**The Madman and the Monster**

In his book, Inside the Third Reich, Albert Speer indicated that Adolph Hitler became even more unstable toward the end. When it became apparent to everyone that Germany’s defeat was imminent, Hitler began calling in the mayors of the major German cities and issuing orders to destroy their own cities to leave nothing of value to the Allied victors; all the major roads, bridges and factories, were to be destroyed. According to Speer, those leaders feigned their usual allegiance to the man in his presence, but summarily ignored his orders as soon as they left the room. They knew the German people had to carry on with their lives after the war was over and demands to destroy their own infrastructure were the ravings of a madman.

In 1 Samuel 22, we find Saul, king of Israel, in a fit of paranoia, accusing his own officers of betraying him as he attempted to find and kill David out of jealousy, and the pursuit had become an obsession. The only man in the group prepared to offer any useful information was Saul’s chief shepherd, Doeg the Edomite. He had seen Ahimelech the priest providing bread and Goliath’s sword to David in the city of Nob. Ahimelech and the other priests of Nob were summoned.

When confronted, Ahimelech tried to convince Saul that David had led him to believe he was on a mission on behalf of the king (that he did). Saul was determined to see Ahimelech and the others as traitors and ordered the guards to strike them down. These Israelite soldiers found themselves under orders of the king to kill the priests of Jehovah God. They refused.

Saul had an opportunistic monster on staff who was willing to act as his henchman regardless of how despicable the task. Doeg the Edomite gladly stepped forward and murdered all eighty-five of the priests who were present. He then proceeded to destroy every man, woman, child, infant and animal in the city of Nob, all to appease the wrath of and gain the favor of a raving madman.

Few of us are likely ever to find ourselves in a dilemma as drastic as the guards in Saul’s army. Nonetheless we find ourselves obligated to submit to legitimate human authority: Civil government (Romans 13), parents (Ephesians 6:1), supervisors (Ephesians 6:5) to name a few. Most of the direction provided by these authorities is wholesome and good, but as long as humans are involved, there is always the risk that a secular requirement will stand in conflict with God’s will. In those cases, we, like the apostles, must stand firmly on one guiding principle: We must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

**John McKee**

**West Murray church of Christ**