testimony: he being dead yet speaketh. Let the afflicted reader take heart and be of good courage.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 2-6.** See Psalms on "**Psalms 34:2**" for further information.

**Ver. 6. This poor man cried.** The reasons of *crying* are 1. Want cannot blush. The pinching necessity of the saints is not tied to the law of modesty. Hunger cannot be ashamed. "I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise," saith David Psalms 55:2; and Hezekiah, "Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove" Isaiah 38:14. "I went mourning without the sun: I stood up, and I cried in the congregation" Job 30:28. Job 30:2. Though God hear prayer only as prayer offered in Christ, not because very fervent; yet fervour is a heavenly ingredient in prayer. An arrow drawn with full strength hath a speedier issue; therefore, the prayers of the saints are expressed by *crying* in Scripture. "O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not" Psalms 22:2. "At noon, will I pray, and cry aloud" Psalms 55:17. "In my distress I cried to the Lord" Psalms 18:6. "Unto thee have I cried, O Lord" Psalms 88:13. "Out of the depths have I cried" Psalms 130:1. "Out of the belly of hell cried I" Jonah 2:2. "Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my rock" Psalms 28:1. Yea, it goeth to somewhat more than *crying*: "I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard" Job 19:7. "Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer" Lamentations 3:8. He who may teach us all to pray, sweet Jesus, "In the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears" Hebrews 5:7; he prayed with war shouts. 3. And these prayers are so prevalent, that God answereth them: **This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his fears** Psalms 34:6. "My cry came before him, even into his ears" Psalms 18:6. The cry addeth wings to the prayer, as a speedy post sent to court upon life and death: "Our fathers cried unto thee, and were delivered" Psalms 22:5. "*The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth*" Psalms 34:17. *Samuel Rutherford.*

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 6.** --

1. The poor man's heritage, "troubles."
2. The poor man's friend.
3. The poor man's cry.
4. The poor man's salvation.

**Ver. 6.** The poor man's wealth.

The position of prayer in the economy of grace, or the natural history of mercy in the soul.

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## Always On Call

This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. — Psalm 34:6

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34:1-18

If you're frustrated with the health care system and would like a personal physician who is always on call, you can have one—for a price. Two Seattle doctors are charging wealthy patients \$20,000 a year for primary healthcare. They make house calls, give personal, unhurried treatment, and say the service they provide is like other perks available to people with money. Whatever we think of the medical ethics involved, it's a level of care most of us would like to have if we could afford it.

There's another type of "on-call" relationship that cannot be purchased. In fact, it's available only to those who consider themselves poor and needy. I'm speaking of God's never-failing response to His children who cry out to Him for help.

David said, "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears" (Psalm 34:4). He also said, "This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (v.6).

Jesus has been called "the Great Physician." He is not "on demand" to do as we ask, but He is always "on call" to hear our prayers and provide the deliverance we need. What an encouragement! "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry" (v.15). By: David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Whenever you need Him, whenever you call,  
The Lord is close by—He's the One who hears all;

When you are in trouble, when you need His aid,  
Just cry out to Jesus, and your fears will fade.

—Fitzhugh

The Great Physician is always on call.

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## The Only One

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers. — 1 Peter 3:12

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34

As a teacher with many years of experience in high school and college classrooms, I have observed many kinds of students. One in particular is what I call the "just me and the teacher" student. This pupil has a kind of one-on-one conversation with the teacher—almost as if no one else were in the class. The teacher's rhetorical questions, for instance, result in verbal answers from this student—oblivious to anyone else's reaction. While the class is filled with other pupils, this one seems to think it's "just me and the teacher."

As I watched one of these students recently and saw him command the teacher's attention, I thought, He's on to something. He has the focus we all need to have when we pray.

The thought that millions of other Christians are talking to God as we pray should never cause us to feel that we are less important. No, as we talk to our everywhere-present, all-knowing, all-powerful God, we can be confident that He is giving us His full attention. David said, "This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him" (Psalm 34:6). God directs single-minded attention toward our praise, our requests, and our concerns.

When you pray, to Him you are the only one. By: Dave Branon

So lift up your heart to the heavens;  
There's a loving and kind Father there  
Who offers release—comfort and peace—  
In the silent communion of prayer.  
—Anon.

Though millions are bending God's ear in prayer, He listens to each individually.

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## God Has Time For You

This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. — Psalm 34:6

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34:4-18

Historian Cassius Dio recorded a revealing event from the life of Hadrian, the Roman Emperor from ad 117-138: "Once, when a woman made a request of [Hadrian] as he passed by on a journey, he at first said to her, 'I haven't time,' but afterwards, when she cried out, 'Cease, then, being emperor,' he turned about and granted her a hearing."

How often we say or hear, "Not now, I'm busy" or "I'm sorry, but I just don't have time." Yet, our heavenly Father, the Master and Creator of everything, always has time for us. The psalmist wrote: "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. . . . The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles" (Ps. 34:15-17).

God is not like the emperor or a busy executive who tries to avoid interruption. Instead, the Father's joy is to listen and respond to His children. "The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit" (v.18).

Hadrian's afterthought was, "I must take time for my subjects." God's first thought is, "I always have time for those who come to Me." Whenever we need to talk, the Lord is ready to listen. By: David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I love to dwell upon the thought  
That Jesus cares for me;  
It matters not what life may bring—  
He loves me tenderly.  
—Adams

God is never too busy to listen to His children.

## EXPOSITION

**Ver. 7. The angel of the Lord.** The covenant angel, the Lord Jesus, at the head of all the bands of heaven, surrounds with his army the dwellings of the saints. Like hosts entrenched so are the ministering spirits encamped around the Lord's chosen, to serve and succour, to defend and console them. **Encampeth round about them that fear him.** On every side the watch is kept by warriors of sleepless eyes, and the Captain of the host is one whose prowess none can resist. **And delivereth them.** We little know how many providential deliverances we owe to those unseen hands which are charged to bear us up lest we dash our foot against a stone.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 7. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.** I will not rub the questions, whether these angels can contract themselves, and whether they can subsist in a point, and so stand together the better in so great a number, neither will I trouble myself to examine whether they are in such and such a place in their *substance*, or only in their *virtue* and *operation*. But this the godly man may assure himself of, that whensoever he shall want their help, in spite of doors, and locks, and bars, he may have it in a moment's warning. For there is no impediment, either for want of power because they are spirits, or from want of good will, both because it is their duty, and because they bear an affection to him; not only rejoicing at his first conversion Luke 15:10, but, I dare confidently affirm, always disposed with abundance of cheerfulness to do anything for him. I cannot let pass some words I remember of Origen's to this purpose, as I have them from his interpreter. He brings in the angels speaking after this manner: --"If he (meaning the Son of God) went down, and went down into a body, and was clothed with flesh, and endured its infirmities and died for men, what do we stand still for? Come, let's all down from heaven together." *Zachary Bogan*.

**Ver. 7. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him.** This is the first time that, in the psalter, we read of the ministrations of angels. But many fathers rather take this passage of the "Angel of the Great Counsel, "and gloriously to him it applies. *J. M. Neale*.

**Ver. 7. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him,** etc. By whom may be meant, either the uncreated Angel, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Angel of God's presence, and of the covenant, the Captain of salvation, the Leader and Commander of the people; and whose salvation is as walls and bulwarks about them, or as an army surrounding them; or a created angel may be intended, even a single one, which is sufficient to guard a multitude of saints, since one could destroy at once such a vast number of enemies, as in 2 Kings 19:35; or one may be put for more, since they are an innumerable company that are on the side of the Lord's people, and to whom they are joined; and these may be said to encamp about them, because they are an host or army (see Genesis 32:1-2 Luke 2:13); and are the guardians of the saints, that stand up for them and protect them, as well as minister to them. *John Gill*.

**Ver. 7. The angel of the Lord** is represented in his twofold character in this pair of Psalms, as an angel of mercy, and also as an angel of judgment, Psalms 35:6. This pair of Psalms (the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth), may in this respect be compared with the twelfth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where the angel of the Lord is displayed as encamping about St. Peter, and delivering him, and also as smiting the persecutor, Herod Agrippa. *Christopher Wordsworth, D.D.*

**Ver. 7. Round about.** In illustration of this it may be observed, that according to D'Arvieux, it is the practice of the Arabs to pitch their tents in a circular form; the prince being in the middle, and the Arabs about him, but so as to leave a respectful distance between them. And Thevenot, describing a Turkish encampment near Cairo, having particularly; noticed the spaciousness, decorations, and conveniences of the Bashaw's tent, or pavilion, adds, "Round the pale of his tent, within a pistol shot, were above two hundred tents, pitched in such a manner that the doors of them all looked towards the Bashaw's tent; and it ever is so, that they may have their eye always upon their master's lodging, and be in readiness to assist him if he be attacked." *Richard Mant*.

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 7.** *Castra angelorum, salvatio bonorum.*

**Ver. 7.** The ministry of angels.

In what sense Jesus is "The angel of the Lord."

The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them. — Psalm 34:7

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34:4-7

In a materialistic world like ours, we are tempted to conclude that the only real things are those we experience with our five senses. Yet "there are things we cannot see: things behind our backs or far away and all things in the dark," said C. S. Lewis.

There is another realm of reality, just as actual, just as factual, just as substantial as anything we see, hear, touch, taste, or smell in this world. It exists all around us—not out there "somewhere," but "here." There are legions of angels helping us, for which the world has no counter-measures (Hebrews 1:14). The psalmist David referred to them as a force of thousands of thousands of chariots (Psalm 68:17). We cannot see God nor His angels with our natural eyes. But they are there, whether we see them or not. I believe the world is filled with them.

Faith is the means by which we are able to "see" this invisible world. That is belief's true function. Faith is to the spiritual realm what the five senses are to the natural realm. The writer of Hebrews says that faith is "the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). By faith we recognize the existence of the spiritual world and learn to depend on the Lord for His help in our daily life. Our goal, then, as George MacDonald once said, is to "grow eyes" to see the unseen. By: David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

At times our fears may loom so large,  
We long for proof that God is near;  
It's then our Father says to us,  
"Have faith, My child, and do not fear."  
—DJD

Faith sees things that are out of sight.  
(ED: BUT NOT OUT OF MIND!)

## Psalms 34:8

### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 8. O taste and see.** Make a trial, an inward, experimental trial of the goodness of God. You cannot see except by tasting for yourself; but if you taste you shall see, for this, like Jonathan's honey, enlightens the eyes. **That the Lord is good.** You can only know this really and personally by experience. There is the banquet with its oxen and fatlings; its fat things full of marrow, and wine on the lees well refined; but their sweetness will be all unknown to you except you make the blessings of grace your own, by a living, inward, vital participation in them. **Blessed is the man that trusteth in him.** Faith is the soul's taste; they who test the Lord by their confidence always find him good, and they become themselves blessed. The second clause of the verse, is the argument in support of the exhortation contained in the first sentence.

### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 8. O taste and see that the Lord is good.** Our senses help our understandings; we cannot by the most rational discourse perceive what the sweetness of honey is; *taste* it and you shall perceive it. "His fruit was sweet to my *taste*." Dwell in the light of the Lord, and let thy soul be always ravished with his love. Get out the marrow and the fatness that thy portion yields thee. Let fools learn by beholding thy face how dim their blazes are to the brightness of thy day. *Richard Alleine, in "Heaven Opened," 1665.*

**Ver. 8. O taste and see,** etc. It is not enough for thee to see it afar off, and not have it, as Dives did; or to have it in thee, and not to taste it, as Samson's lion had great store of honey in him, but tasted no sweetness of it; but thou must as well have it as see it, and as well taste it as have it. **O taste and see,** says he, "*how sweet the Lord is;*" for so indeed Christ giveth his church not only a *sight* but also "*a taste*" of his sweetness. A *sight* is where he saith thus: "We will rise up early, and go into the vineyard, and see whether the vine have budded forth the small grapes, and whether the pomegranates flourish;" there is a *sight* of the vine. A *taste* is where he says thus, "I will bring thee into the wine cellar, and cause thee to drink spice wine, and new wine of the pomegranates;" there is a *taste* of the wine. The church not only goes into the vineyard and *sees* the wine, but also goes into the wine cellar, and *tastes* the wine. *Thomas Playfere.*

**Ver. 8. Taste and see.** There are some things, especially in the depths of the religious life, which can only be understood by being experienced, and which even then are incapable of being adequately embodied in words. **O taste and see that the Lord is good.** The enjoyment must come before the illumination; or rather the enjoyment is the illumination. There are things that must be

loved before we can know them to be worthy of our love; things to be believed before we can understand them to be worthy of belief. And even after this --after we are conscious of a distinct apprehension of some spiritual truth, we can only, perhaps, answer, if required to explain it, in the words of the philosopher to whom the question was put, "What is God?" "I know, if I am not asked." *Thomas Binney's "Sermons," 1869.*

**Ver. 8. Taste and see.** Be unwilling that all the good gifts of God should be swallowed without taste, or maliciously forgotten, but use your palate, know them, and consider them. *D. H. Mollerus.*

**Ver. 8.** Heaven and earth are replete with the goodness of God. We omit to open our mouths and eyes, on which account the psalmist desires us to **taste** and **see**. *Agustus F. Tholuck.*

**Ver. 8.** The **taste and see** invite, as it were, to a sumptuous feast, which has long been ready; to a rich sight openly exposed to view. The imperatives are in reality not oratory but persuasive. *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

**Ver. 8.** All that the believer can attain of spiritual consolation in this life is but a taste. *David Dickson.*

**Ver. 8.:** --

O taste the Lord, and see how sweet He is,

The man that trusts in him lives still in bliss. *Sir John Davies, 1569-1626.*

**Ver. 8-10.** All these verses are beautiful representations of the fulness, suitableness, completeness, and all sufficiency of God in Christ to answer all the wants of his people. And is there not a vast elegance in the comparison taken from the hunger and rapacity of the lion, even the impetuosity of the young lion, to that of the patience and silent waiting of the faithful believer? A life of faith will find food in everything, because it is all founded in Christ. The young lions may, and will lack, because nothing will supply their voracious appetites but that which is carnal. *Robert Hawker.*

#### **HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 8.** Experience the only true test of religious truth.

**Ver. 8. Taste.** The sanctified palate, the *recherche* provision, the gratified verdict, the celestial host.

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#### **THE BEST MEAL!**

Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good. —Psalm 34:8

For me, few things are better than eating good food! However, the best meal I ever had was just a few simple burgers. I was a soldier serving in a dark, snowy and cold Bavaria. After a long patrol, we were given the chance to get some rest and warmth in the back of a truck. Only minutes later there was a knock against the back door, and my heart sank; surely we weren't being called back on duty already?

But the door opened to reveal a box full of hot, steaming burgers. They filled us, warmed us and made us feel better. I've never felt as good after a meal as I did that day.

That meal reminds me of a song in the Bible written by David (a king and soldier). He knew that just as food restores physical strength, God gives us spiritual strength as we spend time with Him and read His Word. David wrote, "Taste and see that the LORD is good . . . . The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good thing" (Psalm 34:8-10).

Just as we need to eat to stay strong and healthy, we also need to spend time with God regularly to be 'filled' and strengthened spiritually. His Word is our spiritual food! Lee McDade

THE MORE YOU FEAST ON GOD'S WORD,  
THE HEALTHIER YOU WILL BECOME.

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#### **God Is Good**

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him! —Psalm 34:8

Today's Scripture: Habakkuk 3:17-19

I have often joined in singing the chorus "God is so good, God is so good, God is so good, He's so good to me." I could sing this with sincerity, thanking Him for my family, my fulfilling occupation, my many friends, and above all my salvation. But one day a



feeling of guilt swept over me as I sang. Would I sing these words if I were living alone, felt unloved, and had little to eat?

I hope so. I am confident that the Lord, in whom I have placed my trust, would give me the same grace He's given to millions who have nothing but Him. Imprisoned for their faith or undernourished or ostracized or painfully ill, they can rejoice in the Lord and declare His goodness.

A friend who has been working with Christians in India told me that hundreds of thousands of new converts reflect a joy and gladness that puts him to shame. Could it be that because they are desperately poor they focus more fully on Christ? This friend and I have Jesus Christ plus many earthly possessions and pleasures. They have Christ plus nothing. He's all they need, and so they sing with greater fervor than I, "God is so good!"

Yes, God is good, no matter what our circumstances. It's a lesson we all must learn sooner or later. By: Herbert Vander Lugt [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

O taste and see that God is good  
To all who seek His face;  
Yea, blest that one who trusts in Him,  
Confiding in His grace.  
—Psalter

Even when everything looks bad, God is good.

---

### **He Can Be Trusted**

O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man who trusts in You! —Psalm 84:12

Today's Scripture: Psalm 84

I was sitting in my chair by the window, staring out through fir and spruce trees to the mountains beyond, lost in thought. I looked down and saw a young fox, staring up at my face. She was as still as a stone.

Days before, I had seen her at the edge of the woods, looking nervously over her shoulder at me. I went to the kitchen for an egg, and rolled it toward the place I had last seen her. Each day I put another egg on the lawn, and each day she ventured out of the trees just long enough to pick it up. Then she would dart back into the woods.

Now she had come on her own to my door to get an egg, convinced, I suppose, that I meant her no harm.

This incident reminded my wife of David's invitation: "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). How do we start doing that? By taking in His Word. As we read and reflect on His compassion and lovingkindness, we learn that He can be trusted (Ps 84:12). We lose our dread of getting closer to Him. Our fear becomes a healthy respect and honor of Him.

You may at times distrust God, as the fox was wary of me at first. But give Him a chance to prove His love. Read about Jesus in the Gospels. Read the praises to God in the Psalms. Taste and see that He is good! By: David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O taste and see that God is good  
To all that seek His face;  
Yea, blest the man that trusts in Him,  
Confiding in His grace.  
—Psalter

No one is beyond the reach of God's love.

---

### **The Hiding Place**

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him! —Psalm 34:8

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34:4-8

In this world's misery there is only one sure refuge: God Himself. "He is a shield to all who trust in Him" (Psalm 18:30).

To "trust in" comes from a Hebrew word that means "to take refuge in" or "to hide in" or "to hide with." It suggests a secret place of concealment, a "hidey hole," as we used to say in Texas.

When we're exhausted by our efforts, when we're bewildered by our problems, when we're wounded by our friends, when we're surrounded by our foes, we can hide ourselves in God. There is no safety in this world. If we were to find safety here, we would never know the joy of God's love and protection. We would miss the happiness for which we were made.

The only safe place is God Himself. When storm clouds gather and calamities loom, we must run into His presence in prayer and remain there (Psalm 57:1).

George MacDonald said, "That man is perfect in faith who can come to God in the utter dearth of his feelings and desires, without a glow or an aspiration, with the weight of low thoughts, failures, neglects, and wandering forgetfulness, and say to Him, 'Thou art my refuge.'"

How safe and blessed we are! By: David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O the sweet unfailing refuge  
Of the everlasting arms;  
In their loving clasp enfolded,  
Nothing worries or alarms.  
—Henessay

Safety is not found in the absence of danger but in the presence of God.

---

### **Taste And Say!**

Taste and see that the Lord is good. — Psalm 34:8

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34:1-22

Do you believe God is good, even when life isn't? Mary did, and I gasped with amazement the day I heard her pastor share her story at her funeral. She, being dead, yet speaks!

Mary had been a widow, very poor, and totally housebound because of her ailments in old age. But like the psalmist, she had learned to praise God amid her hardships. Over the years she had come to savor with deep gratitude every good thing He sent her way.

Her pastor said he occasionally would visit her at home. Because of her crippling pain, it took her a long time to inch her way to the door to let him in. So he would call on the telephone and tell her that he was on his way and the time he would get there. Mary would then begin the slow, arduous journey to the door, reaching it about the time he arrived. Without fail, he could count on her greeting him with these triumphant words: "God is good!"

I've observed that those who speak most often about God's goodness are usually those with the most trials. They choose to focus on the Lord's mercy and grace rather than on their troubles, and in so doing they taste His goodness.

Mary not only challenges us to taste and see, but to taste and say that the Lord is good—even when life isn't. Joanie Yoder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Though trials come, though fears assail  
Through tests scarce understood,  
One truth shines clear; it cannot fail—  
My God is right and good.  
—Hager

Those who bless God in their trials will be blessed by God through their trials.

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### **The Good Life**

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him! — Psalm 34:8

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34:1-22

Many people associate "the good life" with success, fame, and money. Yet a dying man who had it all told me that his life hadn't been worth the effort to attain his success.

How different was my uncle Herb's attitude when he was dying! He was thankful and spoke of his many blessings. In his rich Dutch brogue, he quoted Psalm 34:11-14 as God's prescription for a good life. Most of his life he had worked at a low-paying job, and he owned only a car and a small house. He had remained single until he was 47 so he could care for his parents. When he did marry, he had no children, but he was greatly loved by his wife and the wider family circle. He was a favorite uncle to his nephews and nieces, and was so well-liked by the children in his neighborhood that after he died many came to the funeral home and cried by his casket.

The good life is a gift from God to those who trust Him, and who make obeying Him their primary aim. God watches over them and hears their prayers (v.15). They may know heartbreak and affliction, but God guards and keeps them through it all (vv.18-20). Best of all, however, is that He gives them His grace and redeems their soul through faith in Christ (v.22). That is truly the good life! — Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Life is good when lived in love,  
When faith is strong in God above;  
For only God can set us free  
Through Christ who gives us liberty.

—D. De Haan

No one can know the good life without God.

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### Safe Forever

[Jesus said,] "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." — John 16:33

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34:8-22

Amy Beth was out in her neighborhood taking her dog for a walk when she saw a young man run into a nearby alley. A car followed. The young man grabbed a huge piece of wood from a dumpster and started swinging at the car. Amy Beth froze. She was caught in a gang fight.

Suddenly, the young driver of the car tried to get away by accelerating backwards. He slammed into Amy Beth. She landed on the trunk and was thrown into the street. Amazingly, she wasn't seriously hurt.

Later, she tried to make sense of her experience and attempted to turn it around to make it seem good. She came to this conclusion: "Bad things happen—tragic and horrible things. Good things happen—amazing and miraculous things. And all this happens randomly to us. But it is not random to the God who cradles our aching hearts. He knows. . . . Suffering will come. But God is . . . larger than the events that seem to contradict God's goodness."

We will experience sickness, accidents, sorrow, and death. But we are not on our own. God is in control. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all" (Ps. 34:19). We can be confident that one day we will be safe with Him forever. By: Anne Cetas ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

There is only One who knows  
All the answers to my woes;  
He will all my needs supply  
When in faith to Him I cry.

—Morgan

God is always in control behind the scenes.

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### Psalms 34:9

#### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 9. O fear the Lord, ye his saints.** Pay to him humble childlike reverence, walk in his laws, have respect to his will, tremble to offend him, hasten to serve him. Fear not the wrath of men, neither be tempted to sin through the virulence of their threats; fear God and fear nothing else. **For there is no want to them that fear him.** Jehovah will not allow his faithful servants to starve. He may not

give luxuries, but the promise binds him to supply necessities, and he will not run back from his word. Many whims and wishes may remain unfulfilled, but real wants the Lord will supply. The fear of the Lord or true piety is not only the duty of those who avow themselves to be saints, that is, persons set apart and consecrated for holy duties, but it is also their path of safety and comfort. Godliness hath the promise of the life which now is. If we were to die like dogs, and there were no hereafter, yet were it well for our own happiness' sake to fear the Lord. Men seek a patron and hope to prosper; he prospers surely who hath the Lord of Hosts to be his friend and defender.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Ver. 8-10.** See Psalms on "**Psalms 34:8**" for further information.

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 9.** The blest estate of a God fearing man.

**Ver. 9.** Fear expelling fear. Similia similibus curantur.

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## Two Kinds of Fear

Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! —Psalm 34:9

Perfect love casts out fear. — 1 John 4:18

Today's Scripture: 1 John 4:11-21

I felt fear when I thought of going home. Because of my carelessness, our lovely console TV had fallen out of the trunk of my car and was badly marred. No, I wasn't afraid that my wife would yell at me or hit me. What I feared was the look of disappointment I would see in her face. Yet home was the place I wanted to be.

**My fear was the kind of fear we should feel in relation to God. This is the mature fear advocated in Psalm 34:9 and many other Scripture passages. It is the fear of disappointing the Lord because we love Him so much, and because we so much appreciate His love for us.**

The fear of punishment is an immature fear. This is the fear that is cast out by the "perfect love" mentioned in 1 John 4:18. This kind of fear isn't entirely bad, though. It's often a factor in causing a person to believe in Christ, and it may also keep a Christian from serious sin. But as we grow in our faith, we will obey God because we love Him so much that we don't want to disappoint Him. Pleasing Him will be our supreme desire.

Lord, deliver us from an immature fear of punishment by developing in us a deep awareness of Your love and a profound desire to please You. By: Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O may our love grow more and more  
As we get close to God  
So that we fear displeasing Him  
More than we fear His rod.  
—Sper

The highest motive for obeying God is the desire to please Him.

## Psalms 34:10

## EXPOSITION

**Ver. 10. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger.** They are fierce, cunning, strong, in all the vigour of youth, and yet they sometimes howl in their ravenous hunger, and even so crafty, designing, and oppressing men, with all their sagacity and unscrupulousness, often come to want; yet simple minded believers, who dare not act as the greedy lions of earth, are fed with food convenient for them. To trust God is better policy than the craftiest politicians can teach or practice. **But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.** No really good thing shall be denied to those whose first and main end in life is to seek the Lord. Men may call them fools, but the Lord will prove them wise. They shall win where the world's wisecrackers lose their all, and God shall have the glory of it.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 8-10.** See **Psalms on "Psalms 34:8"** for further information.

**Ver. 10. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger,** The old lions will have it for them, if it be to be had. **But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.** As they would feel no evil thing within, so they shall want no good thing without. He that freely opens the upper, will never wholly close the nether springs. There shall be no silver lacking in Benjamin's sack, while Joseph has it to throw in. Grace is not such a beggarly visitant, as will not pay its own way. When the best of beings is adored, the best of blessings are enjoyed. *William Secker.*

**Ver. 10.** People are apt to fancy that a wild beast's life must be happy--in a brute's sense--and that the carnivorous and graminivorous creatures which have never come under the dominion of mankind are better off than the domesticated quadrupeds which buy their quieter and safer lives at the price of ministering to the luxuries or necessities of their human lords. But the contrary is the case: the career of a flesh eating animal must be wretched, even from the tiger's or leopard's point of view. They must often suffer pangs of long continued hunger, and when they find and kill food they frequently have to wage desperate war for the enjoyment of their victim. The cry of almost every wild beast is so melancholy and forlorn, that it impresses the traveller with sadness more even than with fear. If the opportunity occurs for watching them in the chase, they are seen to sneak and sniff about, far less like "kings of the forest," than poor, dejected, starving wretches, desperate upon the subject of their next meal. They suffer horribly from diseases induced by foul diet and long abstinence; and very few are found without scars in their hide--the tokens of terrible combats. If they live to old age their lot is piteous: their teeth are worn down, their claws are blunt, and in this state numbers of them perish by starvation. Not one half of the wild animals die a natural death; and their life, so far as can be observed, is a series of stern privations, with desperate and bloody fights among themselves. *Clipping from "Daily Telegraph."*

**Ver. 10. They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.** There shall be no want to such, and such shall want no good thing: so that he must be such an one to whom the promise is made; and he must also be sure that it is *good* for him which is promised. But oftentimes it is not good for a man to abound with earthly blessings; as strong drink is not good for weak brains. Yea, if anything be wanting to a good man, he may be sure it is not good for him; and then better that he doth want it, than that he did enjoy it; and what wise man will complain of the want of that, which if he had, would prove more gainful than hurtful to him? As a sword to a madman, a knife to a child, drink to them that have a fever or the dropsy. "No good thing will God withhold," etc., and therefore, not wants themselves, which to many are also good, yea, very good things, as I could reckon up many. Want sanctified is a notable means to bring to repentance, to work in us amendment of life, it stirs up prayer, it weans from the love of the world, it keeps us always prepared for the spiritual combat, discovers whether we be true believers or hypocrites, prevents greater evils of sin and punishment to come; it makes us humble, conformable to Christ our Head, increaseth our faith, our joy, and thankfulness, our spiritual wisdom, and likewise our patience, as I have largely shown in another treatise. *Richard Young, in the "Poor's Advocate," 1653.*

**Ver. 10.** I remember as I came through the country, that there was a poor widow woman, whose husband fell at Bothwell: the bloody soldiers came to plunder her house, telling her they would take all she had. "We will leave thee nothing," said they, "either to put in thee, or on thee." "I care not," said she, "I will not want as long as God is in the heavens." That was a believer indeed. *Alexander Peden's Sermon, 1682.*

**Ver. 10.** Take a survey of heaven and earth and all things therein, and whatsoever upon sure ground appears good, ask it confidently of Christ; his love will not deny it. If it were good for you that there were no sin, no devil, no affliction, no destruction, the love of Christ would instantly abolish these. Nay, if the possession of all the kingdoms of the world were absolutely good for any saint, the love of Christ would instantly crown him monarch of them. *David Clarkson.*

**Ver. 10. (last clause).** Part of his last afternoon was spent by Columba, in transcribing the Psalms of David. Having come to that passage in the thirty-fourth Psalm, where it is said, **They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing,** he said, "I have come to the end of a page, and I will stop here, for the following Psalms 34:11, *"Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord,"* will better suit my successor to transcribe than me. I will leave it, therefore, to Baithen." As usual the bell was rung at midnight for prayers. Columba was the first to hasten to church. On entering it soon after, Dermid found him on his knees in prayer, but evidently dying. Raising him up in his arms, he supported his head on his bosom. The brethren now entered. When they saw Columba in this dying condition they wept aloud. Columba heard them. He opened his eyes and attempted to speak, but his voice failed. He lifted up his hands as if to bless them, immediately after which he breathed out his spirit. His countenance retained in death the expression it wore in life, so that it seemed as if he had only fallen asleep. *"Story of Columba and his successors," in the Christian Treasury for 1848.*

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 10.** Lions lacking, but the children satisfied. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 65.

1. Description of a true Christian, "seek the Lord."
2. The promise set forth by a contract.
3. The promise fulfilled.

**Ver. 10.** What is a good thing?

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### **The Way To Happiness**

Those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing. — Psalm 34:10

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34:1-14

Pathways that seem to be marked This Way To Happiness are all over the landscape of our culture. Some people travel the money path. Others follow the way of entertainment. Still others head down the route of power or self-gratification.

The problem with those roads is that they are all dead ends and lead to frustration. The only way to happiness is the course God has clearly outlined in His Word.

God's route to joy is found in Psalm 34. In just 14 verses, David charts a course that, when followed, leads to all the advantages we need in this world—advantages that can be ours no matter if we are rich or poor, healthy or sick, famous or unknown. The way to happiness is marked by these signs:

Praising God: "My soul shall make its boast in the Lord" (v.2).

Seeking God: "I sought the Lord, and He heard me" (v.4).

Fearing God: "Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints!" (v.9).

Living for God: "Depart from evil and do good" (v.14).

Happiness comes from going God's way. Traveling other paths will take you on a long journey to nowhere. By: Dave Branon

Now none but Christ can satisfy,  
None other name for me;  
There's love and life and lasting joy,  
Lord Jesus, found in Thee.  
—McGranahan

To find true happiness, trust and obey God's directions.

### **Psalms 34:11**

#### **EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 11. Come, ye children.** Though a warrior and a king, the psalmist was not ashamed to teach children. Teachers of youth belong to the true peerage; their work is honourable, and their reward shall be glorious. Perhaps the boys and girls of Gath had made sport of David in his seeming madness, and if so, he here aims by teaching the rising race to undo the mischief which he had done aforetime. Children are the most hopeful persons to teach--wise men who wish to propagate their principles take care to win the ear of the young. **Hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord.** So far as they can be taught by word of mouth, or learned by the hearing of the ear, we are to communicate the faith and fear of God, inculcating upon the rising generation the principles and practices of piety. This verse may be the address of every Sabbath school teacher to his class, of every parent to his children. It is not without instruction in the art of teaching. We should be winning and attractive to the youngsters, bidding them "come," and not repelling them with harsh terms. We must get them away, apart from toys and sports, and try to occupy their minds with better pursuits; for we cannot well teach them while their minds are full of other things. We must drive at the main point always, and keep the fear of the Lord ever uppermost in our teachings, and in so doing we may discreetly cast our own personality into the scale by narrating our own experiences and convictions.

#### **EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS**

**Ver. 11. Come, ye children.** Venema in substance remarks that David in addressing his friends in the cave, called them his sons or



children, because he was about to be their teacher, and they his disciples; and again, because they were young men in the flower of their age, and as sons, would be the builders up of his house; and still more, because as their leader to whose discipline and command they were subject, he had a right to address them as his children. *C. H. S.*

**Ver. 11. Come, ye children,** etc. You know your earthly parents, aye, but labour to know your heavenly. You know the fathers of your flesh, aye, but strive to know the Father of your spirits. You are expert it may be in Horace's Odes, Virgil's Eclogues, Cicero's Orations; oh! but strive to get understanding in David's Psalms, Solomon's Proverbs, and the other plain books of Holy Writ. Manna was to be gathered in the morning. The orient pearl is generated of the morning dew; *aurora musis amica*, the morning is a friend to the muses. O "*remember thy Creator*, 'know him in the morning of thy childhood. When God had created the heavens and the earth, the first thing he did was to adorn the world with light, and separate it from the darkness. Happy is that child on whom the light of saving knowledge begins to dawn early. God, in the law, required the firstborn, and the first fruits, so he doth still our first days, to be offered to him. They are wisdom's words, "They that seek me early shall find me." Proverbs 8:17. Where a rabbin observeth a (n is added to the verb more than usual, which in numbering goeth for fifty. With this note, that early seeking hath not only twenty, or thirty, but fifty, nay, indeed, an hundred fold recompense attending on it. *Nathaneal Hardy.*

**Ver. 11. Come, ye children.** David in this latter part of the Psalm undertakes to teach children; though a man of war and anointed to be king, he did not think it below him: though now he had his head so full of cares, and his hands of business, yet he could find heart and time to give good counsel to young people from his own experience. *Matthew Henry.*

**Ver. 11.** Observe. I. What he expects from them, **Hearken unto me**, leave your play, lay by your toys, and hear what I have to say to you; not only give me the hearing, but observe and obey me. II. What he undertakes to teach them, **The fear of the Lord**, inclusive of all the duties of religion. David was a famous musician, a statesman, a soldier, but he doth not say to his children, I will teach you to play upon the harp, or to handle the sword or spear, or draw the bow, or I will teach you the maxims of state policy, but I will teach you *the fear of the Lord*, which is better than all arts and sciences, better than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. That is it which we should be solicitous both to learn ourselves, and to teach our children. *Matthew Henry.*

**Ver. 11. I will teach you the fear of the Lord.** I shall introduce the *translation* and *paraphrase* from my old Psalter; and the rather because I believe there is a reference to that very improper and unholy method of teaching youth the system of heathen mythology before they are taught one sound lesson of true divinity, till at last their *minds* are *imbued* with *heathenism* and the vicious conduct of gods, goddesses, and heroes (here very properly called tyrants), becomes the model of their own; and they are as heathenish *without* as they are heathenish *within*. Translation. Cummes sones lere me: dred of Lard I sal you lere. Paraphrase. "Cummes, with trauth and luf: sones, qwam I gette in haly lere: beres me. With eres of hert. I sal lere you, noght the fabyls of poets; na the storys of tryauntz; bot the dred of oure Larde, that wyl bring you til the felaghschippe of aungels; and thar in is lyfe." I need not paraphrase this paraphrase, as it is plain enough. *Adam Clarke.*

**Ver. 11. The fear of the Lord.** The Master of Sentences dwells, from this verse, on the four kinds of fear: mundane, servile, initial, filial. *Mundane*, when we fear to commit sin, simply lest we should lose some worldly advantage or incur some worldly inconvenience. *Servile*, when we fear to commit sin simply because of hell torments due to it. *Initial*, when we fear to commit it, lest we should lose the happiness of heaven. *Filial*, when we fear, only, and entirely because we dread to offend that God whom we love with all our hearts. **I will teach.** Whence notice, that this fear is not a thing to be learnt all at once; it needs careful study and a good master. S. Chrysostom compares the Psalmist's school here with the resort of heathen students to the academy; and S. Ephraem, referring to this passage, calls the fear of God itself the school of the mind. As if he proclaimed, "says S. Lawrence Justiniani, "I will teach you, not the courses of the stars, not the nature of things, not the secrets of the heavens, but *the fear of the Lord.*" The knowledge of such matters, without fear, puffs up; but *the fear of the Lord, without any such knowledge, can save.*" "Here, "says Cassiodorus, "is not fear to be feared, but to be loved. Human fear is full of bitterness; divine fear of sweetness: the one drives to slavery, the other allures to liberty; the one dreads the prison of Gehenna, the other opens the kingdom of heaven." *J. M. Neale.*

**Ver. 11. The fear of the Lord.** Let this, therefore, good children, be your principal care and study: for what shall it avail you to be cunning in Tully, Virgil, Homer, and other profane writers, if you be unskilful in God's book? to have learned Greek and Latin, if you learn not withal the language of Canaan? to have your speech agreeable to the rules of Priscian, of Lily, if your lives and courses be not consonant to the rules and laws of Christianity? to have knowledge of the creatures when you are ignorant of the Creator? to have learned that whereby you may live a while here, and neglect that whereby you may live eternally hereafter? Learn to fear God, to serve God, and then God will bless you; for "He will bless them that fear him, both small and great." Psalms 115:13. *Thomas Gataker's "David's Instructor," 1637.*

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 11.** A royal teacher, his youthful disciples, his mode of instruction, "Come; "his choice subject.

**Ver. 11.** Sunday school work.

The morning after our son, Allen, was born, the doctor sat down in a chair near the foot of my bed and said, "Something's wrong." Our son, so perfect on the outside, had a life-threatening birth defect and needed to be flown to a hospital 700 miles away for immediate surgery.

When the doctor tells you something is wrong with your child, your life changes. Fear of what lies ahead can crush your spirit and you stumble along, desperate for a God who will strengthen you so you can support your child.

Would a loving God allow this? you wonder. Does He care about my child? Is He there? These and other thoughts shook my faith that morning.

Then my husband, Hiram, arrived and heard the news. After the doctor left, Hiram said, "Jolene, let's pray." I nodded and he took my hand. "Thank You, Father, for giving Allen to us. He's Yours, God, not ours. You loved him before we knew him, and he belongs to You. Be with him when we can't. Amen."

Hiram has always been a man of few words. He struggles to speak his thoughts and often doesn't try, knowing that I have enough words to fill any silence. But on a day when my heart was broken, my spirit crushed and my faith gone, God gave Hiram strength to speak the words I couldn't say. And clinging to my husband's hand, in deep silence and through many tears, I sensed that God was very near.

God is always near in spite of our fears.

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### Is He Safe?

I will teach you the fear of the Lord. — Psalm 34:11

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34

We will not get very far in our relationship with God unless we understand that He is to be feared. In *The Chronicles of Narnia*, an allegory by C. S. Lewis, the author has two girls, Susan and Lucy, getting ready to meet Aslan the lion, who represents Christ. Two talking animals, Mr. and Mrs. Beaver, prepare the children for the encounter.

"Ooh," said Susan, "I thought he was a man. [Is he quite safe](#)? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion."

"That you will, dearie," said Mrs. Beaver. "And make no mistake, if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly."

"Then he isn't safe?" said Lucy.

"Safe?" said Mr. Beaver. "Don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? Of course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the king, I tell you!"

The psalmist understood this awesome wonder when he wrote, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good," and then urged God's saints to fear Him (Ps. 34:8-9). We need not cringe in terror, but we must live before Him with reverence and awe. Our holy God isn't "safe," but He is good. By: Haddon W. Robinson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Oh, how I fear Thee, living God,  
With deepest, tenderest fears  
And worship Thee with trembling hope  
And penitential tears!  
—Psalter

If you fear God, you need fear nothing else.

---

### Psalms 34:12

### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 12.** Life spent in happiness is the desire of all, and he who can give the young a receipt for leading a happy life deserves to be

popular among them. Mere existence is not life; the art of living, truly, really, and joyfully living, it is not given to all men to know. To teach men how to live and how to die, is the aim of all useful religious instruction. The rewards of virtue are the baits with which the young are to be drawn to morality. While we teach piety to God we should also dwell much upon morality towards man.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Ver. 12.** It is no great matter to live long, or always, but to live happily. That loyal prayer, "Let the king live" (in every language) imports a prosperous state. When the psalmist saith, "Who is the man that would see life?" he explains himself presently after by "good days." *Vivere* among the Latins is sometimes as much as *valere*, to live is as much as to be well; and upon this account it is that, on the one hand, the Scripture calls the state of the damned an eternal death, because their life is only a continuance in misery; so on the other hand the state of the blessed is an eternal life, because it is a perpetual abode in felicity. *Nathanael Hardy*.

**Ver. 12.** The benefit of life is not in the length, but in the use of it. He sometimes lives the least that lives the longest. *Seneca*.

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 12-14.** How to make the best of both worlds.

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### The Wrong Horseshoe

Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil. Psalm 34:12–13

Today's Scripture & Insight: Psalm 34:11–18

Napoleon's defeat in Russia 200 years ago was attributed to the harsh Russian winter. One specific problem was that his horses were wearing summer horseshoes. When winter came, these horses died because they slipped on icy roads as they pulled the supply wagons. The failure of Napoleon's supply chain reduced his 400,000-strong army to just 10,000. A small slip; a disastrous result!

James described how a slip of the tongue can do great damage. One wrong word can change the careers or destinies of people. So toxic is the tongue that James wrote, "No human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison" (James 3:8). The problem has increased in our modern world as a careless email or a posting on a social media site can cause great harm. It quickly goes viral and can't always be retracted.

King David tied respect for the Lord with the way we use our words. He wrote, "I will teach you the fear of the Lord. . . . Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies" (Ps. 34:11, 13). He resolved, "I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth" (39:1). Lord, help us to do the same. By: C. P. Hia ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

What do James 3:1–12 and Proverbs 18:1–8 teach you about a slip of the tongue?

Our words have the power to build up or tear down.

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### An Enduring Happiness

Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days . . . Turn from evil and do good. Psalm 34:12,14

Today's Scripture & Insight: Psalm 34:1–14

Often we hear that happiness comes from doing things our own way. That, however, is not true. That philosophy leads only to emptiness, anxiety, and heartache.

Poet W. H. Auden observed people as they attempted to find an escape in pleasures. He wrote of such people: "Lost in a haunted wood, / Children afraid of the night / Who have never been happy or good."

The psalmist David sings of the remedy for our fears and unhappiness. "I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears" (Psalm 34:4). Happiness is doing things God's way, a fact that can be verified every day. "Those who look to him are radiant," writes David (v. 5). Just try it and you'll see. That's what he means when he says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good" (v. 8).

We say, "Seeing is believing." That's how we know things in this world. Show me proof and I'll believe it. God puts it the other way around. Believing is seeing. "Taste and then you will see."

Take the Lord at His word. Do the very next thing He is asking you to do and you will see. He will give you grace to do the right thing and more: He will give you Himself—the only source of goodness—and with it, enduring happiness. By: David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, sometimes we must simply pray: "I believe. Help my unbelief." Help us trust You by doing what You have given us to do today.

Happiness is doing the right thing.

## Psalms 34:13

### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 13. Keep thy tongue from evil.** Guard with careful diligence that dangerous member, the tongue, lest it utter evil, for that evil will recoil upon thee, and mar the enjoyment of thy life. Men cannot spit forth poison without feeling some of the venom burning their own flesh. **And thy lips from speaking guile.** Deceit must be very earnestly avoided by the man who desires happiness. A crafty schemer lives like a spy in the enemy's camp, in constant fear of exposure and execution. Clean and honest conversation, by keeping the conscience at ease, promotes happiness, but lying and wicked talk stuffs our pillow with thorns, and makes life a constant whirl of fear and shame. David had tried the tortuous policy, but he here denounces it, and begs others as they would live long and well to avoid with care the doubtful devices of guile.

### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 13. Keep thy tongue from evil,** etc. Ficinus, after his tracts, *De sanitate tuenda, of keeping good health*; and another, *of recovering health*; and a third, *of prolonging life*; because all will not do, wisely addeth a fourth, *of laying hold on eternal life*; which cannot be done but by mortifying this earthly member, a loose and lewd tongue. "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned," saith the Judge himself. Matthew 12:37. Compare Genesis 49:21, with Deuteronomy 33:23, and it will appear that good words ingratiate with God and man. *John Trapp.*

**Ver. 13. And thy lips from speaking guile.** Perhaps David is warning us that we speak no guile, reflects upon his own sin in changing his behaviour. They that truly repent of what they have done amiss, will warn others to take heed in doing likewise. *Matthew Henry.*

### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 12-14.** How to make the best of both worlds.

**Ver. 13.** Sins of the tongue--their mischief, their cause, and their cure.

## Psalms 34:14

### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 14. Depart from evil.** Go away from it. Not merely take your hands off, but yourself off. Live not near the pest house. Avoid the lion's lair, leave the viper's nest. Set a distance between yourself and temptation. **And do good.** Be practical, active, energetic, persevering in good. Positive virtue promotes negative virtue; he who does good is sure to avoid evil. **Seek peace.** Not merely prefer it, but with zeal and care endeavour to promote it. Peace with God, with thine own heart, with thy fellow man, search after this as the merchantman after a precious pearl. Nothing can more effectually promote our own happiness than peace; strife awakens passions which eat into the heart with corroding power. Anger is murder to one's own self, as well as to its objects. **And pursue it.** Hunt after it, chase it with eager desire. It may soon be lost, indeed, nothing is harder to retain, but do your best, and if enmity should arise let it be no fault of yours. Follow after peace when it shuns you; be resolved not to be of a contentious spirit. The peace which you thus promote will be returned into your own bosom, and be a perennial spring of comfort to you.

### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 14. Depart from evil,** etc. This denotes that evil is near to men; it keeps close to them, and should be declined and shunned: and it regards all sorts of evil; evil men and their evil company; evil things, evil words and works, and all appearance of evil; and the fear of the Lord shows itself in a hatred of it, and a departure from it. Proverbs 8:13 Proverbs 8:16:6. *John Gill.*

**Ver. 14. Depart from evil.** The other precepts are the duty of works, and they are four, where the precepts of words were but two; because we must be more in works than in words; and they are all affirmative, for it is against the nature of a work to be in the negative; for so working should be no better than idleness: the two former are general, as general as good and evil; that if we meet with anything that is evil, our part is to *depart*, for there is no demurring upon evil. *Sir Richard Baker.*

**Ver. 14. Do good.** Negative goodness is not sufficient to entitle us to heaven. There are some in the world whose religion runs all upon negatives; they are not drunkards, they are not swearers, and for this they do bless themselves. See how the Pharisee vapours Luke 18:11, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, "etc. Alas! the not being scandalous will no more make a Christian than a cypher will make a sum. We are bid, not only to *cease from evil*, but to *do good*. It will be a poor plea at last--Lord, I kept myself from being spotted with gross sin: I did no hurt. But what good is there in thee? It is not enough for the servant of the vineyard that he doth no hurt there, he doth not break the trees, or destroy the hedges; if he doth not work in the vineyard he loseth his pay. It is not enough for us to say at the last day, we have done no hurt, we have lived in no gross sin; but what good have we done in the vineyard? Where is the grace we have gotten? If we cannot show this, we shall lose our pay, and miss of salvation. *Thomas Watson.*

**Ver. 14. Seek peace, and pursue it.** Yea, do well, and thou shalt not need to pursue it; peace will find thee without seeking. Augustine says, *Fiat justitia, et habebis pacem* --Live righteously, and live peaceably. Quietness shall find out righteousness wheresoever he lodgeth. But she abhorreth the house of evil. Peace will not dine where grace hath not first broken her fast. Let us embrace godliness, and "the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, shall preserve our hearts and minds in Jesus Christ." Philippians 4:7. *Thomas Adams.*

**Ver. 14. See peace and pursue it.** The most desirable things are not the easiest to be obtained. What is more lovely to the imagination than the tranquillity of peace? But this great blessing does not voluntarily present itself: it must be *sought*. Even when sought it often eludes the grasp: it flies away, and must be *pursued*. 1. The man of a peaceable carriage must be cautious not to give offence when needless, or, when it may innocently be spared.

2. Another part of the peaceable man's character is, not to take offence; especially in small matters, which are hardly worth a wise man's notice. 3. If any needless offence has been either given or taken, we must endeavour to put a stop to it as soon as may be. If a difference is already begun, stifle it in the birth, and suffer it not to proceed farther. *Condensed from Dr. Waterland's Sermon, in J. R. Pitman's Course of Sermons on the Psalms, 1846.*

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 12-14.** How to make the best of both worlds.

**Ver. 14. (first clause).** The relation between the negative and positive virtues.

**Ver. 14. (second clause).** *The royal hunt.* The game, the difficulties of the chase, the hunters, their methods, and their rewards.

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## Interview With A Gerbil

Seek peace and pursue it. — Psalm 34:14

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34:1-22

With appealing humor, Ron Hutchcraft, busy author, speaker, and counselor, tells about his battle with stress. One day Ron decided to "interview" the family gerbil.

"Tell me, Gerbie," Ron asked, "what do you have planned for today?"

"First, breakfast," he replied, "and then get started."

"Doing what?" Ron questioned.

"Why, the same thing I did yesterday, and the day before that."

"What's that?" Ron asked again.

"The wheel."

And sure enough, Gerbie climbed on his little wheel and started running in circles. Hours later, he was still running.

The more Ron watched that gerbil, the more he saw himself. He had his own personal "wheels"—demands, deadlines, aggravations, ambitions. He felt as if he was running in circles, and he longed for peace. In his search, he made this discovery in Psalm 34: Peace

isn't automatic or passive; it must be pursued. Not only that, but peace is also a result of a right relationship with the Lord.

As never before, Ron enthroned the Lord as the Shepherd of his life. As he did, peace, instead of the stressful wheel, became normal. Which will be normal for you today? By: Joanie Yoder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Give me a heart of calm repose  
Amid the world's loud roar,  
A life that like a river flows  
Along a peaceful shore.  
—Anon.

For peace that lasts, put God first.

## Psalms 34:15

### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 15. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous.** He observes them with approval and tender consideration; they are so dear to him that he cannot take his eyes off them; he watches each one of them as carefully and intently as if there were only that one creature in the universe. **His ears are open unto their cry.** His eyes and ears are thus both turned by the Lord towards his saints; his whole mind is occupied about them: if slighted by all others they are not neglected by him. Their cry he hears at once, even as a mother is sure to hear her sick babe; the cry may be broken, plaintive, unhappy, feeble, unbelieving, yet the Father's quick ear catches each note of lament or appeal, and he is not slow to answer his children's voice.

### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 15. His ears are open unto their cry.** The word "open" is not in the original, but the meaning is that the ear of God is propense, and in a leaning kind of posture, towards the cries of the righteous; the word may here be taken emphatically, as many times in Scripture it is, for some worthy, choice, and excellent strain of righteousness. Those who are worthy and righteous indeed, the ear of God, I say, is propense, and leans and hangs towards them and their prayers, according to that of So 2:14, "Let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice." There is a kind of naturalness and pleasantness between the ear of God and the prayers, and petitions, and cries of such a righteous man. John 15:7. *John Goodwin.*

**Ver. 15. His ears are open unto their cry.** Hebrew, **Are to their cry**, or as St. Peter hath it, **His ears are into their prayers** 1 Peter 3:12; to show that though their prayers are so faint and feeble that they cannot enter into the ears of the Lord of Hosts, yet that he will bow down and incline his ears *unto*, nay, *into* their prayers, their breathings. Lamentations 3:56. *John Trapp.*

**Ver. 15-17. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.** Strangers may howl, and we take little notice what they ail—it is a venture whether we relieve them or no; but if our children cry, being in great distress, we hasten to their help. Our relation to God may well strengthen our hope that our desires shall be heard. He that can cry, *Abba, Father*, may be confident of the success of his suit, and that God will deal with him as a son. *George Swinnock.*

### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 15.** Our observant God. Eyes and ears both set on us.

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### Telephone Runaround

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. — Psalm 34:15

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34:15-22

I needed to make a phone call to my insurance company. It's a good thing I started calling early!

First came the busy signals—for an entire day! Next came a recorded message followed by music, occasionally interrupted by a voice that said, "Our lines are still busy. Please hold, or hang up and try again."

Finally I got through. Hooray! But this led to a complicated set of instructions: For policy information, press 1. For new coverage, press 2. To make a claim, press 3. To talk to an agent, press 4. I chose the last option. A recording said he was out of the office and



told me to press the pound (#) key. The same voice gave me the same options again. I hung up.

About the same time, I had an urgent need to talk with the Lord. I didn't get a busy signal, nor was I put on hold. I knew that God was listening and that He cared deeply for me.

We don't always get immediate answers to our prayers, but because of the wonderful prayer promises in the Bible we know that we are heard. In Psalm 34, for example, David reviewed his prayers and the Lord's answers. Then he said, "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry" (v.15). Thank God that there is no such thing as a prayer runaround. By: David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

For Further Study

What is the prayer promise in each of these verses?

Psalm 10:17; John 14:13-14;

Hebrews 4:16; James 4:2-3; 1 Peter 3:12

Prayer in Jesus' name is a direct line to God.

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## Who's Watching You?

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous. Psalm 34:15

Today's Scripture & Insight: Psalm 34:15–22

No matter where the athletes of the 2016 Olympics go in the city of Rio de Janeiro, they can see Jesus. Standing high above this Brazilian city and anchored to a 2,310-foot-high mountain called Corcovado is a 100-foot-tall sculpture called Cristo Redentor (Christ the Redeemer). With arms spread wide, this massive figure is visible day and night from almost anywhere in the sprawling city.

As comforting as this iconic concrete and soapstone sculpture may be to all who can look up and see it, there is much greater comfort from this reality: The real Jesus sees us. In Psalm 34, David explained it like this: "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry" (v. 15). He noted that when the righteous call out for His help, "The Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit" (vv. 17–18).

Just who are the righteous? Those of us who place our trust in Jesus Christ, who Himself is our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30). Our God oversees our lives, and He hears the cries of those who trust Him. He is near to help in our greatest times of need.

Jesus has His eyes on you. By: Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Sometimes, Lord, life seems out of control and I don't know exactly which direction to take. Thank You for overseeing my life and prompting me in the right way through Your Word and Your Spirit.

The Lord never lets us out of His sight.

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## Trust Him With Your Heart

The Lord is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous. — Proverbs 15:29

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34:15-22

Sportswriter Waddy Spoelstra and his wife Jean are both octogenarians who demonstrate each day the importance of a life of faith in Jesus Christ.

Jean has suffered from congestive heart failure for 3 years. After she had a medical checkup last fall, her doctor announced, "Your heart is good and your lungs are clear. It seems that both are in the process of healing." When Waddy responded with "Praise the Lord," the physician replied, "That's it. You two have positive attitudes. You believe in answered prayer. As I've said before, prayer is a big part of medical care."

It's exciting to hear a doctor acknowledging the connection between prayer and patient care. It's not a new idea, though. Studies have shown that prayer can accelerate the healing process, whether it's the patient or others who do the praying.

But we don't really need studies to prove that prayer works. God's Word tells us it does.

Have you spent time talking to the Lord about your trials? He knows how to meet your needs—whether through His direct

intervention (Ps. 34:17) or through the comfort of His presence (v.18). Trust Him today with your heart. By: Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Prayer brings us peace and gives us power  
To walk the Christian way;  
Prayer links us with the living God—  
Therefore we need to pray.  
—Anon.

Daily prayers are the best remedy for daily cares.

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### **Pray: God Listens!**

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. —Psalm 34:15

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34:8-17

When I was a boy, I wondered how God could listen to so many prayers at the same time. How could He possibly hear each one and yet keep the babble of voices separate? And how could He answer those prayers when one person asks for rain and another for sunshine— both on the same day?

These problems no longer trouble me, even though I still can't explain how God can respond to our prayers. I do know, however, that He is all-knowing and present everywhere, and that His wisdom and power are beyond our comprehension.

We don't have to take turns coming to Him, nor must we wait for just the right opportunity. At any time and in any place we can lift our voices to the Lord with full assurance that He will hear us. And He does more than just receive our requests—He comprehends, He understands, and He perceives exactly what His children ask for in faith.

Has God heard you yet today? He invites you to make your requests known to Him. What a tragedy that so many of His children go through the day without uttering a single prayer to the One who takes pleasure in hearing their voices! Proverbs 15:8 says, "The prayer of the upright is His delight." So pray. God listens! By: Richard DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

There never is a night or day  
When God won't hear us as we pray;  
There is no time, there is no place,  
When He'll withhold His love and grace.  
—DJD

You'll never get a busy signal on the prayer line to Heaven.

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### **Rock-Solid**

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. — Psalm 34:15

Today's Scripture & Insight: Psalm 34:15-22

It was a sad day in May 2003 when "[The Old Man of the Mountain](#)" broke apart and slid down the mountainside. This 40-foot profile of an old man's face, carved by nature in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, had long been an attraction to tourists, a solid presence for residents, and the official state emblem. It was written about by Nathaniel Hawthorne in his short story The Great Stone Face.

Some nearby residents were devastated when The Old Man fell. One woman said, "I grew up thinking that someone was watching over me. I feel a little less watched-over now."

There are times when a dependable presence disappears. Something or someone we've relied on is gone, and our life is shaken. Maybe it's the loss of a loved one, or a job, or good health. The loss makes us feel off-balance, unstable. We might even think that God is no longer watching over us.

But "the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry" (Ps. 34:15). He "is near to those who have a broken heart" (v.18). He is the Rock whose presence we can always depend on (Deut. 32:4).

God's presence is real. He continually watches over us. He is rock-solid. By: Anne Cetas ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC](#))

The Rock of Ages stands secure,  
He always will be there;  
He watches over all His own  
To calm their anxious care.  
—Keith

The question is not where is God, but where isn't He?

## Psalms 34:16

### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 16. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil.** God is not indifferent to the deeds of sinners, but he sets his face against them, as we say, being determined that they shall have no countenance and support, but shall be thwarted and defeated. He is determinately resolved that the ungodly shall not prosper; he sets himself with all his might to overthrow them. **To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.** He will stamp out their fires, their honour shall be turned into shame, their names forgotten or accursed. Utter destruction shall be the lot of all the ungodly.

### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 15-17. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.** See Psalms on "Psalms 34:15" for further information.

### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 16.** The evil man checkmated in life, and forgotten in death.

## Psalms 34:17

### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 17. The righteous cry.** Like Israel in Egypt, they cry out under the heavy yoke of oppression, both of sin, temptation, care, and grief. **And the Lord heareth;** he is like the night watchman, who no sooner hears the alarm bell than he flies to relieve those who need him. **And delivereth them out of all their troubles.** No net of trouble can so hold us that the Lord cannot free us. Our afflictions may be numerous and complicated, but prayer can set us free from them all, for the Lord will show himself strong on our behalf.

### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 15-17. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.** See Psalms on "Psalms 34:15" for further information.

### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 17.** *Afflictions and their threefold blessing.*

1. They make us pray.
2. They bring us the Lord's hearing ear.
3. They afford room for joyful experience of deliverance.

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Call On Him ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. — Psalm 34:17

Years ago when our family lived in West Berlin, we occasionally hosted Bible studies for members of the armed forces. One evening a few soldiers gathered to hear the testimony of an older man. Speaking from his experience, he said, "Men, I've been following the Lord for many years now. I have learned that whenever I turn to the Lord in my troubles, He will bring me through them victoriously. A skeptic once challenged me, 'Sooner or later you'll encounter something so utterly impossible that even the Lord won't be able to help you. Just you wait!'"

After a pause, the speaker said to the soldiers, "Many years and troubles have passed since then, and guess what? I'm still waiting . . . because the Lord never fails!"

David, the writer of Psalm 34, encountered many difficulties and often cried out to God. Again and again the Lord delivered him from his troubles (vv.4-7,17-19). David's part was to keep on turning to God, his refuge and deliverer.

The Lord is also our deliverer. Sometimes He removes the trial, and sometimes He doesn't. He will, however, sustain us through every difficulty with His grace and peace. Our part is to call on Him. By: Joanie Yoder

God will take care of you still to the end;  
O what a Father, Redeemer, and Friend!  
Jesus will answer whenever you call;  
He will take care of you—trust Him for all!  
—Crosby

If we depend on Christ for everything, we can endure anything.

## Psalms 34:18

### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 18. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.** Near in friendship to accept and console. Broken hearts think God far away, when he is really most near them; their eyes are holden so that they see not their best friend. Indeed, he is with them, and in them, but they know it not. They run hither and thither, seeking peace in their own works, or in experiences, or in proposals and resolutions, whereas the Lord is nigh them, and the simple act of faith will reveal him. **And saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.** What a blessed token for good is a repentant, mourning heart! Just when the sinner condemns himself, the Lord graciously absolves him. If we chasten our own spirits the Lord will spare us. He never breaks with the rod of judgment those who are already sore with the rod of conviction. Salvation is linked with contrition.

### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 18. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart.** God is *nigh unto them* (with reverence be it spoken), God takes so much complacency in the company of such, that he cannot endure to have them far from him; he must have them always under his eyes; as for these **broken** ones, he will be sure not to leave them long, nor go far from them, but will be ready at hand to set their bones, to bind up their wounds to keep them from festering. It may be he may put them to much pain before he brings the cure to perfection, but it is to prevent future aches. He is a foolish cruel surgeon, who, for fear of putting his patient to some pain, never searcheth the wound, but skins it over presently; and a wise man will not think him unmerciful that puts him to exquisite pain, so he may make a thorough cure of it. Thus God doth by his patients sometimes, when the nature of their distemper calls for it. But, however, he will be sure not to be out of the way when they want him most. It is possible that they may look upon themselves as forgotten by God, they may not know their Physician when he is by them, and they may take their Friend for an enemy; they may think God far off when he is near; but when their eyes are opened and their distemper is pretty well worn off, they will, with shame and thankfulness, acknowledge their error; nay, they do from their souls confess, that they do not deserve the least look of kindness from God, but to be counted strangers and enemies; but God will let them know that he loves to act like himself, that is, like a God of love, mercy, and goodness; and that they are the persons that he hath set his heart upon; he will have them in his bosom, never leave them nor forsake them; and though these contrite ones many times look upon themselves as lost, yet God will save them, and they shall sing a song of thankfulness amongst his delivered ones. *James Janeway.*

**Ver. 18. The Lord is nigh unto them,** etc. Consider the ADVANTAGES of this broken heart; as I. A broken heart is acceptable and wellpleasing to God, "A broken and a contrite heart, O God thou wilt not despise." Psalms 51:17. II. It makes up many defects in your service and duties, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit." Psalms 51:17. III. It makes the soul a fit receptacle for God to dwell in, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Isaiah

57:15. IV. It brings God near to men, "*The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*" Psalms 34:18. And V. It lays you open to Christ's sweet healing, "I will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." Ezekiel 34:16. And, oh, who would not be broken that they might find Christ's soft hand healing them, and find the proof of that sweet word, "For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord." Jeremiah 30:17. Yea, VI. It puts you in the right road to heaven, where all your wounds and bruises will be cured; for there is a tree Revelation 22:2 the leaves whereof are for the healing of the nations; there is no complaining there of wounds or bruises, but all are perfectly healed. *John Spalding, in "Synaxis Sacra, or a Collection of Sermons," etc., 1703.*

**Ver. 18.** "*The Lord is nigh unto them,*" etc. We are apt to overlook men, in proportion as they are humbled beneath us; God regards them in that proportion. Vessels of honour are made of that clay which is "*broken*" into the smallest parts. *George Horne.*

**Ver. 18. Broken heart...contrite spirit.** Oh, this is the misery of all miseries which ministers have most cause to complain of, that men are not fitted enough for Jesus Christ, they are not lost enough in themselves for a Saviour. "In thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Hosea 14:3. Were we more hopeless, helpless, and fatherless, we should find more mercy from the hand of Jesus Christ. O that God would awaken and shake some sin sleeping soul this day! O that this doctrine thus opened might be as a thunderbolt to let some of you see the inside of yourselves! O poor sinner, thou hast an unsupportable burden of sin and guilt lying on thy soul, ready to press thee down to hell, and yet you feel it not; thou hast the wrath of God hanging over thy head by the twined thread of a short life, which it may be thou mayest not be free from one year, nay, perhaps not one month, but thou seest it not; if thou didst but see it, then thou wouldest cry out as he did in Bosworth field, "A horse! a horse! a kingdom for a horse!" So thou wouldest cry out, None but Christ! nothing but Christ! ten thousand worlds for Christ! *James Nalton, 1664.*

**Ver. 18. A contrite spirit.** (*xwr-yakd*), *dakkeey ruach*, "the beaten out spirit." In both words the *hammer* is necessarily implied; in breaking to pieces the ore first, and then plating out the metal when it has been separated from the ore. This will call to the reader's remembrance Jeremiah 23:29, "Is not my word like as a fire?" saith the Lord: and like a *hammer* that breaketh the *rock* in pieces? The *breaking to shivers*, and the *beating out* are metaphorical expressions: so are the *hammer* and the *rock*. What the large *hammer* struck on a rock by a powerful hand would do, so does the word of the Lord when struck on the sinner's heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. The *broken heart*, and the *contrite spirit*, are two essential characteristics of true repentance. *Adam Clarke.*

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 18.** The nearness of God to broken hearts, and the certainty of their salvation.

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### A Widow's Choice

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted. Psalm 34:18

Today's Scripture & Insight: Psalm 34:15-22

When a good friend suddenly lost her husband to a heart attack, we grieved with her. As a counselor, she had comforted many others. Now, after 40 years of marriage, she faced the unwelcome prospect of returning to an empty house at the end of each day.

In the midst of her grief, our friend leaned on the One who "is close to the brokenhearted." As God walked with her through her pain, she told us she would choose to "wear the label widow proudly," because she felt it was the label God had given her.

All grief is personal, and others may grieve differently than she does. Her response doesn't diminish her grief or make her home less empty. Yet it reminds us that even in the midst of our worst sorrows, our sovereign and loving God can be trusted.

Our heavenly Father suffered a profound separation of His own. As Jesus hung on the cross He cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). Yet He endured the pain and separation of crucifixion for our sins out of love for us!

He understands! And because "the Lord is close to the brokenhearted" (Ps. 34:18), we find the comfort we need. He is near. By: Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Dear heavenly Father, as we think about the sadness that comes from the death of a loved one, help us to cling to You and trust Your love and goodness. Thank You for being close to our broken hearts.

Know anyone who is hurting? Share this devotional

God shares in our sorrow.

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### He's Always Watching

The eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy. — Psalm 33:18

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34

Marcie (not her real name) had broken up with her boyfriend, and now he was harassing her. He followed her, stared at her, and intimidated her in subtle ways. She avoided him as much as she could.

One place she could not escape his gaze was at football games, because she was a cheerleader. During one game, he stood at field level right in front of the cheerleading squad and stared at her as she did her routines. Her mom and stepdad, sitting in the stands, saw him there and realized that she was getting more and more afraid.

At a break, she ran into the stands, her eyes filled with panic. "Do you see him over there?" she blurted out. "Yes, I do," her stepdad said. "I'm watching, and I will not take my eyes off you." Relieved that he saw what was going on and understood how she was feeling, Marcie calmed down and went back to her station.

One of the wonderful joys of being a believer in Jesus is knowing that our Father in heaven is always watching over us. The promise expressed by David in today's psalm applies to us wherever we go. Whatever confronts us, the "eyes of the Lord" are on us and His ears "are open to [our] cry" (Ps. 34:15).

We are never out of God's sight. By: David C. Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

How wonderful to know that He  
Who watches from above  
Will always keep us sheltered in  
His ever-present love.  
—King

His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me. —Martin

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## Real Wholeness

The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit. — Psalm 34:18

Today's Scripture: Hebrews 12:11-17

I was driving my car and listening to a talk-radio program when a young man called in. He was desperate because he had been expelled from college and had lost his job.

The caller said he had grown up in a good home, attended church faithfully, and professed faith in Jesus Christ. But now he was hooked on pornography and immoral conduct.

The pastor-counselor answered vaguely, telling the young man to "focus on your God-given potential" and "get in touch with your inner self" as a step toward personal "wholeness." I didn't know just what he meant. I'm sure the caller didn't either.

If the writer of Hebrews could have responded to this young man, he would have told him that he had a sin problem and that God in love was chastening him to correct him (12:7-11). He would have urged him to repent, and then he would have told him to commit himself wholeheartedly to honoring the Lord (v.12), stick to the straight paths for his own good and the good of others (v.13), and strive for a life marked by peacefulness and purity (v.14).

God's path to wholeness is more than looking within ourselves. It's facing our sin and looking to Christ for forgiveness. Real wholeness is not easy, but it is rewarding. By: Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When God begins His work in us,  
He leaves no stone unturned;  
He points out sins both large and small  
Until each one is spurned.  
—DJD

God's discipline is designed to make us like His Son.

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## Something's Wrong



The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Psalm 34:18

Today's Scripture & Insight: Psalm 34:11–18

The morning after our son, Allen, was born, the doctor sat down in a chair near the foot of my bed and said, "Something's wrong." Our son, so perfect on the outside, had a life-threatening birth defect and needed to be flown to a hospital 700 miles away for immediate surgery.

When the doctor tells you something is wrong with your child, your life changes. Fear of what lies ahead can crush your spirit and you stumble along, desperate for a God who will strengthen you so you can support your child.

Would a loving God allow this? you wonder. Does He care about my child? Is He there? These and other thoughts shook my faith that morning.

Then my husband, Hiram, arrived and heard the news. After the doctor left, Hiram said, "Jolene, let's pray." I nodded and he took my hand. "Thank You, Father, for giving Allen to us. He's Yours, God, not ours. You loved him before we knew him, and he belongs to You. Be with him when we can't. Amen."

Hiram has always been a man of few words. He struggles to speak his thoughts and often doesn't try, knowing that I have enough words to fill any silence. But on a day when my heart was broken, my spirit crushed, and my faith gone, God gave Hiram strength to speak the words I couldn't say. And clinging to my husband's hand, in deep silence and through many tears, I sensed that God was very near. By: Jolene Philo ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

How has God used people to strengthen you when your spirit was crushed? Share your story at [Facebook.com/ourdailybread](https://www.facebook.com/ourdailybread).

The best kind of friend is a praying friend.

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## Be Near

The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart. — Psalm 34:18

Today's Scripture & Insight: Psalm 34:4-18

My friend was going through some difficult challenges in her life and family. I didn't know what to say or do, and I told her so. She looked at me and said, "Just be near." That's what I did, and later on we started talking about God's love.

Many times we don't know how to respond when others are grieving, and words may do more harm than good. Serving others requires that we understand them and find out what they need. Often we can help by meeting practical needs. But one of the best ways to encourage those who are suffering is to be near—to sit beside them and listen.

God is near to us when we call out to Him. "The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles," the psalmist says. "The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit" (Ps. 34:17-18).

By putting ourselves in the shoes of others and allowing our hearts to feel compassion, we can help those who are hurting. We can be near them as God is with us and sit close to them. At the right time, the Holy Spirit will give us the words to say, if they are needed. By: Keila Ochoa ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Who needs my help or for me to sit alongside them this week?

The best way to encourage others may be to just be near.

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## Keep A Low Profile

The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart. —Psalm 34:18

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34:11-22

The National Weather Service advises that if you're ever caught out in the open during a severe lightning storm, you should kneel down, bend forward, and put your hands on your knees. Then, if lightning strikes nearby, your body will be less likely to serve as a conductor. Maximum safety depends on keeping a low physical profile.

The same applies to Christians caught in life's storms—we must assume a low spiritual posture. This means we must humble

ourselves before the Lord (Psalm 34:18), be-cause pride and rebellion can harden us. We must speak truthfully (v.13), depart from evil, do good, and seek peace (v.14). Our heavenly Father wants us to stay close to Him when our hearts are hurting so He can impart His renewing strength and healing love.

Yes, we'll get drenched in the driving rains of adversity, and sometimes its fierce winds will buffet us so severely that we'll almost be swept off our feet. With each blinding flash of lightning we may be strongly tempted to get up and run. But keeping a low spiritual profile of humility and fear of God is the surest and safest way to weather the storm. David assured us that those who trust God in life's storms will not be condemned (v.22). By: Dennis J. DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

He that is down needs fear no fall,  
He that is low, no pride;  
He that is humble ever shall  
Have God to be his guide.  
—Bunyan

God doesn't shield us from life's storms; He shelters us in life's storms.

## Psalms 34:19

### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 19. Many are the afflictions of the righteous.** Thus are they made like Jesus their covenant Head. Scripture does not flatter us like the story books with the idea that goodness will secure us from trouble; on the contrary, we are again and again warned to expect tribulation while we are in this body. Our afflictions come from all points of the compass, and are as many and as tormenting as the mosquitoes of the tropics. It is the earthly portion of the elect to find thorns and briars growing in their pathway, yea, to lie down among them, finding their rest broken and disturbed by sorrow. BUT, blessed *but*, how it takes the sting out of the previous sentence! **But the Lord delivereth him out of them all.** Through troops of ills Jehovah shall lead his redeemed scatheless and triumphant. There is an end to the believer's affliction, and a joyful end too. None of his trials can hurt so much as a hair of his head, neither can the furnace hold him for a moment after the Lord bids him come forth of it. Hard would be the lot of the righteous if this promise, like a bundle of camphire, were not bound up in it, but this sweetens all. The same Lord who sends the afflictions will also recall them when his design is accomplished, but he will never allow the fiercest of them to rend and devour his beloved.

### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 19. Many are the afflictions of the righteous,** etc. Be our troubles many in number, strange in nature, heavy in measure; yet God's mercies are more numerous, his wisdom more wondrous, his power more miraculous; he will deliver us out of all. *Thomas Adams.*

**Ver. 19. Many are the afflictions of the righteous,** etc. When David did behold his trouble, like the host of the Aramites 2 Kings 6:16, he looked back unto God like Elisha, and spied one with him stronger than all against him. Therefore, respecting his afflictions he crieth, **Many are the troubles of the righteous;** respecting the promise he says, **The Lord delivereth him out of all.** Thus, by his own foot, David measures the condition of the righteous, and saith, **Many are the troubles of the righteous;** and then, by his own cure, he showeth how they should be healed, saying, **The Lord will deliver him out of them all...** The lawyer can deliver his client but from strife, the physician can deliver his patient but from sickness, the master can deliver his servant but from bondage, but the Lord delivereth us from *all*. As when Moses came to deliver the Israelites, he would not leave a hoof behind him, so when the Lord cometh to deliver the righteous he will not leave a trouble behind him. He who saith, "I put away all thine iniquities, " will also say, "I put away all thine infirmities." *Henry Smith.*

### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 19.** Black and white, or bane and antidote.

Special people, special trials, special deliverances, special faith as a duty.

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### BUT GOD Delivers Us from Trouble - from book "But God" by Ken Hemphill

It is easier to celebrate the last half of this promise than accept the reality of the first half. We like to be delivered, but we don't like to face adversity. I'm not suggesting, of course, that you should go looking for trouble. But don't worry; you won't have to. If you choose

to be righteous — to live in a right relationship with God — adversity will find you. Righteous living goes against the grain of our culture, creating a certain friction which can lead to adversity.

This psalm actually tells us the occasion in David's life which prompted these words and this promise. The story is found in 1 Samuel 21:10—15, when David was fleeing for his life, forced to act like a madman in order to survive. And though he was humbled by the encounter, he nonetheless praised God for it: "I will praise the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips" (v. 1). Praise is the gateway to deliverance. If you are trapped by discouragement or despair, praise the Lord anyway.

Truly, when we focus on the Lord's greatness, we will begin to seek him. And that's when we discover that "the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry for help" (v. 15).

When I read this verse, I am reminded of the little boy who was afraid of the dark. When his dad would turn out the light in his son's bedroom, the boy's only question was, "Which way is your face turned?" Even though the boy's eyes could not penetrate the darkness, he was comforted by the knowledge that his father's face was toward him.

While the Bible offers no glib guarantees that we will escape crises and trials, God does promise that we can count on his presence and deliverance. Verse 20, in fact, includes the messianic prophecy that "he protects all his bones; not one of them is broken," referring to Christ's death on the cross. Yes, we have resurrected proof that God delivers the righteous!

## Psalms 34:20

### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 20. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.** David had come off with kicks and cuffs, but no broken bones. No substantial injury occurs to the saints. Eternity will heal all their wounds. Their real self is safe; they may have flesh wounds, but no part of the essential fabric of their being shall be broken. This verse may refer to frequent providential protections vouchsafed to the saints; but as good men have had broken limbs as well as others, it cannot absolutely be applied to bodily preservations; but must, it seems to me, be spiritually applied to great injuries of soul, which are for ever prevented by divine love. Not a bone of the mystical body of Christ shall be broken, even as his corporeal frame was preserved intact. Divine love watches over every believer as it did over Jesus; no fatal injury shall happen to us, we shall neither be halt or maimed in the kingdom, but shall be presented after life's trials are over without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, being preserved in Christ Jesus, and kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 20. He keepeth all his bones,** which were very many. Perhaps (saith Abenezra here), David had been scourged by the Philistines, but his bones were not broken, nor were our Saviour's. John 19:36. *John Trapp.*

**Ver. 20. All his bones.** Muis observes, "It says not his *body*, for this he permits to be afflicted; but it signifies that the evils of the godly are light, and scarcely penetrate to the bone; "but Geier observes, "This is too subtle, rather the bone reminds us of the essential parts of the body, by whose injury the whole frame is endangered. It is a proverbial form of speech like that in Matthew 10:30, 'The very hairs of your head are all numbered, ' expressing the remarkable defence afforded to the righteous." Genebrard says, "The bones are put by synecdoche for all the members." *From Poli Synopsis.*

**Ver. 20.** The passover lamb, of which not a bone was broken, prefigured Jesus as one, "not a bone of whose body should be broken; " and yet, at the same time, it prefigured the complete keeping and safety of Christ's body, the church; as it is written, **He keepeth all his bones; not one of them is broken.** *Andrew A. Bonar's Commentary on Leviticus.*

**Ver. 20.** Christ's bones were in themselves breakable, but could not actually be broken by all the violence in the world, because God had fore decreed, *a bone of him shall not be broken.* So we confess God's children mortal; but all the power of devil or man may not, must not, cannot, kill them before their conversion, according to God's election of them to life, which must be fully accomplished. *Thomas Fuller.*

**Ver. 20.** Observe as a point of resemblance between this and the following Psalm, the mention of the bones here and in Psalms 35:10. *C. Wordsworth.*

### HINTS THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 20.** The real safety of a believer when in great perils. His soul, his spiritual life, his faith, hope, love, etc.; his interest in Jesus, his adoption, justification, these all kept.

**Exposition**

**Ver. 21. Evil shall slay the wicked.** Their adversaries shall be killing; they are not medicine, but poison. Ungodly men only need rope enough and they will hang themselves; their own iniquities shall be their punishment. Hell itself is but evil fully developed, torturing those in whom it dwells. Oh! happy they who have fled to Jesus to find refuge from their former sins, such, and such only will escape. **And they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.** They hated the best of company, and they shall have none; they shall be forsaken, despoiled, wretched, despairing. God makes the viper poison itself. What desolation of heart do the damned feel, and how richly have they deserved it!

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS**

**Ver. 21. Evil.** Afflictions though in the plural, prove not ruinous to the righteous, for the Lord delivers him out of them all, whereas *evil* in *the singular* slays the wicked, to signify the difference of God's economy towards righteous and wicked men. The former is permitted to fall into many pressures, the latter is not so frequently exercised with them, yet the many that befall the one do no hurt, but work good for him, whereas the few that befall the wicked, or perhaps the *one singular affliction* of his life is the utter ruin of him. *Henry Hammond.*

**Ver. 21. --**

Conscience self the culprit tortures, gnawing him with pangs unknown; For that now amendment's season is for ever past and gone, And that late repentance findeth pardon none for all her moan. *S. Peter Damiano, 988-1072.*

**Ver. 21. Shall be desolate.** In the margin it is, *shall be guilty.* And this is the proper meaning of the original word, (wmvay). They are guilty, and liable to punishment. Thus the word is frequently rendered in our version (see Leviticus 4:13, Leviticus 4:22); and generally includes it in the idea of guilt, and the punishment incurred by it. *Samuel Chandler, D.D.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 21.** Wickedness, its own executioner, illustrated by scriptural cases, by history, by the lost in hell. Lessons from the solemn fact.

The forlorn condition of a man of malicious spirit.

**Ver. 21-22.** Who shall and who shall not be desolate.

**EXPOSITION**

**Ver. 22. The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants** --with price and with power, with blood and with water. All providential helps are a part of the redemption by power, hence the Lord is said still to redeem. All thus ransomed belong to him who bought them-- this is the law of justice and the verdict of gratitude. Joyfully will we serve him who so graciously purchases us with his blood, and delivers us by his power. **And none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.** Faith is the mark of the ransomed, and wherever it is seen, though in the least and meanest of the saints, it ensures eternal salvation. Believer, thou shalt never be deserted, forsaken, given up to ruin. God, even thy God, is thy guardian and friend, and bliss is thine.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS**

**Ver. 22.** The promises of God to his church, and his threatenings of sin recorded in the living book of his word, are not antiquate; no age shall ever superannuate them, or put them out of full force and virtue. What if good persons and good causes do suffer oppression? The poet is a divine in that case--

*Informes hiemes reducit  
Jupiter; idem  
Summovet. Non si male nunc, et olim  
Sic erit.*

After foul weather comes fair; though it be ill with us now, it will not be always. What if enemies of religion and moths of commonwealth do flourish and prosper, and have all things at will, let it not trouble David and Job; both of them saw as fair a sunshine shut up in a dark cloud, and a world of foul weather following. *Edward Marbury*.

**Ver. 22.** Satan cannot tempt longer than God shall give him leave; and he will never suffer thee to be tempted above measure, but will give a good issue unto the temptation. Thou art called to fight under the banner of Christ Jesus, and in the name of the Lord thou shalt be enabled to do valiantly and overcome. If Satan continue his assaults, "God's grace is sufficient for thee." 2 Corinthians 12:9. If thy strength be clean gone, God's power shall be magnified the more in thee, and he hath brought thee low that thou mayest not trust in thyself, but in the living Lord, and that the whole praise of the victory might be ascribed unto him. If thy strength did remain, it was not to be leaned unto; and now it is decayed and gone, there is no cause of fear, for the Lord will be thy stay. In the most difficult assaults and tedious encounters, we are exhorted to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Be of good courage, and God will grant thee an easy, a joyful victory. Satan's drift in tempting is to turmoil, dishearten, and perplex with fears, and drive into despair; and if thou take heart to rest quietly upon God's grace, and fly unto his name, thou shalt put him to flight, thou hast already got the day. Wait but awhile, and these dark mists and terrible storms shall be dispersed. By these temptations the Lord hath taught thee to see by weakness, and the malice of Satan; to deny thine own wisdom and prize his favour, lightly to esteem all things here below, and highly to value mercy reaching to the pardon of sin, and heavenly communion and fellowship with God. And if this bitter potion hath wrought so kindly for thy spiritual good, why shouldst thou be dismayed? Trust in the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thee. **The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate,** *John Ball*.

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 21-22.** Who shall and who shall not be desolate.

**Ver. 22.** *Redemption* in its various meanings; *faith* in its universal preservation; *the Lord* in his unrivalled glory in the work of grace.

### Psalm 56:1-13

1 For the choir director; according to Jonath elem rehokim. A Mikhtam of David, when the Philistines seized him in Gath.

Be gracious to me, O God, for man has trampled upon me; Fighting all day long he oppresses me.

2 My foes have trampled upon me all day long,

For they are many who fight proudly against me.

3 When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You.

4 In God, whose word I praise,

In God I have put my trust;

I shall not be afraid.

What can mere man do to me?

5 All day long they distort my words;

All their thoughts are against me for evil.

6 They attack, they lurk,

They watch my steps,

As they have waited to take my life.

7 Because of wickedness, cast them forth,

In anger put down the peoples, O God!

8 You have taken account of my wanderings;

Put my tears in Your bottle.

Are they not in Your book?

9 Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call;

This I know, that God is for me.

10 In God, whose word I praise,

In the LORD, whose word I praise,

11 In God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid.

What can man do to me?

12 Your vows are binding upon me, O God;

I will render thank offerings to You.

13 For You have delivered my soul from death,  
Indeed my feet from stumbling,  
So that I may walk before God In the light of the living.

## C H Spurgeon's comments on Psalm 56

### Psalm 56:1

**TITLE.** *To the Chief Musician.* That mighty minstrel by degrees acquired a noble repertoire of hallowed songs, and set them all to music. *Upon Jonathalemrechokim* --this was probably the title of the tune, as we should say Old Hundred, or Sicilian Mariners. Perhaps the title may however belong to the Psalm, and if so it is instructive, for it has been translated "the silent dove in distant places." We have here the songs of God's servant, who rejoices once more to return from banishment, and to leave those dangerous places where he was compelled to hold his peace even from good. There is such deep spiritual knowledge in this Psalm that we might say of it, "Blessed art thou David Barjonas, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee." When David plays the Jonah he is not like the prophet of that name; in David the love of the dove predominates, but in Jonah its moaning and complaining are most notable. Michtam of David. This is the second golden Psalm, we had the first in Psalms 16:0, to which this Psalm has a great likeness, especially in its close, for it ends in the joyful presence. A golden mystery, the gracious secret of the life of faith is in both these Psalms most sweetly unveiled, and a pillar is set up because of God's truth. *When the Philistines took him in Gath.* He was like a dove in strangers' hands, and on his escape he records his gratitude.

**DIVISIONS.** In Psalms 56:1-2, he pours out his complaint; in Psalms 56:3-4 he declares his confidence in God; in Psalms 56:5-6 he returns to his complaining, but pleads in earnest hope in Psalms 56:7-9, and sings a grateful song from Psalms 56:10 to the close.

### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 1. Be merciful unto me, O God.** In my deep distress my soul turns to thee, my God. Man has no mercy on me, therefore double thy mercy to me. If thy justice has let loose my enemies, let thy mercy shorten their chain. It is sweet to see how the tender dove like spirit of the psalmist flies to the most tender attribute for succour in the hour of peril.

**For man would swallow me up.** He is but thy creature, a mere man, yet like a monster he is eager for blood, he pants, he gapes for me; he would not merely wound me, or feed on my substance, but he would fain swallow me altogether, and so make an end of me. The open mouths of sinners when they rage against us should open our mouths in prayer. We may plead the cruelty of men as a reason for the divine interposition--a father is soon aroused when his children are shamefully entreated.

**He fighting daily oppresseth me.** He gives me no interval--he fights daily. He is successful in his unrighteous war--he oppresses me, he crushes me, he presses me sore. David has his eye on the leader of his foes, and lays his complaint against him in the right place. If we may thus plead against man, much more against that great enemy of souls, the devil. We ask the Lord to forgive us our trespasses, which is another way of saying, "Be merciful to me, O God, "and then we may say, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." The more violent the attack of Satan the stronger our plea for deliverance.

### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

*Title.* The words **Jonathalemrechokim** may be rendered, *concerning the mute dove among them that are afar off, or in far places.* John Gill.

*Title. Michtam.* See also Explanatory Notes on Psalms 16:0, in the "Treasury of David," Vol. 1, pp., 222-223.

**Ver. 1. Be merciful.** This is the second of the Psalms beginning with the miserere; the fifty-first being the first of them. *C. H. S.*

**Ver. 1. Be merciful unto me, O God.** This is to me the one source of all my expectations, the one fountain of all promises: *Miserere mei, Deus, miserere mei.* Bernard, 1091-1157.

**Ver. 1. Be merciful.** His first wrestling in prayer is with the check of his conscience, whether for his daily sins, or in particular for casting himself in such apparent danger, as to have ventured without probable security, to seek shelter among the enemies of the people of God, whose blood he himself had shed abundantly; for this rashness or other sins he begs mercy. *David Dickson.*

**Ver. 1. Man.** He uses the indefinite term *man* in this verse, though in the next he speaks of having many enemies, the more forcibly to express the truth, that the whole world was combined against him, that he experienced no humanity amongst men, and stood in the last necessity of divine help. *John Calvin.*



**Ver. 1. Would swallow me up.** *Soop me up* (as the Hebrew word soundeth); make but one draught of me, or suck me in as a whirlpool, swallow me up as a ravenous wild beast. *John Trapp*.

**Ver. 1. He fighting daily.** There is no morning on which we can arise and go forth into the world, and say, "No enemy will come out against me today." There is no night in which we can retire from that world, and think to find safety in the solitude of our own chambers, and say, "No evil can enter here." *Barton Bouchier, in "Manna in the Heart," 1855.*

**Ver. 1-2.** The same words are applicable to the situation and circumstances of David, pursued by his enemies; of Christ, persecuted by the Jews; of the church, afflicted in the world; and of the soul, encompassed by enemies, against whom she is forced to wage perpetual war. *George Horne.*

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

None.

#### WORK UPON THE FIFTY-SIXTH PSALM

In CHANDLER'S *"Life of David,"* Vol. 1., pp. 104-7, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.

#### Psalm 56:2

#### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 2. Mine enemies would daily swallow me up.** Their appetite for blood never fails them. With them there is no truce or armistice. They are many, but one mind animates them. Nothing I can do can make them relent. Unless they can quite devour me they will never be content. The ogres of nursery tales exist in reality in the enemies of the church, who would crush the bones of the godly, and make a mouthful of them if they could.

**For they be many that fight against me.** Sinners are gregarious creatures. Persecutors hunt in packs. These wolves of the church seldom come down upon us singly. The number of our foes is a powerful plea for the interposition of the one Defender of the faithful, who is mightier than all their bands. These foes of the gracious are also keen eyed, and ever on the watch, hence the margin calls them "observers."

**O thou most High.** Thus he invokes against the lofty ones of the earth the aid of one who is higher than the highest. Some translate the words differently, and think that the writer means that his foes assailed him from the high places in which pride and power had placed them. Saul, his great foe, attacked him from his throne with all the force which his high position placed at his disposal: our comfort in such a case is near to hand, for God will help us from a higher place than our proudest foes can occupy. The greatness of God as the Most High is a fertile source of consolation to weak saints oppressed by mighty enemies.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 1-2. See Psalms on "Psalms 56:2"** for further information.

**Ver. 2. O thou most High.** The Hebrew is not that rendered **Most High** in Psalms 7:17; nor in our version is it ever rendered **Most High** in any other place, although found in the Hebrew Bible more than *fifty* times. There are but two other places where it is applied, as an epithet, to God; Psalms 92:8; Micah 6:6. It is commonly rendered, *from above, on high, high places, high*; once *loftily, Psalms 73:8*... The probable meaning is, they "fight against me from the high places of authority, both in Jerusalem and in Gath, *q.d.*, mine enemies are in power. *William S. Plumer's "Studies in the Book of Psalms," 1867.*

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 2-3.**

I. *Fears are common to all men,* at one time or another.

II. *Improper and inefficacious means* of removing fear are often resorted to.

III. There is here suggested a *true and effectual method* of removing fear. *Robert Morrison (1782-1834), in "A Parting Memorial."*

## EXPOSITION

**Ver. 3. What time I am afraid.**

David was no braggart, he does not claim never to be afraid, and he was no brutish Stoic free from fear because of the lack of tenderness. David's intelligence deprived him of the stupid heedlessness of ignorance, he saw the imminence of his peril, and was afraid. We are men, and therefore liable to overthrow; we are feeble, and therefore unable to prevent it; we are sinful men, and therefore deserving it, and for all these reasons we are afraid. But the condition of the psalmist's mind was complex-- he feared, but that fear did not fill the whole area of his mind, for he adds,

**I will trust in thee.**

It is possible, then, for fear and faith to occupy the mind at the same moment. We are strange beings, and our experience in the divine life is stranger still. We are often in a twilight, where light and darkness are both present, and it is hard to tell which predominates. It is a blessed fear which drives us to trust. Unregenerate fear drives from God, gracious fear drives to him. If I fear man I have only to trust God, and I have the best antidote. To trust when there is no cause for fear, is but the name of faith, but to be reliant upon God when occasions for alarm are abundant and pressing, is the conquering faith of God's elect. Though the verse is in the form of a resolve, it became a fact in David's life, let us make it so in ours. Whether the fear arise from without or within, from past, present, or future, from temporals, or spirituals, from men or devils, let us maintain faith, and we shall soon recover courage.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 3. What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.** There is nothing like faith to help at a pinch; faith dissolves doubts as the sun drives away the mists. And that you may not be put out, know that your time for believing is always. There are times when some graces may be out of use, but there is no time wherein faith can be said to be so. Wherefore faith must be always in exercise. Faith is the eye, is the mouth, is the hand, and one of these is of use all the day long. Faith is to see, to receive, to work, or to eat; and a Christian should be seeing or receiving, or working, or feeding all day long. Let it rain, let it blow, let it thunder, let it lighten, a Christian must still believe. "At what time," said the good man, "I am afraid, I will trust in thee." *John Bunyan*.

**Ver. 3. What time I am afraid,** etc. A divine spark may live in a smoke of doubts without a speedy rising into flame. When grace is at the bottom of doubting, there will be reliance on Christ and lively petitions to him. Peter's faith staggers when he began to sink, but he casts a look and sends forth a cry to his Saviour, acknowledging His sufficiency; Matthew 14:30, "Lord, save me." Sometimes those doubtings strengthen our trust and make us take hold faster on God. Psalm 56:3. **What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.** This was a fear of himself or others, rather than a jealousy of God. Had he had unworthy suspicions of him, he would not have trusted him; he would not have run for remedy to the object of his fear. The waverings where faith is, are like the tossings of a ship fast at anchor (still there is a relying upon God), not like a boat carried by the waves of the sea to be dashed against a rock. If the heart stay on Christ in the midst of those doubtings, it is not an evil heart of unbelief. Such doubtings consist with the indwelling of the Spirit, who is in the heart, to perform the office of a Comforter against such fears and to expel those thick fumes of nature. *Stephen Charnock*.

**Ver. 3. What time I am afraid,** etc. I know not what to do, but I will try my old way, it is good for me to draw near still; I will do so still, as I used to do; I will cast myself down upon the free grace of Christ in the promises; I will lay the weight of my sinking spirit there, I will renew my hold, life, expectation there; this is my old path, I will never be turned or beaten out here. This Christian in his strength may challenge all the gates of hell. This was David's course (Psalms 71:5), "Thou art my trust from my youth," etc. Thence was it that he could say, **What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee:** his shield and sword was always in his hand, therefore he could make use of it when fear and inward trouble offered themselves. **Afraid!** alas, who is not? but what course will you take then? Even what course you used to take, *i.e.*, believe; use faith always; and have it now. *Elias Pledger(-1676), in "Morning Exercises."*

**Ver. 3. What time,** etc. Literally, **What day.** As "Man *daily* oppresseth me" (Psalms 56:1), so "Every *day*, when I am afraid, I trust in thee." *A. R. Fausset*.

**Ver. 3.** It is a good maxim with which to go into a world of danger; a good maxim to go to sea with; a good maxim in a storm; a good maxim when in danger on the land; a good maxim when we are sick; a good maxim when we think of death and the judgment--**What time I am afraid, I WILL TRUST IN THEE.** *Albert Barnes*.

**Ver. 3. I will trust in thee.** Faith and fear stand together; and so fear and love. *John Richardson, -1654.*

**Ver. 3-4.** Sometimes faith comes from prayer in triumph, and cries, *Victoria*. It gives such a being and existence to the mercy prayed for in the Christian's soul, before any likelihood of it appears to sense and reason, that the Christian can silence all his troubled thoughts with the expectation of its coming. So Hannah prayed, "and was no more sad." 1 Samuel 1:18. Yea, it will make the Christian disburse his praises for the mercy long before it is received. Thus high faith wrought in David. **At what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee,** and in the next words, **In God I will praise his word;** that is, he would praise God for his promise before there was any performance of it in him, when it had no existence but in God's faithfulness and David's faith. This holy man had such a piercing eye of faith, that he could see the promise when he was at the lowest ebb of misery, so certain and unquestionable in the power and truth of God, that he could then praise God as if the promised mercy had been actually fulfilled to him. *William Gurnall.*

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 2-3.**

I. *Fears are common to all men,* at one time or another.

II. *Improper and inefficacious means* of removing fear are often resorted to.

III. There is here suggested a *true and effectual method* of removing fear. *Robert Morrison (1782-1834), in "A Parting Memorial."*

**Ver. 3. What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.** Whensoever we are afraid of any evil, we are still to put our trust in God.

I. What is it to put our trust in God?

1. To keep our hearts from desponding or sinking down under any fears.

2. To comfort ourselves in God.

3. To expect deliverance from him. II. What is there in God we ought to put our trust in?

1. In his promises.

2. In his properties. His power, wisdom, justice, mercy, all sufficiency. III. Why should we in all our fears put our trust in God?

1. Because there is none else can secure us from our fears. Whereas,

2. There are no fears but God can secure us from them, either by removing the thing feared, or by subduing the fear of the thing. *Bishop Beveridge.*

**Ver. 3.**

I. There is fear without trust.

II. There is trust without fear.

III. There is fear and trust united. *G. R.*

#### Psalm 56:4

#### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 4. In God I will praise his word.** Faith brings forth praise. He who can trust will soon sing. God's promise, when fulfilled, is a noble subject for praise, and even before fulfilment it should be the theme of song. It is in or through God that we are able to praise. We praise as well as pray in the Spirit. Or we may read it--in extolling the Lord one of the main points for thanksgiving is his revealed will in the Scriptures, and the fidelity with which he keeps his word of promise.

**In God I have put my trust.** Altogether and alone should we stay ourselves on God. What was a gracious resolve in the former verse, is here asserted as already done.

**I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.** Faith exercised, fear is banished, and holy triumph ensues, so that the soul asks, "What can flesh do unto me?" What indeed? He can do me no real injury; all his malice shall be overruled for my good. Man is flesh, flesh is grass--Lord, in thy name I defy its utmost wrath. There were two verses of complaint, and here are two of confidence; it is well to

weigh out a sufficient quantity of the sweet to counteract the sour.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 3-4.** See Psalms on "**Psalms 56:3**" for further information.

**Ver. 4. In God I will praise his word.** Or, praise him for his word; for the whole Scripture that was then in being. *John Gill*.

**Ver. 4.** The best hold that faith can have of God, is to take him by **his word**, however his dispensation seems to be; this will give satisfaction at length; for **In God I will praise his word**, is as much as to say, albeit he withhold comfort and deliverance from me, so that I cannot find what I would, yet let me have **his word**, and I will give him the glory of all his attributes. *David Dickson*.

**Ver. 4. I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.** Fear not man, he is but flesh. Thou needest not, thou oughtest not to fear. Thou needest not. What, not such a great man; not such a number of men, who have the keys of all the prisons at their girdle; who can kill or save alive? No, not these; only look they be thy enemies for righteousness sake. Take heed thou makest not the least child thine enemy, by offering wrong to him; God will right the wicked even upon the saint. If he offends he shall find no shelter under God's wing for his sin. This made Jerome complain that the Christian sin made the arms of those barbarous nations which invaded Christendom victorious: *Nostris peccatis fortes sunt barbari*. But if man's wrath find thee on God's way, and his fury take fire at thy holiness, thou needest not fear though thy life be the prey he hunts for. Flesh can only wound flesh; he may kill thee, but not hurt thee. Why shouldst thou fear to be stripped of that which thou hast resigned already to Christ? It is the first lesson you learn, if a Christian, to deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow thy Master; so that the enemy comes too late; thou hast no life to lose, because thou hast given it already to Christ; nor can man take away that without God's leave; all thou hast is insured; and though God hath not promised thee immunity from suffering in this kind, yet he hath undertaken to bear the loss, yea, to pay thee a hundredfold, and thou shalt not stay for it till another world. Again, thou oughtest not to fear flesh. Our Saviour (Matthew 10:0) thrice, in the compass of six verses, commands us not to fear man: if thy heart quail at him, how wilt thou behave thyself in the last against Satan, whose little finger is heavier than man's loins? The Romans had *arma proelusoria*, weapons rebated or cudgels, which they were tried at before they came to the sharp. If thou canst not bear a bruise in thy flesh from man's cudgels and blunt weapons, what wilt thou do when thou shalt have Satan's sword in thy side? God counts himself reproached when his children fear a sorry man; therefore we are bid sanctify the Lord, not to fear their fear. *William Gurnall*.

**Ver. 4. I will not fear**, etc. Eusebius tells us of a notable speech that Ignatius used when he was in his enemies' hands, not long before he was to suffer, which argued a raised spirit to a wonderful height above the world, and above himself. "I care, "says he, "for nothing visible or invisible, that I might get Christ. Let fire, the cross, the letting out of beasts upon me, breaking of my bones, the tearing of my members, the grinding of my whole body, and the torments of the devils come upon me, so be it I may get Christ." *From Jeremiah Burroughs' "Moses his Self denial, "1649.*

**Ver. 4. What flesh can do**, etc. It is according to the phrase of Scripture, when it would speak contemptibly of man and show him to be the lowest creature, to call him "flesh, "to set forth the weakness that man is subject to. *John Arrowsmith, 1600-1660.*

**Ver. 4. (last clause).** *Fear of man* --grim idol, bloody mouthed; many souls has he devoured and trampled down into hell! His eyes are full of hatred to Christ's disciples. Scoffs and jeers lurk in his eye. The laugh of the scorner growls in his throat. Cast down this idol. This keeps some of you from secret prayer, from worshipping God in your family, from going to lay your case before ministers, from openly confessing Christ. You that have felt God's love and Spirit, dash this idol to pieces. "Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?" "Fear not, thou worm Jacob." "What have I to do any more with idols?" *Robert Murray Macheyne, 1813-1843.*

**Ver. 4.** Faith groweth valiant in fight; albeit it began like a coward, and staggered in the first conflict, yet it groweth stout, incontinent, and pulls its adversaries under foot: **In God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.** *David Dickson.*

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

None.

## Psalm 56:5

## EXPOSITION

**Ver. 5. Every day they wrest my words.** This is a common mode of warfare among the ungodly. They put our language on the rack, they extort meanings from it which it cannot be made fairly to contain. Thus our Saviour's prophecy concerning the temple of his body, and countless accusations against his servants, were founded on wilful perversions. They who do this every day become

great adepts in the art. A wolf can always find in a lamb's discourse a reason for eating him. Prayers are blasphemies if you choose to read them the wrong way upwards.

**All their thoughts are against me for evil.** No mixture of good will tone down their malice. Whether they viewed him as a king, a psalmist, a man, a father, a warrior, a sufferer, it was all the same, they saw through coloured glass, and could not think a generous thought towards him. Even those actions of his which were an undoubted blessing to the commonwealth, they endeavoured to undervalue. Oh, foul spring, from which never a drop of pure water can come!

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 5. Every day they wrest my words;** or, they put my words to pain and grief, or, they painfully and grievously wrest my words. David's enemies took up what he spake, and put a new shape upon it; and this they did so vexingly, that they are said to **wrest** his words; a thing is vexed when it is wrested or wrought out of the form it before had. The same metaphor the apostle Peter useth in reference to doctrine, speaking of the Epistles of Paul, in which "are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable *wrest*, 'br put upon the rack; they painfully form his words, and represent them in a meaning which he never intended. 2 Peter 3:16. What is spoken may be right, both in the matter and intendment of the speaker, yet another wrests, forms and fashions it in his own mould, and makes it bear a sense which the speaker never dreamed of. *Joseph Caryl*.

**Ver. 5. Every day they wrest my words,** etc. Mr. Jewel, the Bishop of Salisbury, who, according to his life, died most godly and patiently, at the point of death used the versicle of the Hymn, "Te Deum, ""O Lord, in thee have I trusted, let me never be confounded, " whereupon, suppressing the rest, they published that the principle champion of the heretics, in his very last words, cried he was confounded. *Lord Bacon's "Bible Thoughts."*

**Ver. 5. They wrest my words.** Whatever Christ said in justification of himself was twisted to a meaning injurious to him. So it is still in the world, self justification by words answers but little purpose with ungodly men. *W. Wilson, D.D., 1860.*

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

None.

#### Psalm 56:6

#### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 6. They gather themselves together.** Firebrands burn the fiercer for being pushed together. They are afraid to meet the good man till their numbers place terrible odds against him. Come out, ye cowards, man to man, and fight the old hero! No, ye wait till ye are assembled like thieves in bands, and even then ye waylay the man. There in nothing brave about you.

**They hide themselves.** In ambuscade they wait their opportunity. Men of malice are men of cowardice. He who dares not meet his man on the king's highway, writes himself down a villain. Constantly are the reputations of good men assailed with deep laid schemes, and diabolical plots, in which the anonymous enemies stab in the dark.

**They mark my steps,** as hunters mark the trail of their game, and so track them. Malicious men are frequently very sharp sighted to detect the failings, or supposed failings, of the righteous. Spies and *mouchards* are not all in the pay of earthly governments, some of them will have wages to take in red hot coin from one who himself is more subtle than all the beasts of the field.

**When they wait for my soul.** Nothing less than his life would content them, only his present and eternal ruin could altogether glut them. The good man is no fool, he sees that he has enemies, and that they are many and crafty; he sees also his own danger, and then he shows his wisdom by spreading the whole case before the Lord, and putting himself under divine protection.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 6. They mark my steps.** Go whither I will, they are at my heels. *William Nicholson(-1671), in "David's Harp Strung and Tuned."*

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

None.

#### Psalms 56:7

## EXPOSITION

**Ver. 7. Shall they escape by iniquity?** Will such wickedness as this stand them in good stead? Can it be that this conduct shall enable them to avoid the sentence of earthly punishment? They slander the good man to screen themselves--will this avail them? They have cunningly managed hitherto, but will there not be an end to their games?

**In thine anger cast down the people, O God.** Trip them up in their tricks. Hurl them from the Tarpeian rock. A persecuted man finds a friend even in an angry God, how much more in the God of love! When men seek to cast us down, it is but natural and not at all unlawful to pray that they may be disabled from the accomplishment of their infamous designs. What God often does we may safely ask him to do.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS** None.

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 7.**

I. From iniquity there is an escape.

II. By iniquity there is no escape. The mercy of God secures the one. The justice of God prevents the other.

*R.*

## Psalms 56:8

## EXPOSITION

**Ver. 8. Thou tellest my wanderings.** Every step which the fugitive had taken when pursued by his enemies, was not only observed but thought worthy of counting and recording. We perhaps are so confused after a long course of trouble, that we hardly know where we have or where we have not been; but the omniscient and considerate Father of our spirits remembers all in detail; for he has counted them over as men count their gold, for even the trial of our faith is precious in his sight.

**Put thou my tears into thy bottle.** His sorrows were so many that there would need a great wineskin to hold them all. There is no allusion to the little complimentary lachrymators for fashionable and fanciful Romans, it is a more robust metaphor by far; such floods of tears had David wept that a leathern bottle would scarce hold them. He trusts that the Lord will be so considerate of his tears as to store them up as men do the juice of the vine, and he hopes that the place of storage will be a special one--**thy bottle**, not a bottle.

**Are they not in thy book?** Yes, they are recorded there, but let not only the record but the grief itself be present to thee. Look on my griefs as real things, for these move the heart more than a mere account, however exact. How condescending is the Lord! How exact his knowledge of us! How generous his estimation! How tender his regard!

## EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Ver. 8. Put thou my tears in thy bottle.** Among other things in the collection of Mr. Abbott, of Cairo, he had a lachrymatory, or tear bottle, which had been found in a tomb at Thebes. This interested me very much. The custom in old times was, when a person was ill or in great distress, for his friends to go to see him, and take with them a tear bottle. Then, as the tears rolled down the cheeks of the sufferer, they were caught in these bottles, sealed up, and preserved as a memorial of the event. This is what David referred to in Psalms 56:8. **Put thou my tears into thy bottle.** But it implies much more than at first suggests itself, and much more than I can attempt to write. For instance, it is as if David had said, "Visit me, and behold my tears; ("O visit me with thy salvation!") for without such *visit* there could be no bottling of his tears. "Thou tellest my wanderings; O visit me, and behold my anguish; put my tears into thy bottle, "for "they have been my meat day and night." Psalms 42:3. "Keep them before thee, by way of remembrance, and when thou seest the bottle, O think of him whose tears it contains. Are they not in thy book?" That is, God's book of remembrance, that was written for those "who thought upon his name" (Malachi 3:16), just as the kings of old used to keep a book of chronicles of important events. See Ezra 6:1-11. *John Gadsby, 1860.*

(We insert this to show what has been said by others; but we do not think there is the slightest allusion to this piece of *Roman* etiquette in this text. *C. H. S.*)

**Ver. 8. My tear:** the singular used collectively. **In thy bottle:** as if one should say, take care of my tears, as of a kind of wine that is very costly, and very pleasant to thee; or, that hereafter you may measure out to me just that quantity of joys: a metaphor from the



keeper of a vineyard, who receives into his vessel the drops of the grapes pressed out by the winepress of affliction. The word *dag* (*iter*) (leather or skin bottle) denotes the manner in which they preserved their wine. (1 Samuel 16:20; Joshua 9:4, Joshua 9:13), and milk also (Jude 1:4:19). *Martin Geier*.

**Ver. 8. Put thou my tears into thy bottle.** What a sweet thought is suggested here of God's remembrance of his people's affliction! It is an interesting figure of speech, of *bottling their tears*. But the sense is, they are remembered. And woe will be to the man that offends one of God's little ones on his account. What are now bottles of tears, will be poured out in the end as so many vials of wrath. But reader! think how the tears of Jesus have been treasured up when shedding for the sins of his people. *Robert Hawker*, 1753-1827.

**Ver. 8. Put thou my tears into thy bottle.** It is the witty observation of one, that God is said in Scripture to have a bag and a bottle, a *bag* for our sins, and a *bottle* for our tears; and that we should help to fill this, as we have that. There is an allusion here in the original that cannot be Anglicized. *John Trapp*.

**Ver. 8. Are they not in thy book?** While we remain in this vale of misery, God keeps all our tears in a bottle; so precious is the water that is distilled from penitent eyes; and because he will be sure not to fail, he notes how many drops there be in his register. It was a precious ointment wherewith the woman in the Pharisee's house (it is thought Mary Magdalene) anointed the feet of Christ; but her *tears*, wherewith she washed them, were more worth than her spikenard. *Abraham Wright*, in "A Practical Commentary or Exposition upon the Book of Psalms," 1661.

### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 8.** Here are--

- I. Manifold mercies, to reclaim from wanderings.
- II. Tender mercies, putting tears in a bottle.
- III. Covenant mercies, "Are they not," etc. *G. R.*

## Psalms 56:9

### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 9. When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back.** So soon as I pray they shall fly. So surely as I cry they shall be put to the rout.

"So swift is prayer to reach the sky,  
So kind is God to me."

The machinery of prayer is not always visible, but it is most efficient. God inclines us to pray, we cry in anguish of heart, he hears, he acts, the enemy is turned back. What irresistible artillery is this which wins the battle as soon as its report is heard! What a God is this who harkens to the cry of his children, and in a moment delivers them from the mightiest adversaries!

**This I know.** This is one of the believer's certainties, his axioms, his infallible, indisputable verities.

**For God is for me.** This, we know, and we know, therefore, that none can be against us who are worth a moment's fear. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Who will restrain prayer when it is so potent? Who will seek any other ally than God, who is instantly present so soon as we give the ordained signal, by which we testify both our need and our confidence?

### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 9. When I cry.** The cry of faith and prayer to God is more dreadful to our spiritual foes than the war whoop of the Indian is to his surprised brother savages. *Adam Clarke*.

**Ver. 9. (first clause).** It was somewhat that when David prayed he was saved from his enemies. "I will call on the Lord: so shall I be saved from mine enemies" (2 Samuel 22:4); there is the *defensive* power of prayer; but it is more that it puts enemies to the foil. **When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back** and be put to flight; there is the *offensive* power of prayer. In David's tower there was an armoury, *thalpijoth*, a place to hang swords with two edges, swords with two mouths (Song of Solomon 4:4); a defensive and an offensive edge. Both edges must be used by such as seek safety. Prayer is a sword with two edges. "Put up thy sword into his place," says Christ to Peter: "for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Matthew 22:52. But he that takes not this sword may happen to perish by the sword; and the drawing of this sword may save a man from perishing by the

sword. Mark that last reason that our Saviour adds why Peter should put up his sword: "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 22:53). As if he had said, If it were my mind to confound these mine enemies that now set upon me, I should not need thy sword to do it. I could pray to my Father, and could presently by prayer bring such forces into the field as should rout and scatter all mine enemies; hereby implying, that if he would, he could do his enemies more damage and mischief by his prayers against them than by the sword and all instruments of war. Prayer is *twelve legions* strong, yea, twelve legions of angels strong against enemies. *Jeremiah Dyke (1620), in the Righteous Man's Tower.*

**Ver. 9. This I know.** Faith goeth upon solid grounds, and is not a fallible conjecture, but a sure knowledge. *David Dickson.*

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 9.**

- I. God is on the side of his people.
- II. He is known to be on their side.
- III. In answer to prayer he appears on their side.
- IV. When he appears enemies flee.

Or--

- I. The fact, God is for me.
- II. The knowledge of that fact--**This I know.**
- III. The use of that knowledge--**When I cry**, etc.
- IV. The consequence of that use--**Mine enemies turn back.** *G. R.*

#### Psalm 56:10

#### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 10. In God will I praise his word.** Now comes the thanksgiving. He is a wretch who, having obtained help, forgets to return a grateful acknowledgment. The least we can do is to praise him from whom we receive such distinguished favours. Does David here mean "by God's grace I will praise him"? If so, he shows us that all our emotions towards God must be in God, produced by him and presented as such. Or does he mean, "that which in God is most the object of my praise is his word, and the faithfulness with which he keeps it"? If so, we see how attached our hearts should be to the sure word of promise, and especially to *him* who is the WORD incarnate. The Lord is to be praised under every aspect, and in all his attributes and acts, but certain mercies peculiarly draw out our admiration towards special portions of the great whole. That praise which is never special in its direction cannot be very thoughtful, and it is to be feared cannot be very acceptable.

**In the Lord will I praise his word.** He delights to dwell on his praise, he therefore repeats his song. The change by which he brings in the glorious name of Jehovah is doubtless meant to indicate that under every aspect he delights in his God and in his word.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 10. In God will I praise his word: in the Lord will I praise his word.** The first word, *Elohim*, is a name belonging to God as a judge, the second word, *Jehovah*, is a name of mercy. I will praise God whether he deal with me in a way of justice or in a way of mercy, when he hath thunder in his voice, as well as when he hath honey under his tongue. Oh, how should we praise God, and pleasure ourselves by such a frame! *Stephen Charnock.*

**Ver. 10. (first clause).** By the assistance of God I shall be enabled to praise him for the performance of his promises. *Symon Patrick, 1626-1707.*

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 10.**

- I. "I will praise God *for* his word."
- II. *In* his word, as he is there revealed.

III. *By his word.* "Thou hast put a song, "etc.

## Psalm 56:11

### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 11. In God have I put my trust.** This and the former verse are evidently the chorus of the Psalm. We cannot be too careful of our faith, or see too sedulously that it is grounded on the Lord alone.

**I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.** Faith has banished fear. He views his foes in their most forcible character, calling them not *flesh*, but indicating them as *man*, yet he dreads them not; though the whole race were his enemies he would not be afraid now that his trust is stayed on God. He is not afraid of what they threaten to do, for much of that they cannot do; and even what is in their power, what they *can do*, he defies with holy daring. He speaks for the future, "I will not," for he is sure that the security of the present will suffice for days to come.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS** None.

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER** None.

## Psalm 56:12

### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 12. Thy vows are upon me, O God.** Vows made in his trouble he does not lightly forget, nor should we. We voluntarily made them, let us cheerfully keep them. All professed Christians are men under vows, but especially those who in hours of dire distress have rededicated themselves unto the Lord.

**I will render praises unto thee.** With heart, and voice, and gift, we should cheerfully extol the God of our salvation. The practice of making solemn vows in times of trouble is to be commended, when it is followed by the far less common custom of fulfilling them when the trouble is over.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS**

**Ver. 12. Thy vows are upon me, O God.** Whoever is conversant with the Psalms of David, will find him frequently making *vows*, and careful in paying them. When these words dropped from him he was just delivered out of a pressing danger among the Philistines, with whom he took shelter from the rage of King Saul, who unweariedly pursued him; but he soon found that the remembrance of his past achievements to their damage was still so fresh amongst them, and they so exasperated thereupon, that his life was in constant danger. In his distress he flies to God, his wonted refuge, and sends up earnest addresses to him, *vowing* if he would open a way for his deliverance out of these new straits, he would show his grateful sense of so signal a mercy, by the exactness and accuracy of his future obedience. God hears and succours him; and he thereupon grateful looks back, endeavours to renew the sense of his former obligation to his great Deliverer, and to stir up himself by suitable returns, and so cries out, **Thy vows are upon me, O God**; as if he should say, I resolve, O Lord, not to forget what was transacted while I was under my fears. Thou hast heard my cries, and I own myself firmly bound by my *vows*. I was serious and in earnest when I made them, and I will endeavour to show that I was so by my care to perform them. **Thy vows, O God**, made indeed on my part, but justly to be exacted on thine, **are upon me**, they do in reality hold me fast, and I desire not to be released. I am sensible I deserve to be stigmatised for a perfidious wretch if I ever forget them. This temper of holy David with reference to the *vows* he made on this occasion, should be ours with reference to all the sacred *vows* we any way come under. All Christians, as such, are necessarily under *vows* to the blessed God: and particular circumstances may make it expedient for us to come under special engagements to him. But wherever they are such as that they may justly be denominated *vows of God*, *i.e.*, are such as his word will warrant; we should make holy David, as speaking in this text, our pattern, and set ourselves to imitate him, in seriously owning their binding force, and endeavouring to answer and pay them. *Edmund Calamy, in "A Practical Discourse Concerning Vows," 1704.*

**Ver. 12. Thy vows are upon me, O God.** A well composed *vow* will make thee more circumspect and wary in the general course of thy life. Such an influence it hath, as doth more directly work on one particular part, yet is not terminated to that particular only. Thus it was with David. These **vows** were made when he was in danger of his life, as it seemeth from Psalms 56:13; for when God heard him, he delivered his soul from death: for this he vowed praises in particular, and he will render them. But, withal he takes himself to

be hereby engaged to a more exact and circumspect walk before God in all duties: so he expresses himself in the latter part of Psalms 56:13. *Henry Hurst (1629-1696), in "The Morning Exercise at Cripplegate, "1661.*

**Ver. 12-13. Thy vows are upon me, O God.** Passively, vows made to God, not by God; or the obligations of those vows and prayers which I have made and upon which I have received answers. Sacrifices of thanksgiving were called vows, as having been vowed to God upon the want, and to be paid upon the receipt, of mercy. Leviticus 1:1, "If the sacrifice that is offered be a vow." Thy vows are upon me; the fruit of my vows, so that I stand indebted to God for the return of praise. **Thou hast delivered.** He understands some great danger wherein he had sunk had not God stood by him, and from a greater mercy, the deliverance of his soul from death, argues for a less, the keeping his feet from falling. **That I may walk before God in the light of the living.** By light of the living is meant life, which is called being enlightened with the "light of the living." Job 33:30. Sometimes eternal life in heaven. John 8:12, "He that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "To walk before God." To walk obediently in the sight of God; with a respect to his presence; a walking unto all well pleasing. This is the last argument in the Psalm whereon he builds his strongest plea, as if he knew not what to urge if this should fail him; as if he should have said, Lord, I have had experience of thy wisdom in contriving, thy power in effecting, thy mercy in bestowing deliverance upon me, thy goodness in answering my vows and prayers. "Thou hast delivered from death, "a danger as great and unavoidable as death itself. O Lord, art not thou the same as thou wert? Art not thou still as wise to design, and as gracious to confer further mercy? Wilt thou not as certainly also deliver my feet from falling? The one contains his experience, the other the inference or conclusion he draws from it. Mercies received are in a special manner to be remembered. Mercies received are encouragements to ask, and strong grounds to hope for the mercies we want. *Stephen Charnock.*

### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Ver. 12.** Here is--

- I. Past dedication.
- II. Present consecration.
- III. Future glorification. *G. R.*

**Ver. 12-13.** You have here--

1. The commemoration of former mercies: **Thou hast delivered.**
2. The confidence of future: **Wilt not thou.**
3. The end of all: **To walk before God in the light of the living.** *Stephen Charnock.*

### Psalm 56:13

### EXPOSITION

**Ver. 13. For thou hast delivered my soul from death.** His enemies were defeated in their attempts upon his life, and therefore he vowed to devote his life to God.

**Wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling?** One mercy is a plea for another, for indeed it may happen that the second is the necessary complement of the first. It little boots that we live, if we are made to fall in character by the thrusts of our enemies. As lief not be, as live to be bereft of honour, and fallen prostrate before my enemies.

**That I may walk before God in the light of the living,** enjoying the favour and presence of God, and finding the joy and brightness of life therein. Walking at liberty, in holy service, in sacred communion, in constant progress in holiness, enjoying the smile of heaven--this I seek after. Here is the loftiest reach of a good man's ambition, to dwell with God, to walk in righteousness before him, to rejoice in his presence, and in the light and glory which it yields. Thus in this short Psalm, we have climbed from the ravenous jaws of the enemy into the light of Jehovah's presence, a path which only faith can tread.

### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

**Ver. 12-13. Thy vows are upon me, O God. See Psalms on "Psalms 56:12"** for further information.

**Ver. 13. From falling,** or, as more literally translated, from a *thrust*, or a *push*, by which one is caused to fall. *O. Prescott Hiller.*

**Ver. 13 (last clause).** *To walk in the presence of God* is partly under his eyes, his guidance and care, partly in particular, where God is wont to be *present*, where he is *worshipped* by his people and scatters his blessings, opposed to his present state by which he

was removed from the place of his worship and presence. Conf. 1 Samuel 26:19, etc. Lastly, *to walk in the light of the living* denotes in general to live amongst *those who live in the light*, or who enjoy the *light*, as it is said elsewhere, *in the land of the living* --Psalms 27:13 Isaiah 38:11 Isaiah 38:53:8; Ezekiel 32:32; Ps 142:6 --opposed to the *dead* or *the region of the dead*, who dwell in *darkness*. But in particular it signifies to live in a *safe* and *prosperous* state, whose well known emblem is *light*. *Hermann Venema*.

**Ver. 13** (*last clause*). We cannot restrict this phrase to the light of mortal life; David's vows bound him to walk in the *light of spiritual life*, and also in the *light of eternal life*, of which by faith he was a partaker. And most commentators have applied this verse to the *light of glory* in the world to come, as the real and final object of the believer's conversation here on earth. *W. Wilson, D.D.*

#### **HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Ver. 12-13.** You have here--

1. The commemoration of former mercies: **Thou hast delivered.**
2. The confidence of future: **Wilt not thou.**
3. The end of all: **To walk before God in the light of the living.** *Stephen Charnock.*

**Ver. 13.**

- I. The language of Gratitude--**Thou hast**, etc.
- II. Of Faith--**Wilt not thou**, etc.
- III. Of Hope--**That I may walk**, etc. *G. R.*