

1st Samuel Ch 23

As we approach ch 23 of the book of 1st Samuel we're still in this span of David's life that proves to be quite unpleasant and no doubt uncomfortable for him and yet hindsight shows us, or gives us the benefit of seeing that it's a necessary time in David's life whereby God is developing in him a heart and a character that could be developed (really) no other way. David finds himself on the run from king Saul being treated like a criminal and a fugitive and he's escaping anyway he can seeking refuge in the wilderness and in the caves that are out there because Saul is out to get him.

But God is dealing with David's heart in these times of despair and despondency, teaching him that his true refuge lies not in the shadows of those caves, but in the shadows of His Heavenly Father's wings. God is his *refuge* and his *stronghold*, his *rock*, and his *hiding place*, it's in God that he's learning to place his trust, and it's in these times that he's being transformed from a shepherd boy into a king, a man after God's own heart.

In Ch 22 David acquires a band of 400 men who were in distress, in debt, and discontented and he becomes captain over them, and we saw in that a picture of you and me, the down trodden and distressed people of this world, having a sin debt we could never pay retreat to the Son of David, the Greater than David Jesus Christ and He becomes the captain of our souls, of our salvation.

Ch 22 also contains within it one of the greatest atrocities of Saul's life whereby he had 85 men, (of the priesthood of Israel) slaughtered, and along with them the city of Nob, the city of the priests including men women children and even the animals because he was so enraged and paranoid of anyone's association with David. But one of the priests managed to escape, his name; Abiathar. And he fled to David, and David repented of his deceit which had caused the slaughter of the priests and encouraged Abiathar in vs 23 (of Ch 22, read).

Vs1

Now you recall that the prophet Gad had come to David and told David to get out of the stronghold and go to the land of Judah. Now David didn't know why the Lord would instruct him in that direction, for all intents and purposes it was much safer for David to remain right where he was no one could touch him, but then again he wasn't any good to anyone else where he was either. But now that David has responded in obedience, it begins to become clear to him why the Lord was moving him down toward Judah and that's because the Philistines are beginning to attack the inhabitants of Keilah, which was a city there in Judah. And we read here that they were robbing the threshing floors, now the threshing floors was where they would thresh the wheat (or process the wheat) so that the grain might be separated from the chaff, and so the point is that the Philistines were robbing their crops, their livelihood, months of labor brought to nothing because of the oppression of the enemy.

Now this is interesting to me because this is an Israelite city that's come under attack, why didn't they call upon King Saul? He's the king, it's his responsibility (legally), perhaps they did bring it to Saul's attention, but he was too busy pursuing David to worry about the people of Keilah. Maybe they didn't even bother with Saul because they knew that he wouldn't concern himself with their affairs, we don't know but the call goes out to David, we need your help.

And the question is, what would you do in a situation like this? Someone calls needs your help they're crying out to you to come and save me from this circumstance, this situation of oppression.

Some people would just be like, "Hey, this isn't my problem, you need to get a hold of Saul because this is his responsibility." Others might take on the situation like, "If there's anyway I can help, count me in, doesn't matter if it's my business or not." But the fact is, that both of those scenarios are wrong, we err to assume one direction or the other watch what David does.

Vs2

These are the earmarks of a godly leader, so many of us make decisions now and inquire of the Lord later, (that is if it goes south and we find ourselves in trouble). But David doesn't assess the situation in his own understand and simply presume upon the Lord, but rather he "inquires" of the Lord saying, "Should I go and attack these Philistines?" I mean, the call has gone out, the request for help has come, it seems like the right thing to do but it's pretty risky and people could get hurt, so "Lord what do you want me to do?" Now David was a seasoned soldier, had fought in several battles, but what we're seeing here is humility, he doesn't rely upon the power of his own might and military strategy, he seeks the heart of God on the matter. And in this he shows something else that we do well to have when it comes to our approach to God and that is an open heart and an open mind, and a surrendered will that's willing to receive God's direction.

Many times we already have our minds made up of what direction we want to take, but so as to appease our conscience we come to the Lord and we lay it out before the Lord, but we're not really "inquiring" of the Lord, we're asking for a rubber stamp of approval in order to do what we already want to do. But David's heart was one that said, "God, I don't have any preconceived notions in this deal, I'll be submitted to your will no matter what it is." And as you and I inquire of the Lord for direction in life it's absolutely essential that we be open to God's "Yes" and just as open to God's "No" because, "God I just want to do your will." David Guzik said concerning this issue, "Often times we never hear the will of God because we've decided already what it is before we ever really seek Him." But such was not the case with David, he's was open, ready and willing to submit to the direction of God for his life no matter how that might correlate with his own will or desire.

But God told David to go and attack the Philistines and to save Keilah.

Vs3-4

Prov 24:6 says, “*For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, And in a multitude of counselors there is safety.*” Now what we’re seeing here is that these 400 men that have assembled under David aren’t the mighty men of valor that they’ll eventually come to be known as. Right now they’re a bunch of scaredy cats that think David’s crazy for even considering something like this. “As if we’re not already fugitives, as if Saul’s not already hunting us dogs, now you want to go and expose ourselves in a walled city taking on the Philistines on top of it all! As if we weren’t scarred enough; lets go jump in a big rat trap and snare ourselves.” Now understand that it wasn’t wrong for them to voice their opinion, it’s important that David understand how they stood on the issue, what’s critical is that once they make their position known, what’s David going to do with that? And again there are 2 reactions that David could’ve had and both of them would have been wrong. He could’ve said, “Wow, I didn’t know you guys felt that way, and if that’s the way you feel, then we won’t do it.” And he could’ve been swayed by the popular opinion of the people and fallen into the system of democracy, the majority vote rules. But then again on the other hand he could’ve been, “Hey, it doesn’t matter what you guys think, I’m the captain of this army and if I say we’re going, we’re going!” And he could’ve completely disregarded what they had to say and the way they felt, accused them of not being men of faith or what have you.

But perhaps the Lord was placing him in check through these men, and wanted to do something different and was using these guys to alter David’s plans. So what do you do? You inquire again of the Lord, notice that. David inquired again of the Lord in vs 4, and not only did the Lord confirm His word to David, (which by the way the Lord will always do that if we need it, God will confirm His direction for your life) but He also added a promise to it. God told David, “Go to Keilah” (the confirmed word) “For I will deliver the Philistines into your hands” the promise of victory. It’s always wise to consider the input of those around you, but ultimately you have to be obedient to the direction you believe God is leading you in.

Vs5

So David inquires of the Lord, gets God’s direction, gets God’s direction confirmed, he begins to move in God’s will for his life, and God brings about great victory for David in manifold ways. #1 He saved the people of Keilah, and #2 the Lord used this as a means to provide for David and his men, David was always running low on supplies during his days in the wilderness, trying to provide for 4-600 men or so, and here David not only destroyed the enemies of Israel, but took away their livestock. The bible says, “*The wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.*” Prov 13:22 And here the Lord provided for David and his men through the livestock and the wealth of the Philistines.

Vs 6

Now this just sort of seems thrown in here, but there's a number of things to be gleaned here, 1st of all now that Abiathar is on the scene we now have in the mix of David's company a prophet (Gad who would come to David from time and again, we saw him in the last Ch) a priest, (Abiathar) and a King (David) and these are the 3 key ingredients that God will use in the establishing of His Kingdom concerning Israel. A prophet, a priest, and a king, and no one of these guys could function in the office of the other, but they were all a foreshadowing of the fulfillment that we have in Jesus Christ He's the only Man who can rightfully fulfill all 3 offices in and of Himself, He is our Prophet, our Great High Priest, and the King of Kings.

But this also gives us a little insight as to how David inquired of the Lord, if you've noticed we haven't read up to this point where David inquired of the Lord since he began his days of exile. But now that Abiathar has come to David with the ephod he's inquired twice of the Lord, and this will be a regular thing for David from this point on. The point being that the ephod was a part of the garments of the priesthood of the OT, now the regular priests would wear the standard white ephod (and the ephod was much like a butchers apron, because the priests did a lot of bloody work with the sacrifices and all and the ephod would sort of act like a butchers apron keeping them from getting their robes all bloody.) But the high priest wore a special blue ephod, and there was something very special attached to the ephod of the high priest known as the breastplate of judgment. And it attached to the ephod by means of a couple of gold chains, it was the length of a span, and the width of a span, and inset on to the front of this breastplate was 3 rows of 4 stones, precious stones (12 altogether) and inscribed on each of the stones was the names of the children of Israel. And it was a powerful picture whereby the Lord was saying to the priest that whenever he went in before the Lord to minister to the Lord that he had to have the people that he was over (or ministering on the behalf) of on his heart.

But inside this breastplate were what was called the Urim, and the Thummim. Now what exactly those were we don't know, literally it means "Lights, and Perfections" but most people believe that they were perhaps a white and a black stone.

And it would be that when one would inquire of the Lord, they would ask questions in a "yes" or "no" format and when the priest would reach into the breastplate, if the white stone came out, the answer was yes, if the black stone came out, the answer was no. Now there may be a portion of you that are thinking, "How goofy is that?" This is how we determine the will of God, as if it's the magic 8-ball of the OT, you just ask a question shake it up and wait for the answer to pop up? But then again there's another portion of you who are thinking, "Man, what I wouldn't give for a set of those rocks. Because I would love to be able to simply ask God a yes or no question, reach into my pocket and know the will of God." But that's no doubt why God shaded what they were, because if they were described in detail, you could go to every local Christian bookstore and placed strategically in a certain section would be a whole rack, or wall of different companies Urim and Thummim products for you to buy to take home and use to seek the will of God.

But here's the fact, if you know Jesus Christ God has given you a way superior to the Urim and the Thummim to aid you in determining God's will. #1 You have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling with in you so that your conscience is convicted with a "No" when you begin to get outside of the will of God for you, and give you a peace that's according to His Word when you're with in God's will for your life. And I don't believe that there was anything "magical" about these items, one of the keys of their effectiveness was that God had given them instructions in His Word for the use of them, so that when they were using them they were in reality being obedient to the Word of God and God always honors our obedience. And this is such a key, so many people wrestle with the will of God for their lives, but they're being disobedient to what's clearly instructed of them for their lives. And don't you think that before God begins to unveil to you His plans for you life, that aren't clearly marked out for you in His Word, that He would have us to be obedient to that which He's already said?

How many times are we in direct disobedience to God's written Word in a certain area of our lives and yet we're seeking God to reveal to us His will. And God's like, "Why should I reveal My will for your life that's not written, when you're not even doing what I've already told you to do?" You see David wasn't inquiring of God concerning something that was already revealed in His Word, "Should I really keep the 3rd commandment, can I take your name in vain from time to time?" David was fulfilling the general will of God as already revealed to the best of his ability, and then trusted that God would lead him in His *specific* will for his life.

And so the ephod came to David through the coming of Abiathar the priest and David was able to inquire of the Lord and ascertain God's will for his life. But there's something else to pull (briefly) out of this and that is that it's not enough to inquire of God's will, or even to know God's will, we have to have a commitment to *obey* God's will, even when the odds seem stacked against you. As soon as David was sure of God's will, he did it, even though it seemed risky, he trusted in the Lord, and God honored David's devotion.

Vs7-8

Now this is interesting, David fears God, inquires of the Lord so that he might know God's will, and here's Saul who doesn't fear God, doesn't inquire of God, but thinks he knows God's will. He hears that David's down in that city incased by its walls and he says, "Praise the Lord, God's given him into my hands." Once again being completely out to lunch, not understanding the heart of God. And I find it interesting that when the Philistines were attacking the city Saul didn't waste his time defending it, but when David was there he assembled a whole army to go there a take him out.

Vs9-12

Boy isn't this the way that it so often goes, those whom you help, those whom you defend, those whom you aid so often turn their backs on you, and seek to somehow hurt you. But to a degree I can sort of understand where the people of Keilah are coming from, they were no doubt terrified having heard what happened to the priests at Nob and didn't want to be wiped out being identified with David. And the Lord provided for David and his men through this event, and so even though men are turning their backs on David, the Lord is taking care of him, and He'll do the same for you. He tells David you better get out of here because these guys are going to hand you over.

Vs13-14

Man, Saul is just relentless isn't he, never gives up, is constantly pursuing David, Peter tells us, "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*" 1 Peter 5:8 He's always after you, never gives up, continually pursues you, "But God" notice that, "But God did not deliver him into his hand." Saul is seeking to destroy David's life, but God is in control, Satan is after you day after day after day, but greater is He who is in you than he that is of the world.

Vs15-18

and This is the last time that's recorded for us that David would ever see Jonathon alive, I find it interesting that Saul couldn't find David, but Jonathon went right to him, God is just keeping him hedged about from his enemies. But I like this phrase in vs 16 he, "Strengthened his hand in God" these are the kind of friends that we need to have around us. Not guys or gals that are going to sympathize with us and cater to our flesh, but those who will strengthen us in *the Lord*. Who will remind us to trust in the Lord with all our heart, and lean not on our own understanding, "Yeah, I know things look pretty bleak right now, but trust in the Lord. He's going to see you through." This is the type of guy Jonathon was, he didn't go out there just cry with David and say, "I can't believe my dad's out to get you, and you're stuck out here in this wilderness, this is awful, what a horrible thing, how can you even be surviving." He didn't *sympathize* with David, he *strengthened* David in God, He said, "God's got a plan for your life David, you just hang tough because He's going to see you through and nothing can stop it." And he said, "Even my dad knows you're going to be the king" and yet Saul resisted it so emphatically, how often we know the will and the ways of God in a given situation and yet we resist it and wrestle against it.

Vs19-22

Again Saul is just showing his deranged character here, "Blessed are you of the Lord." Again what's the lesson? Don't be fooled by people who have the spiritual lingo down, just because someone *talks* like a Christian, that doesn't mean that they *walk* like a Christian. Saul had the talk down, but he didn't have a heart set upon the Lord, or that desired to please the Lord, he wore the mask, honored God with his mouth, and drew near to Him with his lips, but the fact is his heart was far from Him.

Vs23-26

David is staying just one step ahead of Saul, and now he's up against the ropes and destruction seems evident, David is cornered.

Vs27-29

Finally, what's the lesson? God will make a way when there is no way. God's providential hand of protection upon David, until God's through with you, you have nothing to worry about. So many times God takes us to the edge like this, why? So we'll freak out? No, so that when deliverance comes we're careful to give Him the glory. God wants to show Himself real to you, and strong on your behalf but in order for that to happen we're going to have to be in a position where only He can do the work, and then only He can get the glory, and may we always give to Him because He alone is worthy.