

# 1 Samuel 22:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the LORD; because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not shew it to me. But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the LORD.

## Analysis

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**And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the LORD; because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not shew it to me. But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the LORD.**

The soldiers' refusal represents remarkable moral courage. The Hebrew 'lo avu' (were not willing) indicates deliberate choice despite royal command. These 'footmen' (ratsim—runners, royal guards) risked everything by refusing. Their reasoning—unwillingness to 'fall upon the priests of the LORD'—shows reverence for God's servants trumped fear of the king. Saul's accusation (their hand is with David, they knew and didn't tell) distorts hospitality into conspiracy. The guards' disobedience echoes the Hebrew midwives defying Pharaoh (Exodus 1:17). When human authority commands what God forbids, faithful resistance becomes obedience to the higher King.

## Historical Context

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Royal guards typically executed without question. Their refusal to kill priests indicates the profound sanctity accorded to those who served at the altar. This act of conscience cost them royal favor but preserved their integrity before God.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

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1. When must civil disobedience become faithful obedience to God?
2. What does the soldiers' refusal teach about maintaining moral boundaries under immoral authority?

## Interlinear Text

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וַיֹּאמֶר	הַמֶּלֶךְ	לְרָצִים	הַנִּצָּבִים	עַל יוֹ	סָבוּ
said	And the king	unto the footmen	that stood	H5921	about him Turn
H559	H4428	H7323	H5324		H5437
וַיַּהַרְגוּ	בְּכֹהֲנֵי יְ	יְהוָה:	כִּי	גַם	יָדָם
and slay	the priests	of the LORD	H3588	H1571	because their hand
H4191	H3548	H3068			H5973
				H3027	
וְדָוִד	וְכִי	יָדְעוּ	כִּי	בָרַח	וְהָאֵל
also is with David	H3588	and because they knew	H3588	when he fled	H1931
H1732		H3045		H1272	H3808
וְלֹא	אָזְנָה	וְאֵל	אָבִי	עַבְדֵי יְ	
and did not shew	H853	H241	H3808	would	it to me But the servants
H1540			H14	H5650	
וְלֹא	לְשַׁלְּחָם	אֶת	יָדָם	לִפְגֹּעַ	בְּכֹהֲנֵי יְ
And the king	not put forth	H853	because their hand	to fall	the priests
H4428	H7971		H3027	H6293	H3548
יְהוָה:					
of the LORD					
H3068					

## Additional Cross-References

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**Exodus 1:17** (Kingdom): But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive.

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