

1 Samuel 23
February 26, 2023

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Our text today opens with David learning that “the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and looting the threshing floors.” David sought the Lord to see if he should go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah. The Lord tells him yes, but it raises a question for us to consider.

Q: I’m going to guess that most of us, if not all of us, prefer to avoid confrontations. How many of us actually pray to the Lord to find out if we should at least enter into a conversation to make a stand for God’s principles and truths – even if it’s uncomfortable? It’s so easy to watch these “fights” from the sidelines through the news. How do you approach these situations? Have you ever felt God leading you to speak up for Him, knowing full well you’d be uncomfortable? [Let people engage]

Transition: David is still in his “wilderness.” David must have had great patience to be able to endure daily danger and persecution! David models well what we should do when we are faced with conflict, which is to seek the Lord. And as we will see, sometimes God tells us to enter the conflict with His help, and sometimes the Lord will tell us no! Let’s read the text.

BOOK:

David Saves Keilah

23 When David was told, “Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are looting the threshing floors,” ² he inquired of the LORD, saying, “Shall I go and attack these Philistines?”

The LORD answered him, “Go, attack the Philistines and save Keilah.”

³ But David’s men said to him, “Here in Judah we are afraid. How much more, then, if we go to Keilah against the Philistine forces!”

⁴ Once again David inquired of the LORD, and the LORD answered him, “Go down to Keilah, for I am going to give the Philistines into your hand.” ⁵ So David and his men went to Keilah, fought the Philistines, and carried off their livestock. He inflicted heavy losses on the Philistines and saved the people of Keilah. ⁶ (Now Abiathar, son of Ahimelech, had brought the ephod down with him when he fled to David at Keilah.)

Saul Pursues David

⁷ Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah, and he said, “God has handed him over to me, for David has imprisoned himself by entering a town with gates and bars.” ⁸ And Saul called up all his forces for battle, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men.

⁹ When David learned that Saul was plotting against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring the ephod.” ¹⁰ David said, “O LORD, God of Israel, your servant has heard definitely that Saul plans to come to Keilah and destroy the town on account of me. ¹¹ Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me to him? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? O LORD, God of Israel, tell your servant.”

And the LORD said, “He will.”

¹² Again David asked, “Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me and my men to Saul?”
And the LORD said, “They will.”

¹³ So David and his men, about six hundred in number, left Keilah and kept moving from place to place. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he did not go there.

¹⁴ David stayed in the desert strongholds and in the hills of the Desert of Ziph. Day after day Saul searched for him, but God did not give David into his hands.

¹⁵ While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. ¹⁶ And Saul’s son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God. ¹⁷ “Don’t be afraid,” he said. “My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this.” ¹⁸ The two of them made a covenant before the LORD. Then Jonathan went home, but David remained at Horesh.

¹⁹ The Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah and said, “Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hakilah, south of Jeshimon?” ²⁰ Now, O king, come down whenever it pleases you to do so, and we will be responsible for handing him over to the king.”

²¹ Saul replied, “The LORD bless you for your concern for me. ²² Go and make further preparation. Find out where David usually goes and who has seen him there. They tell me he is very crafty. ²³ Find out about all the hiding places he uses and come back to me with definite information. Then I will go with you; if he is in the area, I will track him down among all the clans of Judah.”

²⁴ So they set out and went to Ziph ahead of Saul. Now David and his men were in the Desert of Maon, in the Arabah south of Jeshimon. ²⁵ Saul and his men began the search, and when David was told about it, he went down to the rock and stayed in the Desert of Maon. When Saul heard this, he went into the Desert of Maon in pursuit of David.

²⁶ Saul was going along one side of the mountain, and David and his men were on the other side, hurrying to get away from Saul. As Saul and his forces were closing in on David and his men to capture them, ²⁷ a messenger came to Saul, saying, “Come quickly! The Philistines are raiding the land.” ²⁸ Then Saul broke off his pursuit of David and went to meet the Philistines. That is why they call this place Sela Hammahlekoth. (means rock of parting) ²⁹ And David went up from there and lived in the strongholds of En Gedi.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

It was important that David live, for it was he who would deliver Israel, establish the kingdom in glory, and become the father of Christ in the flesh (Rom. 1:3). Satan used Saul to seek to kill David, but God was too strong for the enemy. As long as David sought the mind of the Lord, God gave him protection and victory.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (1 Sam 23)*. Victor Books.

II. God Guarded David's Life (23)

It was important that David live, for it was he who would deliver Israel, establish the kingdom in glory, and become the father of Christ in the flesh (Rom. 1:3). Satan used Saul to seek to kill David, but God was too strong for the enemy. As long as David sought the mind of the Lord, God gave him protection and victory.

A. Victory at Keilah (vv. 1–13).

The Philistines were David's enemy and the enemy of Israel, so it was right for him to fight them. When the child of God is in the will of God, he may expect the help of God. So intense was Saul's hatred that he did not thank God for David's victory, but instead came to fight the victor himself. And the men of Keilah did not protect their deliverer; rather, they tried to turn him over to Saul! How wicked is the human heart untouched by the grace of God!

B. Victory in the wilderness (vv. 14–18).

What patience David had, to be able to endure daily danger and persecution! He was a master strategist and could have tricked Saul into defeat, but he preferred to wait for God to give the victory. How moving it was when Jonathan met him in the wilderness (at the risk of his own life) to reassure him and encourage him. Sad to say, Jonathan was never allowed to reign with David, for he was slain in battle with his father. The righteous often suffer because of the sins of others.

C. Victory over the Ziphites (vv. 19–29).

Ziph was in Judah and its inhabitants should have been loyal to David; but instead they betrayed their rightful king to Saul. Read Ps. 54 for David's prayer to God for deliverance. The rock stood between David and Saul (23:26), just as the cloud stood between Israel and the Egyptians. It seemed that Saul would finally capture his man, but an invasion from the Philistines forced Saul to return home. Certainly, God is in control of circumstances and delivers His own at the right time.

Merrill, E. H. (1985). *1 Samuel*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 451) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

23:1–18. While in flight from Saul, **David** did more than remain in hiding. He also fought on behalf of his beleaguered people against the ever-menacing **Philistines**. First, having consulted **the LORD** by means of the ephod's sacred lots (v. 2; cf. v. 6), he delivered the town of **Keilah**, near the Philistine border, 15 miles southwest of Bethlehem (vv. 1–5). But the people "repaid" his kindness by betraying him to **Saul** (vv. 7–12). So he withdrew with **600** men, who remained faithful to him (v. 13; cf. 27:2; 30:9; 2 Sam. 15:18), **to the Desert of Ziph** (1 Sam. 23:14), a desolate hilly and wooded area between Hebron and the Dead Sea. He was joined there (**at**

Horesh in the desert) briefly by **Jonathan**, who again confirmed the legitimacy of David's kingship (vv. 16–18).

23:19–29. **The Ziphites** also betrayed **David** to **Saul** (vv. 19–23). **David** became aware of this (vv. 22–25), so he escaped to **the Desert of Maon**, 10 miles southeast of Hebron. **Saul** pursued him there, but was temporarily called back to defend Israel against another Philistine raid (vv. 27–28). That gave David opportunity to go to **En Gedi** (v. 29), an oasis 10 miles north of Masada on the Dead Sea.

Philbeck, B. F. (1972). 1 Samuel. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher's Bible Commentary (pp. 175-176). Broadman and Holman Publishers.

David Narrowly Escapes Capture (1 Sam. 23:1–29)

The passage—Although David was immensely popular in many sections, he by no means commanded the loyalty of the whole country. This chapter gives but two of many instances in which Israelites would have been willing to turn him and his men over to Saul's forces.

The first incident occurred at Keilah, a small walled town just south of Adullam. The people there had reason to feel indebted to David since he had used his fledgling army to relieve a Philistine siege of the city. Nevertheless, the people admitted such fear of Saul that they would surrender David and his men to the king if they were called on to do so. Recognizing that the safety of his small band lay in the employment of different tactics, David abandoned the false security of the city walls and fled to the Wilderness of Ziph. There he could hide his men and use the guerrilla tactics which suited them best.

David's sojourn in Ziph brought him an unexpected dividend as Jonathan came forward to renew their covenant of friendship. Actually, the two seem to have agreed to form a coalition government in which David would be the chief and Jonathan would be his second in command (v. 17). In any case, David was not without friends in high places.

In other areas, however, David had an ample supply of enemies. The Ziphites betrayed his position to Saul, and, except for divine providence, he would have been captured. Later generations pointed to a particular rocky hillside where Saul abandoned his search on one side while David was hiding on the other (v. 28).

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (1 Samuel 23). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.