

## 38. The Book of 1 Samuel—23:1-13

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### *“Absolute Dependence Upon God”*

(2/28/16)

Paul the apostle said in Romans 15:4—

#### **Romans 15:4 (NKJV)**

<sup>4</sup> For whatever things were written before [O.T.] were written for our learning...

There is so much we can learn from the O.T. that will help us live for God that it's a shame when Christians think the Old Testament Scriptures are outdated, irrelevant and therefore don't read them.

When I read the O.T.—I like to read it as a 'detective' looking for hidden treasures (principles) placed in the text by the Holy Spirit that will be a value to me in my walk with and service for the Lord.

Some of these principles are buried deep in the text and need extra effort and study to dig them out (the reward far outweighs the effort)—and other principles (like in our passage this morning) are laying right on the surface for us to easily gather up.

As we study our passage today the one principle I see standing out more than anything else is how David didn't make a move without first consulting God for His will in the situation.

A few years later David's own son Solomon would write something that has become invaluable to me in my walk with God—something he may have learned from his father—

**Proverbs 3:5-6 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; <sup>6</sup> In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

The secret of the Christian life is learning to be more and more God dependent and less and less self-dependent.

Many Christians start out with a kind of negative Proverbs 3:5-6 approach to life—

*“I will trust in myself with all my heart—I will lean on my own understanding. In every decision I face I will let my desires guide me—and self direct me in the path I take.”*

For some believers it takes an entire life of mistakes and bad decisions before they learn to get it right.

Okay, let’s jump into our passage this morning and see how all of this worked its way out in David’s life.

## **I. The First Test David Faced—v.1-5**

### **A. The Background**

**1 Samuel 23:1 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Then they told David, saying, "Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and they are robbing the threshing floors

Less than three miles south of the cave of Adullam was the city of Keilah.

It was a 'fortified' city v.7 tells us (a strong wall was built around it) and was located in a rich, agriculturally productive area in the region of Judah.

It was early summer which meant it was the time of either the wheat and/or barley harvest and because Keilah was relatively isolated from the other cities in the area and only twelve miles from Gath (one of the major Philistine cities)—the Philistines felt it would be easy pickings and so they attacked it trying to steal its harvest.

## **B. David inquires of the Lord**

**1 Samuel 23:2 (NKJV)**

**<sup>2</sup> Therefore 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."**

*That* David inquired of the Lord is clear—*how* David inquired of the Lord is not.

This is before Abiathar (the new High Priest) went down and joined himself to David with the ephod in his hand (v.6).

One of the common ways to discern the will of God in the O.T. was to cast lots. (Explain)

David could have used this method to figure out what God wanted him to do in this situation—but I highly doubt it.

It appears that David simply prayed and God spoke to his heart (v.2)

I believe that because, at this time, the six hundred men that had joined themselves to David weren't very spiritually mature it seems—why do I say that?

I say that because when David told them what God had said (what He had spoken to David's heart)—they weren't sure that God had really spoken to David and therefore confident that they *would* defeat the Philistines—who were a pretty formidable group of fighting men—

**1 Samuel 23:3 (NKJV)**

**<sup>3</sup> But 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?"**

I don't want to be too hard on David's men—from a practical standpoint this seemed like a crazy thing to do.

1. *David only had six hundred men with "thin resumes and bad credit reports" (1 Samuel 22:2)—not exactly a regular army.*
2. *David and his guys already had King Saul and his army hot on their tails—they didn't need to add trouble with the Philistines.*
3. *This would bring David and his men from their hiding place out into the open and alert King Saul as to their whereabouts.*

Needless to say this seemed like a *'fool's errand'* and a very dangerous course of action.

Now David was humble enough to inquire of the Lord again concerning this to make sure he had really heard from the Lord—

**1 Samuel 23:4 (NKJV)**

**<sup>4</sup> Then David inquired of the LORD once again. And the LORD answered him and said, "Arise, go down to Keilah. For I will deliver the Philistines into your hand."**

The reason I believe that David simply prayed and God spoke to his heart and didn't cast lots to determine God's will in this was because the "I" in the Hebrew is emphatic "I will absolutely deliver the Philistines into your hand"—and you can't get that from casting lots.

**1 Samuel 23:5 (NKJV)**

**<sup>5</sup> And 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.**

Here in this section we see David beginning to act like a king (saving God's people from their enemies)—whereas Saul is ignoring his responsibilities as king (protecting the people of Israel from their enemies) choosing rather to spend all of his time and energy on trying to kill David his rival.

Therefore in this passage David becomes a type of Christ (a savior); and Saul becomes a type of Satan (a destroyer).

Because of his love for the people and his desire to obey God David was willing to put himself in harm's way to save the people of Keilah—just like the Son of David, Jesus Christ, did for all of humanity—not just putting Himself in harm's way but becoming a living sacrifice for all of us. (Explain)

So David passed the first test of his leadership with flying colors.

## **II. The Second Test David Faced—v.6-13**

**1 Samuel 23:6-8 (NKJV)**

**<sup>6</sup> Now it happened, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, *that* he went down *with* an ephod in his hand. <sup>7</sup> And Saul 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." <sup>8</sup> Then Saul called all the people together for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men.**

It never ceases to amaze me how completely contrary to God's will someone can be and still be so self-deceived so as to think He is on their side leading and blessing their life—here Saul fits that to a tee. (Comment)

### A. David inquires of the Lord

**1 Samuel 23:9 (NKJV)**

**<sup>9</sup> When David knew that Saul plotted evil against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod here."**

This was the **ephod** that Abiathar's father, Ahimelech the High Priest, had worn—Ahimelech was killed by Saul for helping David.

The *ephod* consisted of two beautifully woven panels, one to cover the High Priest's front torso and the other his back—both joined together by two straps that the High Priest put his head through and wore the ephod like a vest.

Connected to the ephod was a smaller piece of beautifully woven linen that was folded over to make a six inch by six inch square sealed on three sides and attached to the front panel of the ephod.

This smaller 'pouch' was called the *breastplate* into which were placed the Urim and Thumim. (Explain)

Since the ephod and breastplate were connected sometimes it was just referred to as the 'ephod'.

**1 Samuel 23:9-12 (NKJV)**

**<sup>9</sup> When David knew that Saul plotted evil against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod here." <sup>10</sup> Then David said, "O LORD God of Israel, Your servant has certainly heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah to destroy the city for my sake.**

**<sup>11</sup> Will the men of Keilah deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as Your servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant." And the LORD said, "He will come down." <sup>12</sup> Then 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*."**

I would like to tell you that those you make the greatest sacrifices for will be the most loyal to you—but that's not always the case.

Here, David had risked his own life and the lives of his men to save the people of Keilah—yet they would have turned him over to Saul if given the chance to save themselves.

When it comes to ministry I have seen this many times—those that you sacrifice the most for are often the ones that will ‘throw you under the bus’ and side with your enemies against you.

*So why help people at all*—because God commands us to—even to the point of “*loving our enemies*”.

And the way you keep from getting cynical in ministry—the way you keep from getting bitter and resentful against those who turn on you—always do it for Jesus. (Elaborate)

## **B. David responds accordingly**

**1 Samuel 23:13 (NKJV)**

**<sup>13</sup> So 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.**

Once again, I think the key verses for this passage is Prov.3:5-6—

**Proverbs 3:5-6 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; <sup>6</sup> In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

The first condition for receiving God's guidance is that we *learn God's truth*—(Proverbs 3:1-4)

The will of God is revealed in the Word of God—and therefore the only way to know His will is to study His Word.

*"It isn't enough for believers to carry the Bible in their hands—they must let the Holy Spirit write it on their hearts"* (2 Cor. 3:1–3)

By spending time in God's Word we learn God's heart and how faithful He is in keeping His Word to those who put their trust in Him—this builds trust in us with regard to His character and wisdom.

The reason many Christians don't want to trust God with every area of their life is because they really don't know Him.

And the reason they don't know Him is because they don't spend very much time with Him.

Listen, you're not going to trust someone with the important matters of your life if you don't know them very well.

The first step in receiving God's guidance is to know God's goodness—by studying His Word!



## **1. Trust in the Lord with all your heart**

→ John Payton missionary to the New Hebrides story

Have you put “*all your weight*” on Jesus?

## **2. Do not lean on your own understanding**

God is so much wiser than I am—I understand that in principle but often deny it in practice.

God is so much wiser than me for a lot of reasons—one of them is because He can see the ‘big picture’—I can’t.

Peter said that one of our problems is we only see what is near and not that which is a far off.  
(2Peter 1:9)

I only have limited information of the situation—but that never seems to stop me from making decisions based on my limited understanding—decisions that I often make without prayer and God’s guidance.

This often has devastating results in my life.

How much better to seek God and not lean on my own understanding when making important life decisions?

How much better to lean on the wisdom of the One who said,

*“I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.” (Jer.29:11)*

**Proverbs 28:26 (NKJV)**

<sup>26</sup> He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But whoever walks wisely will be delivered.

**Jeremiah 10:23 (NKJV)**

<sup>23</sup> O LORD, I know the way of man *is* not in himself; *It is* not in man who walks to direct his own steps.

**Hosea 10:13 (NKJV)**

<sup>13</sup> You have plowed wickedness; You have reaped iniquity. You have eaten the fruit of lies, Because you trusted in your own way, In the multitude of your mighty men.

**Proverbs 14:12 (NKJV)**

<sup>12</sup> There is a way *that seems* right to a man, But its end *is* the way of death.

*1. Trust in the Lord with all your heart*

*2. Do not lean on your own understanding*

**3. In all your ways acknowledge Him**

The Hebrew word translated ‘**acknowledge**’ appears over 800 times in the O.T. and primarily means “*to know*”—as in knowing someone relationally—but not superficially.

The word is used of a relationship that is deep and intimate—which is why it is often used of a man ‘*knowing his wife*’ and she conceiving and bearing a child.

And so with that in mind what is Solomon admonishing us when he says—“**in all your ways acknowledge Him**”?

He is saying that when it comes to the “ways” of your life—or in other words when it comes to making important life decisions about which way you should go in a given situation—

Make sure you are in a deep personal relationship with God (that you’re saved and in close fellowship with Him) and that, whatever it is you’re planning on doing, it is consistent with your knowledge of God, His character and His will as revealed in His Word.

If anything you’re planning on doing violates what God has said in His Word about Himself and His will for our lives—it is not the direction He wants you to take and therefore—don’t go there!

Now if you’re faithful in doing your part of this conditional promise—if you:

- 1. Trust in the Lord with all your heart*
- 2. Do not lean on your own understanding*
- 3. In all your ways acknowledge Him*

**Then** the Lord will fulfill His part of this promise and **He will direct your path.**

**Psalm 37:23 (NKJV)**

<sup>23</sup> The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way.

A “**good man**” implies a man or woman who is saved and living in obedience to what God has revealed in His Word.

One author said,

*“The Christian who purposes to live in harmony with God's moral commands will experience God's guidance in a special way because they will have—the heart of the Father, the mind of Christ and ears to hear what the Spirit is saying.”*

The Christian life in a nut shell is learning to stop trying to be the god of your life and start surrendering control to the only true and living God—the Lord Jesus Christ (and the rest of the Trinity of course).

When evangelist John Wilbur Chapman was in London in the late 19th century, he had an opportunity to meet General Booth (founder of the Salvation Army), who at that time was past eighty years of age.

Dr. Chapman listened reverently as the old general spoke of the trials and conflicts he had faced and the victories he had seen in his many years of serving the Lord.

John Chapman then asked the general if he would disclose his secret for success.

*“He hesitated a second,” Dr. Chapman said, and I saw the tears come into his eyes and steal down his cheeks, and then he said, “I will tell you the secret. God has had all there was of me. There have been men with greater brains than I, men with greater opportunities; but from the day I got the poor of London on my heart, and a vision of what Jesus Christ could do with the poor of London, I made up my mind that God would have all of William Booth there was. And if there is anything of power in the Salvation Army today, it is because God has all the adoration of my heart, all the power of my will, and all the influence of my life.””*

Dr. Chapman said he went away from that meeting with General Booth knowing, *“that the greatness of a man's power is the measure of his surrender.”*

You have two choices in how to live your life—you can act like a little god and live a self-centered and self-willed life.

*Or you can get off the throne of your life, invite Jesus Christ to sit down, and surrender control of your life to Him.*

And this goes for Christians as well—

Stop trying to control God and surrender to His control.

Remember, absolute surrender means absolute blessings and maximum effectiveness for the Lord.