

**Troubles are part of our training**

• Even our mistakes train us

• On the run

• David lies and eats Illegally!

• Laws about compassion and human need are more important than laws about ritual and ceremony

• Another lie

• Doeg

• David tells more lies to persuade Ahimelech to give him a sword

God allowed David to go through a lengthy period of agonizing trouble. Anyone who is going to be used by God can expect difficult days before he gets to the time when God uses him. The very troubles are part of our training. Sometimes we make many mistakes. But God 'overrules for good'<sup>1</sup> and eventually even our mistakes train us also.

At the stage of his life we are considering, David is going through a bad patch. He has run away. It is difficult to know whether he should have done that. Some commentators are highly critical of him. I know one thing. I would have done the same as David. I would have run for my life! But while David is running he often does things that are awful. We must sympathize with him. He has spent nights out in the open air. He is tired. He has no food. He is intensely anxious.

He arrives at a place called Nob, where Ahimelech the high priest lives. There is a sanctuary there. Immediately Ahimelech wants to know why David and his men ('those with him')<sup>1</sup> have come to Nob, unaccompanied by any army to attack the Philistines<sup>2</sup>. The truth is that David has suffered the loss of all things. But he does not want to admit it. David lies<sup>3</sup> and asks for food<sup>4</sup>. The only food available is the bread that was used inside the sanctuary at Nob<sup>5</sup>. The men eat it. Strictly speaking it was illegal! But Jesus used this very story to make a point about the Mosaic law. The Mosaic law can be divided into levels of importance, and it is a basic principle with Jesus that laws about compassion and human need are more important than laws about ritual and ceremony. The rules about not eating the 'holy bread' were just ceremonial regulations. When men are starving, laws about compassion are more important. The rules about ritual may be broken without fear.

Then he lies again. The priest asks whether his men are ceremonially pure. 'Oh yes!', says David. 'My men always keep themselves ritually pure when we are on this holy work of defeating the Philistines.' He is lying. He is not on a secret mission from Saul. His few companions are not looking for Philistines but running from Saul. But he will say anything to get some food! We must not be too hard on him. When Jesus referred to this time in David's life he did not have a word of criticism and spoke only of David's hunger<sup>1</sup> and his concern for his men<sup>2</sup>. He said not one word about any sin and only spoke of compassion!

While David is at Nob there is someone watching all that is going on. Doeg, a supporter of Saul, was watching<sup>1</sup>. It would have tragic consequences.

Then David tells more lies to persuade Ahimelech to give him a sword<sup>1</sup>. 'The king was so important and I was in such a hurry I had to leave my sword behind.' There was no king's business. It is strange that David accepts Goliath's sword. It had not done Goliath any good! And David himself was the one who said 'You come to me with a sword... but I come to you in the name of the Lord...'<sup>2</sup>. But now he is so distressed and half-crazed with panic he is in effect saying to Saul 'I am not coming to you in the name of the Lord; I am coming to you with a sword...'

<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:28

<sup>1</sup> Luke 6:3  
<sup>2</sup> 21:1  
<sup>3</sup> 21:2  
<sup>4</sup> 21:3  
<sup>5</sup> 21:4-6

<sup>1</sup> Mark 2:25  
<sup>2</sup> Mark 2:26b

<sup>1</sup> 21:7

<sup>1</sup> 21:8-9  
<sup>2</sup> 17:45

• *Feigns madness to avoid being treated as an enemy*

• *Hiding in caves*

**Why should David be put through such a severe test?**

1. *It would produce sympathy in David*

2. *It would teach David about grace*

3. *It would teach David about the marvellous deliverances of God*

In desperation he goes to Gath, one of the Philistine towns. Saul will certainly not want to come there! But he is immediately recognized and can think of nothing better than to feign madness so as not to be treated as a dangerous enemy of the Philistines<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 21:10-15

So he had to keep moving. He is reduced to an even lower expedient. There were many limestone caves in the region where he was seeking to escape Saul. The caves made good hiding places, and in one of them David found a place adequate to be a refuge and a temporary home<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 22:1

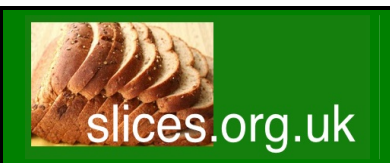
Why should David be put through such a time where he is at his wits' end, where he is pressurised into lies, where he acts in a way that brings scorn and disgrace upon himself? He had been promised a palace but all he has is a cave.

1. **It would produce sympathy in David.** It is easy to criticize others when one's life has been cushy and easy. But David would never be able to forget that he had had his patience and endurance tested to the limit.

2. **It would teach David about grace.** David would never forget that when he was full of sin and impatience, when he was lying to Ahimlech and disgracing himself before the enemies of God, that God did not abandon him. We have all known times when we have done things where, if God had entirely written us off, we would have not been in a position to complain. But God does not deal with us as our sins deserve. David would be more tender in dealing with people, after he had himself been dealt with so tenderly by God.

3. **It would teach David about the marvellous deliverances of God.** When David was at his worst and could find no help anywhere, he could only flee into a desert. There is one place there where he is not likely to be found immediately, the cave of Adullam. It was not a palace, but it was enough. When we are at our wits' end, when we have let God down badly, when we are turning to all sorts of desperate expedients to extricate ourselves from our troubles - God is likely to step in and provide a temporary rescue. God will not let us be tested beyond the level of what we can bear<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:13



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