

I Samuel Lesson 23

I Samuel Chapter 23

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Memory verses for this week: *Zec 4:10 For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.*

Introduction: We continue our study on Samuel this week. In last week's lesson, we studied about David gathering a group of men in the cave of Adullam. Saul called up the high priests and questions Ahimelech about whether he helped David. Ahimelech answers King Saul truthfully and tells him that while he did help David, he thought there was none more highly esteemed by the King. Saul has both Ahimelech and all the other priests destroyed plus many of those living in the city of Nob.

I. David Saves Keilah out of the Hands of the Philistines

1 Sam 23:1 Then they told David, saying, Behold, the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshingfloors.

1 Sam 23:2 Therefore David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the LORD said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah.

Keilah was a town in the plain about eight miles northwest of Hebron. The Philistines were robbing the people of their newly harvested and threshed grain. Some men come and report to David what is happening. David wanted to go and help, but showed wisdom in first inquiring of the Lord as to whether he should go or not. So many times when we want to do some great thing, we move forward quickly without ever consulting God. If it is important, always know that waiting on the Lord and asking His advice is the smartest thing a man or woman can do.

Prov 3:1 My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:

Prov 3:2 For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

Prov 3:3 Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:

Prov 3:4 So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

Prov 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

Prov 3:6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

David takes time to inquire of God, and God directs him to go and to smite the Philistines and save the people of Keilah.

1 Sam 23:3 And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?

1 Sam 23:4 Then David inquired of the LORD yet again. And the LORD answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah: for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand.

1 Sam 23:5 So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.

Some of David's men feared the Philistines, and did not think it wise for them to go up and to attack them. God had given David orders to go, and they should have had the faith to go forth. David goes again to the Lord and asks if they should really go. God again assures David that he will give him the victory over the Philistines. The men follow David this time and they go down and won a great victory. They smote the Philistines with a great slaughter and brought their cattle back with them.

II. Saul Prepares to Capture David

1 Sam 23:6 And it came to pass, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David to Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand.

Abiathar was Ahimelech's son, making him the eleventh high priest in succession from Aaron. Abiathar had escaped when Doeg the Edomite had slew his father and 85 other priests. In last week's lesson, we closed with Abiathar coming to David in the cave of Adullam. It says he fled now to the town of Keilah and came to David with an ephod in his hand. An ephod was a priestly garment.

1 Sam 23:7 And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars.

1 Sam 23:8 And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men.

1 Sam 23:9 And David knew that Saul secretly practiced mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod.

When Saul learned that David was in the town of Keilah, he mobilized his forces

to go and trap David in the walled town. Even though King Saul was far from the Lord at this time, he says in verse 7 that God had delivered David into his hand. We need to stay close to the Lord and be sure that the feelings we have are truly from God. There are many spirits in the world, but we are warned to try the spirits, whether they be of God or not.

1 John 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

1 John 4:2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

1 John 4:3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

David hears of Saul's plans and immediately inquires of God as to whether Saul would come up or not. He tells Abiathar to bring the ephod to him.

III. David Calls on the Lord for Instructions

1 Sam 23:10 Then said David, O LORD God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake.

1 Sam 23:11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O LORD God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the LORD said, He will come down.

David knew that God was omniscient... meaning that he is all knowing. He knew that God would know exactly what Saul would do. God knows our hearts too and knows what we will do. We may have the best of intentions, but we may not come through for someone when they need our help. But God knows even our weaknesses and what we will and will not truly do. David asks God whether the men of Keilah would deliver him up to Saul in verse 12.

1 Sam 23:12 Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the LORD said, They will deliver thee up.

1 Sam 23:13 Then David and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah; and he forbore to go forth.

You would think after a man and his followers came to your rescue, that you would be loyal to him and protect him from one who means him harm. God tells him that King Saul would definitely come down, and warns David that the men of Keilah would turn him over to Saul. David leaves Keilah, and Saul then changes his plan. While it is difficult to not find fault in these men, we must realize that King Saul had been mad about taking David. He has just killed all 86 of the priests of Nob and destroyed many innocent women and children.

They surely knew about this, and to help David would bring the King's wrath down on them. It says when David left the town, he now had 600 men with him. Success has a tendency to draw others to the one with the success, and David was a special man truly blessed of God.

Matthew Henry pointed out that David inquired of God twice to seek wisdom from the Lord.

His queries upon the case are likewise very particular. God allows us to be so in our addresses to him: "Lord, direct me in this matter, about which I am now at a loss." He does indeed invert the due order of his queries, but God in his answer puts him into method. That question should have been put first, and was first answered, "Will Saul come down, as thy servant has heard?" "Yea," says the oracle, "he will come down; he has resolved it, is preparing for it, and will do it, unless he hear that thou hast quitted the town." "Well, but if he do come down will the men of Keilah stand by me in holding the city against him, or will they open to him the gates, and deliver me into his hand?" If he had asked the men (the magistrates or elders) of Keilah themselves what they would do in that case, they could not have told him, not knowing their own minds, nor what they should do when it came to the trial, much less which way the superior vote of their council would carry it; or they might have told him they would protect him, and yet afterwards have betrayed him; but God could tell him infallibly:

"When Saul besieges their city, and demands of them that they surrender thee into his hands, how fond soever they now seem of thee, as their Saviour, they will deliver thee up rather than stand the shock of Saul's fury." Note, [1.] God knows all men better than they know themselves, knows their length, their strength, what is in them, and what they will do if they come into such and such circumstances. [2.] He therefore knows not only what *will* be, but what *would* be if it were not prevented; and therefore knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and how to render to every man according to his works.

1 Sam 23:14 And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand.

1 Sam 23:15 And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood.

David takes his men and they remove from Keilah to a forested wilderness in Ziph. This was approximately four miles southeast of Hebron. Day after day, Saul came seeking David, but God protected him and did not allow Saul or his men to find David.

I don't know what it would be like to have someone tracking me each day hoping to put me to death. It had to be hard on David. But you know, David didn't give up. He looked to God, and sought strength from the Almighty in his trying days.

Some of the greatest songs and Psalms David ever penned came during this time of his life.

Charles Spurgeon spoke of this in one of his sermons back in 1872.

“Thy statutes,” said David, “have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.” Brother! there hath no sorrow befallen thee but what thy noble ancestors have celebrated in cheery tones, and set to music in cheerful strains. Oh, beloved! if you could forget the statutes, can you ever fail to remember the songs? There has never been a revival in the church that has not witnessed to the value of our psalmody. God be praised for our psalms and spiritual songs. Oh, how often they have made melody in our

(V18) Charles Spurgeon

hearts to the Lord! While our voices blend, do not our very souls become more and more richly cemented? They are, in truth, the pilgrim’s solace.

Oh to be able to look beyond our problems of the day and to lift up our voices to God in praise. We should praise him in the good times, but also praise him in the down times. David penned how we should Praise the Lord in Psalms 107:8-9.

Psa 107:8 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

Psa 107:9 For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

IV. Jonathan Finds David

1 Sam 23:16 And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God.

1 Sam 23:17 And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth.

1 Sam 23:18 And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.

Is it not strange that Saul and all his men could not find David, but Jonathan could. You can tell by verse 16 that God allowed him to find David so that he might strengthen him in his time of need. Jonathan knew that David would soon be the king of Israel. And I believe Saul knew that too, and that is why he hounded and searched to destroy David so vigorously. These two men make a covenant before the Lord. We’re not told what this was, but you can be sure that they meant what they said and stood by their word. Jonathan tells David that Saul knows that he will soon be the king over Israel.

V. The Ziphites Turn Against David

1 Sam 23:19 Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon?

1 Sam 23:20 Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down; and our part shall be to deliver him into the king's hand.

The Ziphites send word to Saul that they know David's location and will help him to capture David. These men were simply trying to survive also. Saul was capable of totally destroying them if he had knowledge that they might be hiding David near to them. Saul blesses them in verse 21 and says that the people have had compassion on him.

1 Sam 23:21 And Saul said, Blessed be ye of the LORD; for ye have compassion on me.

1 Sam 23:22 Go, I pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his place where his haunt is, and who hath seen him there: for it is told me that he dealeth very subtly.

1 Sam 23:23 See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hideth himself, and come ye again to me with the certainty, and I will go with you: and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah.

King Saul instructs the men to find out exactly where David is located and come and bring him the information as to where he was hiding. He plans to come and take David if he has to search throughout the whole land of Judah.

1 Sam 23:24 And they arose, and went to Ziph before Saul: but David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the plain on the south of Jeshimon.

1 Sam 23:25 Saul also and his men went to seek him. And they told David: wherefore he came down into a rock, and abode in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard that, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon.

1 Sam 23:26 And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them.

Saul arrives with his men to Ziph and quickly catches up with David. No doubt David was pretty much hopeless at this point in escaping Saul's army, but God again is with him. David goes down the other side of the mountain as Saul and his men come up the other side in hot pursuit. It says in verse 26 that Saul and his men compassed David and it appeared there was no way he could get away.

VI. A Message Arrives to Saul

1 Sam 23:27 But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land.

1 Sam 23:28 Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines: therefore they called that place Selahammahlekoth.

1 Sam 23:29 And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at Engedi.

Do you think God can provide a way of escape for his chosen people? Just as Saul is about to take David and his men, a messenger arrives telling Saul that the Philistines are invading the land of the Israelites. Do you think God had a hand in stirring up the Philistines to attack. I have no doubt about it. Bible says that the heart of the king is in God's hand and he can turn it whichever way he chooses. He did this in the time of Ezra with the king of Assyria.

Ezra 6:22 And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the LORD had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

As Saul returns home, David and his men slip away and hide in the strong holds of Engedi.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.

