

Siding with God's King is a Really Costly Thing

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Preacher: Graeme Shanks

[0 : 00] Well, thank you so much, Adi, for reading and Drew for leading and Gary for playing. Just been so helpful to build us up to the passage we're going to be looking at this evening.

So I encourage you to have that passage in 1 Samuel 22 open in front of you. And to track along as we go along this morning, because it's a passage that gives so much to teach us about what it means to follow God's anointed king.

And Drew's already prayed for us, so we'll just get stuck right in tonight. And I want to read to you something I was reading on the Internet this week, and it's a poem. And the poem goes like this. We are Christians in the path of Christ we tread. Take from me this word and note it well. Jesus is my Lord and he is the best of protectors.

Now let me put a number on the screen as we begin this evening, which will get us into the big theme of this passage. And the number up there is 3,000.

[1 : 01] Do you know what that number represents? It represents the number of Christians from around the world that it was estimated last year were killed specifically because they identified themselves with Jesus Christ.

3,000 people. Get your head around that. 3,000 people. And it's shocking. But what's even more shocking is the fact that apparently statistics would tell us that it's doubled since 2017.

Now if you've been following the news over the past few months, you may have seen Jeremy Hunt, the foreign secretary, take time to publicly recognize that shockingly high statistic. And he commented recently at an event hosted by Open Doors.

He said Britain can and must do more to respond to the plight of persecuted Christians around the world. So here's what we're going to see tonight in this passage.

There's a sobering truth that's right at the heart of 1 Samuel 22. And it's something like this. The truth is that siding with God's king is a really costly thing.

[2 : 09] Siding with God's king is a really costly thing. It's always been that way. And it always will be that way. But as we see this sobering truth that's right at the heart of this passage tonight, before we think this is all doom and gloom, there's a hugely comforting truth that's right at the heart of this passage as well.

And I think it's got massive amounts of things to teach us about what it means to follow God's anointed king. Now, as we've journeyed through this book of 1 Samuel, we've seen the rise of David, God's anointed, soon-to-be king.

And we've seen his rise and we've seen the decline of Saul, God's rejected but still-on-the-throne king. And we've seen the author present David to us almost as a kind of marmite king.

You've probably picked it up as we've gone through it. People are not really neutral to him. People either love him or they hate him as they respond to him and as they see the things that God is accomplishing through him.

So, while Saul rejects David and wants him dead, and we'll come back to see that in just a minute, others recognize David and they embrace him as God's chosen king. Now, we've seen it over the last few weeks, particularly we're presented with this character called Jonathan.

[3 : 32] The man who is the rightful heir to the throne of Israel and he's the man with the future of dreams ahead of him. And he recognizes, as he sees David in action, that he is God's chosen king and he stakes it all, his fortune, his family, and he stakes it all on David.

Now, we have to ask as we read about him there, we have to ask, why does he do that? Why does he do that? Well, because Jonathan doesn't just admire David. Jonathan, we see this all the way through, he loves David.

He loves him. And that's what inspires Jonathan's loyalty and devotion to David. And I guess, just as I've been reflecting on it this week, that's the thing that God's been challenging me on most as we've journeyed through this book together.

I don't know if this resonates with you, but this is where the challenge has come to me. The question has come to me, Graham, do you love God's anointed king, Jesus, in the same way that Jonathan does David?

It's been the question that's hit me straight, no pun intended, straight between the eyes, the stone that's hit me as we walk through this book. Do you love him like that? Do you love the Lord Jesus with your heart, soul, mind, and strength?

[4 : 49] Do you love him? Does he have your loyalty? Does he have your devotion? Because that's the relationship between Jonathan and David, isn't it? This is what Jonathan recognizes about David.

And flowing from that rightful recognition of Jesus and my love for him, am I willing to do what Jonathan did and stake it all in following Jesus? So that means saying no to comfort and yes to cross.

No to comfort and yes to cross. Now it's been the week, isn't it, as a society that we've celebrated love. Yeah? Husbands, boyfriends, wives, girlfriends. I hope you remembered the 14th, Thursday during the week there.

It's the week where we celebrated love as a society. Well, the thing is, my love for God's King, my love for Jesus will show itself, and not by the giving of a card, but it will show itself by the carrying of a cross.

That's what my love for Jesus will show itself as. As the challenge came to me this week, as I read about German pastor, theologian, and anti-Nazi dissident Dietrich Bonhoeffer, he said, when Christ calls a man, he calls him, come and die.

[5 : 56] Come and die. Because siding with God's King is a really costly thing. And Jonathan is a wonderful example of somebody who's counted the cost and responded rightly to God's anointed King.

And so last week as well, on top of Jonathan, we saw, and if you want to check it out there, chapter 22, verse 2, we saw this band of misfits who have somehow found their way to David.

Do you see it? The 400 people who've gathered to him. And they are described as the desperate, the debtors, and the discontent. See, even this author likes alliteration.

The desperate, the debtors, and the discontent. They are gathering to David, which I take it is the people in Israel who have been stung by the Saul regime.

They've been stung by the Saul regime. That is everyday people who have greatly suffered, who are experiencing the cost as a result of living under the poor choices of this King Saul.

[7 : 02] They're suffering. And I think if we're meant to identify with anyone in this book, really, it's meant to be these ordinary, everyday Israelites who are suffering because of a bad King. And these people, they've gathered, haven't they, to David.

Do you see as he's hiding in the cave at Adalem? They gather to him, presumably because, and this is fascinating, presumably because they see something so very different in David as God's anointed King.

And they see something so refreshingly different between him and Saul. Now again, I should, we're thinking through our New Testament lenses.

That should remind us of Jesus, shouldn't it? What was he described as? What was his nickname all the way through the New Testament? What's his nickname? The Friend of Sinners. The Friend of Sinners.

So we pick up the story at verse 6 of chapter 22. David's still on the run and having made his way to the forest of Hereth. And the first word we read at verse 6 is Saul.

[8 : 01] So here is Saul. He's back in action again. And Saul's determined to know. Now you say, know what? Well, he wants to know where David is. The last time he saw Saul speak was at verse 31 of chapter 20.

This is where he last appears. And he utters the defiant words to Jonathan because of his loyalty to David. He says, David must die. That's where we left Saul. He declared that. David must die.

And he quite literally made his point to Jonathan. He threw his spear at Jonathan. Saul said, he must die. And so Saul comes back into the narrative here at verse 6.

And it's very revealing. Do you see it? Of his mental state. What's he still got in his hand? His spear. He's still got his spear in his hand. When we last saw him, he had his spear in his hand. He threw it. What's he got now? He's still got his spear in his hand.

Revealing of his mental state at this point. But, do you follow with me in the narrative? Saul's luck is in. Because he receives news.

[9 : 04] This news that he's been dying to hear. Not only about David's whereabouts. Does he hear about. But he hears about these 400 people who have gathered around him. Now you've heard that expression, haven't you? To a man with a hammer, everything's a nail.

Yeah? Well, to the man with an enemy. Everything's a conspiracy. Presumably Saul hears this bit of news. And he thinks to himself that David's on the recruitment drive.

He's gathering for himself a little army. And he's planning on going a bit of William Wallace. Yeah? Guerrilla warfare. And he's going to attack me.

He's out to get me. This is what Saul's going on in his mind, I imagine. As he hears this news. And it's interesting as you contrast the two characters here. As you see Saul.

As you see the people that Saul has gathered around about him. So if David has welcomed people. Saul has rejected people. Do you see the little detail in the text at verse 7?

[10 : 04] When Saul turns to address his little group. His servants. He addresses the men. Not of Israel. But of Benjamin. So he's gathered around about him.

The people from his own tribe. These are the only people who he will trust. He's pushed everyone else away. And even to them. He begins to hurl at them accusations. About their lack of loyalty to him.

And about their lack of concern for him. He's hurling it at these people. And as you read it. I mean the man is throwing the pity party of all pity parties. Isn't he? The pity party of all pity parties.

What he's doing. He's desperately trying to emotionally secure. His men's allegiance. And so in light of all of that. And sensing a huge opportunity.

Verse 9. If you see it there. Enter stage left. It's your left isn't it? Enter stage left. Doeg. Now we're told that this man's an Edomite.

[11 : 08] And the author calls him that three times in these verses. To make sure that we get the point. That he's an Edomite. He's one of these people. This is what the author is telling us. One of these people.

Who don't worship the Lord. They worship the God of the nations. Round about him. He's one of these people. Who have proven to be. And who will consistently prove to be.

A constant thorn in the side of Israel. Doeg is one of these people. He's an Edomite. But Doeg. I think the thing to see. He's the man.

If you glance back to verse 7 of chapter 21. He's the man who has been in the background. And he's overheard David speaking with a Himalek the high priest.

So he's heard that. He's got that bit of information. That bit of juicy gossip. That bit of juicy news. If you like. I was trying to picture him this week. Like he's a member of the paparazzi. He's found himself in exactly the right places.

[12 : 05] At exactly the right time. And he's managed to get that photo. Of that celebrity. And when he sees it back. He realises that what he's got in his hand. Is absolute gold. I mean he's got the golden ticket.

Doeg. He's got it. He's got that information. That no one else has. But Saul wants. And he senses his moment is now. Because he hears Saul's distaste for David.

And he sees how delighted Saul is. When he learns of David's whereabouts. Verse 9. Hear him chip in. I saw him. Says Doeg.

I saw him. Jesse's son. Doesn't even give him the name David. Jesse's son. So what's going on here. Is that he is subtly playing into Saul's language. Saul never refers to him as David.

Does he? Jesse's son. Doeg is playing into this narrative. I saw him speaking with Ahimelech. I saw him speaking with the high priest. And what's more. I saw Ahimelech.

[13 : 00] In choir of the Lord for him. Which is an interesting little comment. Because if you look back at the conversation. Between David and Ahimelech. Ahimelech did no such thing.

He did no such thing. Again do you see what Doeg's doing? He's twisting. Subtly twisting the tale of events. Trying to win Saul's favour. And trying to tap into Saul's paranoid narrative.

For his advantage. And you've got to hand it to Doeg. Yeah. I mean as far as biblical baddies go. He is pretty crafty. He's up there. Cunning. Opportunistic. This is Doeg. And so when Saul hears that David has Goliath's sword. What he does is he puts two and two together.

And he gets 22. So he thinks David's on the run. He's gathered these 400 men. And he's got Goliath's sword in his hand. So he's after me. And that gives me the excuse.

[13 : 58] To go after him. And anybody who would associate with him. And if Saul's determined to know. Well Doeg's delighted to kill. And what follows next is absolutely brutal.

It's absolutely brutal. And I think we do well to slow down. And to remind ourselves. That the Bible is not a fable. This is not Hansel and Gretel.

This is not an allegory. This is real. Brutal. Biblical. History. And this shows us just how bad. It had gotten under. The Saul regime. How. Bad it had got for the everyday Israelite. How bad it had got for the nation.

That this king. Had totally taken his eye off the ball. And verse 11. Saul orders Ahimelech. And his whole family. Which means him. As well as the other priests.

[14 : 58] To be brought to him. And Saul refers to him. At verse 12. As the son of Atihub. Do you see? He doesn't even dignify him with his name. And Ahimelech.

No doubt. Trembling with fear. He not only pleads his innocence. But I think really interestingly. He gives a massively. Sorry. He gives a telling defense of David. And it's striking the way he describes David.

And it's a wonderful testimony here. Of who he knows David to be. And how David has come to be regarded in Israel. Because God's anointed king.

People speak very well of him. Again it should remind us of Jesus. He does all things well. People are speaking well here of David. Look at what Ahimelech says.

David. David. Do you mean your most faithful servant? David. Do you mean your son-in-law? David. Do you mean the man who's honoured.

[15 : 54] In your own house? Do you mean that David? Do you see? How it's a wonderful testimony. Of how David has come to be regarded. And yes Ahimelech's helped David.

But he didn't do it. Because he thought he was in on some kind of conspiracy. Against the king. These are totally innocent. Heart on sleeve comments from Ahimelech. And he's just stating the facts.

This is who I know David to be. This is who he is. And as Cat pointed out to me this week. As we studied this passage together. As a staff team. What a wonderfully brave thing for Ahimelech to do. He just tells it like it is. This is who I know David to be. This is who he is. In spite of all the opposition that's going to come his way. Of all the pressure.

Of all the accusations that are standing before him. Ahimelech just tells it like it is. And I think there's some wonderful lessons that we can learn for our evangelism.

[16 : 50] And we think about that this morning. Just being able to speak about Jesus to our friends. To give a testimony. To give an answer. Before those who would ask us about King Jesus.

And Ahimelech is a wonderful example. He doesn't twist it. He doesn't shirk it. He just tells it like it is. This is who I know David to be. But in Saul's mind as he hears this.

He only goes to reinforce his mindset. That everybody is in on this. Everybody is in on this. And anyone who associates with David. Anyone who speaks well of him. Anyone who sides with him must be killed.

And it's fascinating what happens next at verse 17. Because Saul gives his orders to his guards to slaughter the priests. But do you see how they just cannot bring themselves to do it? Presumably because they could see the utter foolishness and the cold-bloodedness of what Saul was asking them to do. I mean Saul this is the priests. This is the priests.

[17 : 57] These are the guys who perform the sacrifices to make us right with God. And you're wanting us to effectively try and wipe them out. If you think about it like that.

What is Saul asking? But I wonder if as well. And I'm slightly reading between the lines here. But you'd forgive me for that. As they hear what Ahimelech has to say about David.

I wonder if there's just part of him that sits there and thinks to themselves. Do you know what? We kind of agree. That's who we know David to be too. What crime has he committed?

What wrong has he done? And do you see how they can't even bring themselves to do it? I think it's another way of showing us that David is innocent. He's innocent of these crimes.

He's innocent of what Saul is thinking he's going to do. Again do you see the little bread comes dropped to Jesus. Jesus. Innocent. Free of accusation. Before Pilate. Before the Pharisees.

[18:58] Before the authorities. Innocent. But verse 18. If they won't do it. If they won't do it. I know someone who will.

Doeg will do it. Verse 18. And he absolutely butchers the priests. 85 people. Get your heads around that. Think about that. That's more than who are in this room tonight.

85 people. 85 people. And so good and opportunist is Doeg. That he senses that Saul is in no mood to stop him.

He senses that there's an even greater opportunity ahead of him to do some serious damage. And do you see how he goes so much further. So much further. Than Saul's original command to him.

And he intacts the entire city of the priests who are living in Nob. Along with everything and everyone else who is living there. And it's horrible reading isn't it? This is how bad it had got under Saul.

[19:58] And his kingship. As one commentator read this week put it. On that day Doeg proved himself to be a true Edomite. And I think here's where we need to maybe take a step back.

And we need to think about what's been described to us here. I mean it really is a massacre isn't it? What has been described to us here? Well what Doeg did on that day.

It echoes the judgments of God on the surrounding enemy nations. As a result of the rebellion against him. And as a result of their hostility towards his people.

This is how it's described. And when you view it like that. The utter tragedy is that Saul. The king of Israel. Do you remember the people we saw? The king who we saw right at the start.

The people had chosen him. He was the people's king. That's how much hatred he now has for God's anointed king. And so if you think about the Bible.

[20:57] Big picture. Like Pharaoh in the days of Moses. Like Jezebel in the days of Elijah. Like Herod in the days of Jesus. And like the Pharisees in the days of Jesus.

And like many more ever since. Even today. Saul's come to represent the face of the person who would stand to kill and hate God's king.

We do not want him as our king. I hate who he is. I hate what he stands for. And by extension. I hate everybody who identifies with him. Do you see the sobering lesson here in this chapter?

Siding with God's king. Is a really costly thing. It always has been. Always has been. And it always will be. And that's the sobering truth.

That's right at the heart of this passage this evening. But. In amongst all the bloodshed and brutality. There's an important truth. That if we blink.

[22:02] We will miss it. And the truth is. That this was not outside God's sovereign plan. Now. If you remember much earlier in 1st Samuel chapter 2.

There was a prophet that came to Eli with a terrible message. And the terrible message was to do with the judgment. That God was going to bring on the priesthood. As a result of their wickedness. And the rejection of the Lord.

Particularly that of Phineas and Hophni. Eli's sons. And this is what God said was going to happen. The only one of you. This is after God had brought his judgment.

The only one of you. Whom I shall not cut off from my altar. Shall be spared to weep his eyes out. To grieve his heart. And all the descendants of your house. Shall die.

By the sword of men. This is what God had said would happen. Because of their. Because of the priest's. Willful rejection of the Lord. This is what's going to happen. So what does that mean? Think about it.

[22:58] What does that mean? Well it means. That Doeg. Even though he had. No idea what was going on. And whilst remaining along with Saul.

Fully responsible for his actions. He was being used by God as an instrument. Through which God's judgment was brought to pass. On the priests of Israel.

And of course that's exactly what we see at the cross of Jesus. Isn't it? The Pharisees. The religious leaders. Pilate. The Romans. All fully responsible for the murder of Jesus.

Jesus. However what was really going on. Was that it was the will of the Lord to crush him. And there were our iniquities that he bore on the cross.

And behind the cross was the sovereign hand of God. That these. Mill mortals. Were carrying out his sovereign plan.

[23 : 58] And God also says in those verses. If you look at it there. That someone would be spared. There it is there. Someone would be spared.

And that's exactly what we read at verse 20. Back in chapter 22. Do you see how one guy escapes? One priest escapes. There's. Again. Do you see how good God is for his word? What he says will pass. Will come to pass. Abiathar. That's his name. Abiathar. Do you know what his name means? His name means my father remains. My father remains. And in light of everything that's happened. Everything that he's witnessed. The fact that a man with that name. Runs straight to David. To deliver this message. No doubt with tears in his eyes. And pain in his heart. The fact that a man with that name. Runs to David. Is deeply. Deeply. Moving. And again. So revealing of how. Well regarded.

[24 : 58] David is at this point in history. That the fact that Abiathar thinks. That's where I'm running. That's where I'm running. In fact. You could forgive him. If you think about it. In one respect. It's the one place. Given everything that he's seen and heard.

It's the one place. That we might think. That. In a way. Would be the one place. You'd run a million miles away from. Yeah. Don't associate yourself. With David. Because to side with him is a costly thing.

So why are you running to David? But he runs to David. He runs to David. Why? Well could it be that Abiathar too has recognized who David is?

And he realizes that somehow. Somehow. His life. Is safe with God's anointed king. His life is safe. Because his life has become bound up. With God's anointed king. And that's the safe place for Abiathar in his life. Not away from God's king.

[25 : 59] But by running to God's king. And Saul's determined to know. And Doeg's delighted to kill. While David's devoted to keep. Look at it here.

And this is where we come to the encouragement. And the great comfort for us this evening. I think. David responds to this news. That Abiathar brings him. And again. David puts two and two together. And he remembers the episode with Doeg. Back at chapter 21. He remembers that conversation. What does he say? I knew Doeg was there. I knew he was there. So he hears this news. About what's going on. Doeg is done. And it's at this point. Interestingly. That David pens Psalm 52. Thinking of Doeg.

He pens this Psalm. And check it out when you go home. It's a fascinating Psalm. Thinking of Doeg. Why do you boast of evil you mighty hero? Why do you boast of that? Do you hear it in his voice? Why do you boast all day long?

[26 : 56] You who are a disgrace. In the eyes of God. I wonder whether Doeg was boasting over the fact that he killed so many people. Then at verse 5.

Surely God will bring you down to everlasting ruin. He will snatch you up and pluck you from your tent. In other words. God will have the last word on your life and what you've done. And I think at the end of that Psalm.

We get a wonderful picture into David's heart. A little window into what's going on in his soul. He says. But I am like an olive tree. Psalm 55 at the end.

I am like an olive tree. Flourishing in the house of God. I trust in God's unfailing love. Forever. And ever. So there is the heart of God's anointed king there.

And in contrast to the lack of. Total lack of responsibility that we've seen Saul exercise over the past few weeks in this book. David takes responsibility for what's happened here.

[28 : 00] Not simply responsibility for the fact that because he was seen there with Ahimelech. This tragedy happened. But he takes responsibility for the person.

For the priest. Who's run to him for safety. And here is the great comfort for us in these verses. And for all. Maybe you're here tonight. And you're knowing that in your life at the minute.

You know and you feel the cost of associating and siding with God's anointed king. Here is the comfort. Verse 23. God's anointed king says to Abiathar.

Your life is safe with me. Your life is safe with me. Your life and my life.

They are now caught up together. And you're mine. And look at the promise that David makes to him right at the end of this chapter. Consider who this man is. Yeah.

[28 : 56] Abiathar. This man who's heartbroken. This man with nowhere else to go. This man with a target on his back. This man maybe even likely an orphan at this point. And he runs to God's king. And God's king says don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. I've got you. And your life. Is safe with me. And we cannot read those words.

Without thinking. Of the Lord Jesus. Can we? And what he said to his disciples. Is he's preparing them. For what life is going to be like without him.

And how life without him is going to be really hard. It's going to be really hard. They hated me. They will hate you. But at the end of John 16. This is what we get from Jesus.

I have told you these things. So that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart.

[30 : 01] Which is another way of saying. Don't be afraid. Why? Because I have overcome the world. So surely the message to the first readers of this passage.

And the message to the 21st century believer who reads this passage. Is that yes. Siding with God's anointed king is a really costly thing. It is.

It may cost you your reputation. It may cost you a career advancement. It may cost you a split in your family. It may even cost you your own life. But. With Jesus.

God's ultimate. Anointed. Crucified. Risen. And one day gloriously returning king. Friends we have an eternally safe and good place for our lives.

We are Christians. In the path of Christ we tread. Take from me this word and note it well. You see Jesus is my Lord.

[31 : 10] And he is the best of protectors. You know just as we close. That poem was something I found this week. It was written by a woman called Fatima. And Fatima was a young woman who was in her 20s.

And living in Saudi Arabia. And Fatima, devout Muslim. By God's grace became a Christian. And as with so many who convert in the Muslim world.

When they come to faith in Jesus Christ. When people got wind of it. The cost was incredibly, incredibly high. In fact, I was reading it this week. Fatima's brother was a member of the secret police.

And he noticed the change in her life. And so he started to investigate her. And one day when she left for the shop. He went upstairs. Turned to her computer. And he saw a host of Christian websites that she'd been on.

And so when she came home at dinner time. He confronted her. And he said, Fatima, are you a Christian? To which she replied, yes I am. And he said, because of what you said.

[32 : 17] You've got two hours before I'm going to kill you. So she went to her room. And she typed a poem on her computer. And she posted it online for the world to see.

And you can check it out. I'll give you the link after if you want. She posted it for all to see. And the last bit read this. We are Christians. In the path of Christ we tread. Take from me this word and note it well.

You see, Jesus is my Lord. And he is the best of protectors. Because siding with God's king is a really, really costly thing.

But Jesus Christ, God's ultimate anointed king. Says to all those who would count the cost of following him. He says, in this world you will have trouble.

I mean, there's no hiding of the small print there, is there from our king? You will have trouble. But take heart. Don't be afraid.

[33 : 22] Because I have overcome the world. Let me pray. And then we'll close our service. And maybe just use this. Maybe time of quiet reflection.

Just to offer your own prayers. To the Lord. In light of everything that we've thought about. This evening. Amen. And so, dear Father, we thank you for Jesus.

We thank you for the life and death of our king. And we ask that as we seek to follow him, I pray that you would help us to love him more than the things of the world.

And I pray for those here tonight who are feeling the heat of following him. And dear Father, I pray that you would give them boldness.

And you would give them courage. And that they would treasure the words of Jesus. As he speaks to them. Speaks to us. The one who died for us.

[34 : 32] Whoever lives to plead for us at your right hand. And who says to us, take heart. In other words, don't be afraid. For I have overcome the world.

And Lord, I pray that you would help us to fix our eyes on Jesus this week. Father, thank you that you love us so incredibly much. And I ask that you be with us this week by your spirit.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.