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## LESSON NOTES (EXPLORE THE BIBLE)

GOD HAS HEARD—THE BENEFICENCE AND TOXICITY OF SUCCESS  
 (1 Samuel 22) Lord's Day, August 7, 2016

### OVERVIEW

"Session 10" for this week in the *Explore the Bible Series*



Success kills; success creates. Whether it kills or creates is determined by how success is defined. Saul defined success as being "in charge," sovereignty as it were. And, the Lord God Yahweh took His hand off Saul.

**A QUESTION TO GET YOU THINKING:**  
**WHY DO WE BECOME UNEASY AT OTHERS' SUCCESS, EVEN IF THAT SUCCESS IS RIGHTEOUS IN GOD'S EYES?**

Success illuminates; success blinds. Success illuminates the *raison d'être* of a person, or it blinds them to their true reason for being. Whether it blinds or illuminates is determined by how one defines success. Saul was blinded by his jealousy of David who, objectively speaking, was his finest warrior, his most loyal commander, and his son-in-law. David's success was not Saul's success. David's success blinded Saul. Saul's definition of success killed him.

We too will reap death, or blindness, by how and what we value as success. When we serve the King, and not ourselves, our success is His success. When we glorify Him, and not ourselves, we get glorified nonetheless—we get to bask in *His* glory. When we glorify ourselves in our success, however, He is jealous—for all glory is His, and His alone. In fact, nothing is more blasphemous than taking God's glory for what we have done through His beneficence, His bestowing of talents, His gift of opportunities. It is the ultimate formula for evil to do good and not give Him the honor.

When we serve the King, He clears our path, and lights our path—whether that path in the valley is shadowed by death, or meanders along on the mountaintop. But, when we serve ourselves, we become blinded by our own success—we begin to believe our own publicity. We stop listening to Him and start listening to those who want a part of our "success." They too catch the disease; they too become blind, and success kills them as well.

We can learn a lot from Saul. Sure, he's not one of Scripture's greatest heroes, but if we're honest, we will often see more of Saul in our lives than David. Let us all be descendants of David<sup>1</sup> rather than Saul.

<sup>1</sup>Consider Paul's declaration in Galatians 3:28-29—"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendant, and heirs according to the promise." Yes, you read it correctly, in Christ we are Jews, yet we are not Jews. We are Gentiles, but not Gentiles. We are slaves, but not slaves. We are neither male nor female. We are one **εἰς** Christ, heirs to the promise given to Abraham.

1 Samuel 22:1-5 *David flees; people cling.* After David realized he was in deep doo-doo with Saul, he retreated to the kingdom of Gath. King Achish was nervous about this David who had killed the “tens of thousands.” So, David realized he was in no safe sanctuary and acted crazy<sup>2</sup> so King Achish of Gath wouldn’t “turn him in.”

So David left Gath, escaping to a cave called “Adullam’s cave.” When his brothers heard, and indeed the entire household heard, they joined him. The word spread and all those who were distressed, in debt, or discontented gathered around David. He became their leader, all four hundred or so of them.

From his base of operations, he solicited the assistance from the king of Moab where his great grandmother, Ruth, had been borne. “Would you let my mother and father stay with you until I learn what God has in store for me?” he asked. So, David left Jesse and Nitzevet<sup>3</sup> with the king, and they stayed with the king as long as David was in his stronghold at Adullam’s cave.

But there was a prophet in Gad who warned David—Get out of your “stronghold.” Go to your homeland, Judah. So, David left and sought safety in the forest of Hereth in Judah.

Q Why was the stronghold not so strong?

Q Who was attracted to this “enemy of Saul” who had retreated to Adullam’s cave?

Q Why was David concerned about Jesse and Nitzevet? To what extent was this a military decision, or concern about their safety?

### 1 SAMUEL 22:1-5

David left Gath and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and his father's household heard about it, they went down to him there.

<sup>2</sup>All those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him, and he became their leader. About four hundred men were with him.

<sup>3</sup>From there David went to Mizpah in Moab and said to the king of Moab, “Would you let my father and mother come and stay with you until I learn what God will do for me?” <sup>4</sup>So he left them with the king of Moab, and they stayed with him as long as David was in the stronghold.

<sup>5</sup>But the prophet Gad said to David, “Do not stay in the stronghold. Go into the land of Judah.” So David left and went to the forest of Hereth.

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<sup>2</sup>“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.”

Achish said to his servants, “Look at the man! He is insane! Why bring him to me? 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?” [1 Samuel 21:12-15]

<sup>3</sup>The Scriptures do not actually mention David’s mother’s name; “Nitzevet” comes from the Talmud.

1 Samuel 22:6-13. *David's 400 are discovered; Saul develops spiritual retinopathy. Saul learns the whereabouts of the 400. Ruling from a tamarisk tree at Gibeah, all his officials listened to his rant...*

*Listen up, all you sons of Benjamin! Will this son of Jesse give you fields? Will he give you vineyards? Will he make you commanders of thousands? Or even commanders of hundreds?*

*Is that why you've conspired against me? None of you informed me of the covenant my very son made with this son of Jesse. None of you really care about me, or even tells me that my very son has incited this so-called servant, this son of Jesse, to lie in wait for me, just like he does today!*

But good old Doeg, an Edomite, who was actually standing with Saul's officers during this tirade said...

*Look I saw the son of Jesse come to Ahimelech at Nob. Ahimelech reached out to the Lord God Yahweh for him; gave him food, and even Goliath's sword.*

Saul sent for priest Ahimelech, his father Ahitub and his whole family! When they arrived, the rant continued...

*Why have you conspired against me? You, and the son of Jesse are felonious traitors! You gave him bread, and a sword, and even reached out to God for him. Because of this, he has rebelled against me and is ready to attack, lying in wait, right now, today!*

- Q Why didn't Saul ever mentioned the name of the "son of Jesse?"
- Q How did Ahimelech speak of the Lord God Jehovah in comparison to Saul?
- Q About what was Saul accurate? Deluded?
- Q What was the cause of his delusion?
- Q Why was he especially upset with priest Ahimelech?

1 SAMUEL 22:6-13

Now Saul heard that David and his men had been discovered. And Saul, spear in hand, was seated under the tamarisk tree on the hill at Gibeah, with all his officials standing around him.

<sup>7</sup>Saul said to them, "Listen, men of Benjamin! Will the son of Jesse give all of you fields and vineyards? Will he make all of you commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds?"

<sup>8</sup>Is that why you have all conspired against me? No one tells me when my son makes a covenant with the son of Jesse. None of you is concerned about me or tells me that my son has incited my servant to lie in wait for me, as he does today."

<sup>9</sup>But Doeg the Edomite, who was standing with Saul's officials, said, "I saw the son of Jesse come to Ahimelech son of Ahitub at Nob. <sup>10</sup>Ahimelech inquired of the LORD for him; he also gave him provisions and the sword of Goliath the Philistine."

<sup>11</sup>Then the king sent for the priest Ahimelech son of Ahitub and his father's whole family, who were the priests at Nob, and they all came to the king. <sup>12</sup>Saul said, "Listen now, son of Ahitub."

"Yes, my lord," he answered.

<sup>13</sup>Saul said to him, "Why have you conspired against me, you and the son of Jesse, giving him bread and a sword and inquiring of God for him, so that he has rebelled against me and lies in wait for me, as he does today?"

Samuel 22:14-23. Ahimelech loses his life for the Truth—Saul doesn't care.

Defensively, Ahimelech answered...

*Who among all your officials is more loyal than David—the King's son-in-law, captain of the King's bodyguard, and so highly respected within your household?*

*And for the record, that wasn't the first time I inquired of God for him. Let not the King accuse your servant, or any of his family for that matter.*

King Saul was not impressed—he turned to his guards and ordered them to kill the priests of the Lord God Yahweh for they had taken sides with David. They knew he was running away from me, they didn't say squat.

Mutiny flooded the ranks—none of his guards were willing to raise a hand to even strike the priests of the Lord God Jehovah.

So, Saul turned to Doeg—"You do it." So Doeg the Edomite turned and struck them down; on that day he killed 85 men who wore the ephod. He also killed Nob, the town of the priests, with its women, men, children, infants and its cattle, donkeys and sheep.

One escaped this holocaust, however, Abiathar, son of Ahimelech. Ironically, he joined David and reported what had happened—Saul had killed the priests of the Lord God Almighty!

David was grieved and guilty. When I saw Doeg the Edomite there, I knew he would surely inform on us to Saul. *I am responsible for the death of your whole family. So, stay with me; don't be scared for the dude who is trying to kill you is trying to kill me as well. You'll be safe with me.*

Q Why was Ahimelech in political trouble with Saul?

Q Where did Doeg get the authority to act as a sovereign avenger on Nob, and all its priests and the entire population, including people and animals? What does this tell you about the one who gave the order?

Q Why was the *whole* town wiped out? Why not just the men & women and priests who were guilty of siding with David?

Q To what extent was David's guilt confession to Abiathar warranted?

## 1 SAMUEL 22:14-23

Ahimelech answered the king, "Who of all your servants is as loyal as David, the king's son-in-law, captain of your bodyguard and highly respected in your household? <sup>15</sup>Was that day the first time I inquired of God for him? Of course not! Let not the king accuse your servant or any of his father's family, for your servant knows nothing at all about this whole affair."

<sup>16</sup>But the king said, "You will surely die, Ahimelech, you and your father's whole family."

<sup>17</sup>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."

But the king's officials were not willing to raise a hand to strike the priests of the LORD.

<sup>18</sup>The king then ordered Doeg, "You turn and strike down the priests." So Doeg the Edomite turned and struck them down. That day he killed eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod. <sup>19</sup>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.

<sup>20</sup>But Abiathar, a son of Ahimelech son of Ahitub, escaped and fled to join David. <sup>21</sup>He told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD. <sup>22</sup>Then David said to Abiathar: "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 father's whole family. <sup>23</sup>Stay with me; don't be afraid; the man who is seeking your life is seeking mine also. You will be safe with me."

**22:1** *cave of Adullam.* See 2Sa 23:13; Ge 38:1; Jos 12:15; 15:35; 1Ch 11:15 and some believe Ps 142 was written while he was in this cave.

**22:2** *four hundred men were with him.* David, officially an outlaw, was joined by others in similar circumstances, so that he began to develop a power base populated by outlaws which would sustain him throughout his later years as king.

**22:3** *Mizpah in Moab.* Precise location unknown. *let my father and mother come and stay with you.* The king of Moab was a natural ally for David because Saul had warred against him (see 14:47) and David's own great-grandmother was a Moabitess (see Ruth 4:13,22).

**22:4** *stronghold.* Perhaps a specific fortress, but more likely a reference to a geographical area in which it was easy to hide (see 23:14; 2Sa 5:17; 23:14).

**22:5** *prophet Gad.* The king-designate is now served also by a prophet. Later a priest would come to him (v. 20) and complete the basic elements of a royal entourage—and they were all refugees from Saul's administration. This is the first appearance of the prophet who later assisted David in musical arrangements for the temple services (see 2Ch 29:25), wrote a history of David's reign (see 1Ch 29:29) and confronted David with the Lord's rebuke for his sin of numbering the Israelites (see 2Samuel 24:11-25).

*forest of Hereth.* Located in the tribal area of Judah.

**22:7** *men of Benjamin.* Saul, a Benjamite (9:1-2; 10:21), seeks to strengthen his position with his own officials by emphasizing tribal loyalty. David was from the tribe of Judah (see 16:1; 2Sa 2:4).

*give all of you fields and vineyards.* Saul does exactly what Samuel had warned him that he would do—become as the kings of other nations (see 8:14). His actions are contrary to the covenantal ideal for kingship (see notes on 8:7; 10:25). *commanders of thousands and of hundreds.* See 8:12.

**22:10** *Ahimelech inquired of the LORD for him. Nob.* A town northeast of Jerusalem and south of Gibeah where the tabernacle was relocated after the destruction of Shiloh (4:2-3; Jer 7:12). Although it appears that no attempt was made to bring the ark to this sanctuary (see note on 7:1), Ahimelech the high priest, 85 other priests (22:17-18), the ephod (v. 9) and the table of consecrated bread (v. 6) are mentioned in connection with it.

*Ahimelech the priest.* It appears from 22:10,15 that David's purpose in coming to Nob was to seek the Lord's guidance by means of the Urim and Thummim (see 2:28; Ex 28:30).

**22:17** *They knew he was fleeing.* How much the priests really knew is not clear. David himself had not told them (see 21:2-3,8).

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<sup>4</sup>Adapted, corrected, and revised by D. Thomas Porter from Compton's Interactive NIV © 1996.



**22:18** *linen ephod.* See 2:18.

**22:19** *put to the sword Nob.* Thus the prophecy of judgment against the house of Eli is fulfilled (see 2:31).

**22:20** *Abiathar . . . escaped and fled to join David.* See note above on v. 5. Abiathar brought the high priestly ephod with him (see 23:6) and subsequently "inquired of the LORD" for David (see 23:2; see also 23:4,9; 30:7-8; 2Sa 2:1; 5:19,23). He served as high priest until removed from office by David's son, Solomon, for participating in the rebellion of Adonijah (see 1Ki 2:26-27).

