

Session 10 David's Courage and Resolve at Keilah (1 Sam. 23; Ps. 54)

I. DAVID FLED TO KEILAH, ZIPH, AND MOAN (1 SAM. 23)

- A. David had recently experienced great fear in Gath followed by the trauma of the massacre at Nob, and despair in Adullam. Overcome with fear in Gath (Ps. 34), he escaped to Adullam and faced his despair (Ps. 57 and 142), also struggling there with shame after the events in Nob (Ps. 52).
- B. In Psalm 142, he wrote that “sorrow overwhelms me (v. 3), nobody understands me or cares about me (v. 4), I feel very low as my enemies are stronger than me (v. 6), and my soul is in a prison (v. 7).
- C. In Psalm 57, David wrote, “My soul is among men who are like devouring lions (v. 4), they have prepared a net to trap me so that I fail (v. 6), but my heart is steadfast, O God (v. 7).
- D. As we put these four psalms together, we get a picture of how David felt just before Keilah. Now David is described as rising up with boldness and tenacity to fight Philistines. How did he do this?

II. DAVID RESCUES KEILAH (1 SAM. 23:1-5)

- A. I cannot imagine how such a young man could have the resolve to engage in a war against the Philistines to defend a city of Israel having recently been in great fear and despair, feeling alone, and under the pressures of leading 600 distressed and discontent men.
¹They told David, saying, “Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and they are robbing the threshing floors.” ²Therefore David inquired of the LORD, saying, “Shall I go and attack these Philistines?” And the LORD said to David, “Go and attack the Philistines, and save Keilah.” ³But David’s men said to him, “Look, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?” ⁴Then David inquired of the LORD once again. The LORD answered him and said, “Arise, go down to Keilah. For I will deliver the Philistines into your hand.” ⁵And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines, struck them with a mighty blow, and took away their livestock. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah. (1 Sam 23:1-5)
- B. **Keilah:** Keilah was a fortified city in the territory of Judah, that is, a city with a military presence and fortress. After the enemy captured a fortified city, the villages in the area would be easily captured. David returned to Judah in response to a prophetic word given by the prophet Gad (22:5).
- C. **Inquired of the Lord:** There are nine times where David is described as *inquiring of the Lord* regarding what to do in a specific way (1 Sam. 23:2, 4, 11-12; 30:8-9; 2 Sam. 2:1-2; 5:19, 23; 21:1).
- D. **Shall I go and attack?:** This is a remarkable question for David to ask after all that he had recently been through. He could easily have said, “Let them take care of it. I have had a really hard few months.” However, David found a fresh expression and a fresh release of the power of God.

- E. He could have reasoned that it is not his responsibility to save Keilah. The king of Israel was responsible. However, David was determined to do what he could do to help. Saul had been neglecting the public safety of Judah because he was preoccupied with pursuing David.
- F. **Go and attack:** The Lord led David to attack. Sometimes the greatest solution that God gives us in the midst of the despair and depression is to get more deeply involved in God’s purposes and go on the attack by helping people in the kingdom of God. Our natural tendency is to draw back to lick our wounds or to hide away and forget other people’s crisis.
- G. **Afraid:** David’s men were afraid in Judah because they felt vulnerable to being attacked by Saul, thinking, “If we go to Keilah to fight the Philistines, then we will be surrounded with the Philistines on one side of us with Saul attacking from the other side.” However, they stayed there in order to obey the prophetic directive to go to Judah (22:5).
1. They were afraid, but the Lord would not let them leave Judah to seek refuge in Moab, Gath, or another city (22:5). God would not let them live in the comfort zone outside of His will.
 2. The Lord knew that Keilah in Judah would bring more trouble to David. Yet He commanded David to go there to experience His power, protection, and provision in the midst of trouble.
 3. David might have said, “Lord, I do not need more trouble. I need healing right now.” The Lord knew that, as long as David focused on himself, he would never be equipped to be a great warrior king after God’s own heart, so He commanded David to go to Keilah.
- H. **Mighty blow:** We may see God’s power in our life in big and small ways when we least expect it. When I have not felt strong or like reaching out in ministry, the Lord released His power in me.
- I. **Leadership lesson:** Our healing is partially found in getting out of the comfort zone to face the enemies of God and help others with their troubles. Some of you are now in the shame or despair of Nob, Gath, or Adullam. The Lord is telling you to rise up and embrace the purpose of the Lord. Do not get overly introspective or draw back, but arise, attack, and find the Lord in midst of this.

III. THE LORD DIRECTED DAVID TO LEAVE KEILAH TO ESCAPE SAUL (1 SAM. 23:6-13)

- A. Saul misinterpreted David going to Keilah to mean that God delivered David into his hands. So Saul called all the people to go to Keilah to besiege the city. The Philistines were attacking Keilah, yet Saul wanted to attack David, for he did not care about the Philistines or Keilah.

⁷Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah. So Saul said, “God has delivered him into my hand, for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars.” ⁸Then Saul called all the people together for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men. ⁹When David knew that Saul plotted evil against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring the ephod here.” ¹⁰Then David said, “O LORD God...¹¹will Saul come down, as Your servant has heard?...The LORD said, “He will come down.” ¹²Then David said, “Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?” And the LORD said, “They will deliver you.” ¹³So David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah and went wherever they could go. Then it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah; so he halted the expedition. (1 Sam 23:7-13)

- B. David asked if the city he just saved would betray him and turn him over to Saul. They had heard about the massacre at Nob, so they were afraid of Saul, not wanting to risk their families being killed by Saul.

IV. DAVID FLED TO THE WILDERNESS OF ZIPH (1 SAM. 23:14-23)

- A. David hid in the forest in the Wilderness of Ziph in the territory of Judah (23:14-15). The uncultivated wilderness here included a forest with mountains, along with some desert conditions. Saul was relentless in daily pursuing David to kill him, but God wouldn’t deliver David to him.

¹⁴And David stayed in strongholds in the wilderness, and remained in the mountains in the Wilderness of Ziph. Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand.

¹⁵David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. And David was in the Wilderness of Ziph in a forest. (1 Sam. 23:14-15)

- B. David and Jonathan met for the last time in Ziph (23:16-18). They reaffirmed their covenant.

¹⁶Jonathan, Saul’s son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God.

¹⁷And he said to him, “Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Even my father Saul knows that.” ¹⁸So the two of them made a covenant...David stayed in the woods, and Jonathan went to his own house.

(1 Sam. 23:16-18)

- C. The men from Ziph offered to help Saul (23:19-23). Saul had been chasing David for many months, and it was getting very expensive. They were looking for Saul reward them.

¹⁹The Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, “Is David not hiding with us in strongholds in the woods, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? ²⁰Now therefore, O king, come down...and our part shall be to deliver him into the king’s hand.” ²¹Saul said, “Blessed are you of the LORD, for you have compassion on me. ²²Please go and find out for sure, and see the place where his hideout is...I am told he is very crafty. ²³See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hides; and come back to me with certainty, and I will go with you.

And it shall be, if he is in the land, that I will search for him throughout all the clans of Judah.” (1 Sam. 23:19-23)

V. DAVID FLED TO THE WILDERNESS OF MOAN (1 SAM. 23:24-29)

- A. Saul’s army of 3,000 men encircled David and his men, trapping them (23:24-26).

²⁴So 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. ²⁵When Saul and his men went to seek him, they told David. Therefore he went down to the rock, and stayed in the Wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard that, he pursued David in the Wilderness of Maon. ²⁶Then Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain. So David made haste to get away from Saul, for Saul and his men were encircling David and his men to take them.

(1 Sam. 23:24-26)

- B. God distracted Saul with the Philistines (23:27-29).

²⁷A messenger came to Saul saying, "Hurry and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land!"

²⁸Therefore Saul returned from pursuing David, and went against the Philistines; so they called that place the Rock of Escape. ²⁹David went up from there and dwelt in strongholds at En Gedi. (1 Sam. 23:27-29)

VI. PSALM 54: VICTORY OVER THE ENEMY

- A. The superscription for Psalm 54: "A contemplation of David when the Ziphites went and said to Saul, "Is David not hiding with us?" These were the ones who helped Saul against David. Their decision to stand for Saul and against David defined their city and affected their future.
- B. We see what David was thinking and feeling in the midst of his conflict and pressures with Saul.
- C. David's prayer for deliverance from his enemy, Saul (54:1-3): David was being falsely accused, so he asked the Lord to vindicate him, set the record straight, and not let the lies about him prevail.
- ¹Save me, O God, by Your name, and vindicate me by Your strength...³For strangers have risen up against me, and oppressors have sought after my life; they have not set God before them. (Ps. 54:1-3)
1. **Your name:** David was interacting with a real Person, not just a mechanical, saving power. God's name speaks of His personality, power, and attributes. By meditating on God's name and declaring it over our situation, we are calling Him into the situation.
 2. **Opressors:** The oppressors who sought David at Ziph were Saul's 3,000 soldiers.
 3. **Not set God before them:** These men had not set God before their eyes. In other words, they did not fear the Lord. They feared Saul much more than they feared the Lord. David understood that their zeal to destroy him was rooted in the reward that they might receive from Saul. Ultimately the issue was about their lack of relationship with the Lord, not about how bad David was or how much they hated him. David saw them not just as men who were betraying him, but also as men who did not have a relationship with or history in God.
- D. David looked to God as his helper or source (54:4-5). This insight changes how we carry our heart. One plus God is a majority. David found his champion in the Lord. He did not see Saul, the Ziphites, or the men of Keilah as his source of safety or blessing. This kept him free from bitterness.
- ⁴Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is with those who uphold my life. ⁵He will repay my enemies for their evil. Cut them off in Your truth. (Ps. 54:4-5)
- E. David set his heart to praise God instead of yielding to condemnation, fear, or complaint (54:6-7).
- ⁶I will freely sacrifice to You; I will praise Your name, O LORD, for it is good. ⁷For He has delivered me out of all trouble; and my eye has seen its desire upon my enemies. (Ps. 54:6-7)
- F. **For it is good:** It is good to set our heart to praise or thank God for who He is, what He has done for us, and what He will yet do. This realigns our heart and causes us to set our eyes on Him instead of being preoccupied with how hard things are, or what we lack, or what we are waiting for.