

## 39. The Book of 1 Samuel—23:14-29

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### *“Between Promise and Fulfillment”*

(3/6/16)

As we have been following the life of David we have seen him start off as a simple shepherd boy, the youngest son of Jesse, and a relative nobody.

We were first introduced to David when God sent the prophet Samuel to Bethlehem, to the house of Jesse, to anoint this young shepherd to be the next king of Israel because of Saul’s continual disobedience to the commands of God.

Then we saw how God used David to kill Goliath, the nine and a half foot Philistine giant, which catapulted David into instant fame among the people of Israel.

Saul then made David one of his commanding officers and David and his men experienced one victory after another over the Philistines until a new song became popular among the Jewish people—*“Saul has killed his thousands but David his ten thousands.”*

At this point Saul became so jealous of David that he purposed to kill him and remove him as a threat to his reign.

This then began a ten year period where David was a fugitive running for his life and hiding in caves in the wilderness.

This is where we pick the story up this morning with David and his men on the run from Saul and his army (six hundred men eventually joined themselves to David).

The title of this morning's message is: *"Between Promise and Fulfillment"*.

What I want you to keep in mind is that from the time God makes a promise, like He promised David he would someday be king—between the time God makes a promise and the day He fulfills that promise—there is often a time of waiting and testing—why? We'll see why in a moment.

Let's go ahead and look at the text and then we'll come back to this truth.

## **I. The Relentlessness of Saul**

### **1 Samuel 23:14-15 (NKJV)**

<sup>14</sup> **And 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.**

<sup>15</sup> **So David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. And David *was* in the Wilderness of Ziph in a forest.**

This was not an easy time in David's life.

Saul was constantly and relentlessly pursuing after him.

He was a fugitive with a bounty on his head which meant that everywhere he hid he had to sleep with one eye open.

But it was during this time that God was molding David into a king and a man of faith (something Saul was not).

It was also during this time that David wrote many of the Psalms that have blessed us as God's people during difficult times—as someone has said, *"For every sigh there is a psalm."*

As we said last time—here Saul becomes a type of Satan, and Satan never takes a break or a vacation—he is relentless in his pursuit of the children of God to destroy our walk, our witness and our work for the Lord.

In the midst of Saul's relentless pursuit of David—God sends Jonathan to encourage him:

## II. The Encouragement of Jonathan

### **1 Samuel 23:16-18 (NKJV)**

**<sup>16</sup> Then Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God. <sup>17</sup> And 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." <sup>18</sup> So the two of them made a covenant before the LORD. And David stayed in the woods, and Jonathan went to his own house.**

As we have already seen David and Jonathan were best of friends—and even though Jonathan was next in line for the throne, he knew that God had chosen David to be the next king.

Jonathan was a strong believer and a true friend to David—and so as Saul sought to kill David, Jonathan sought to strengthen him with words of encouragement.

And the encouragement he gave to David was to remind him of the promise that God had given to him.

**And 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."**

I am so thankful for the Body of Christ and how God will bring to us those who, like Jonathan, will encourage us in our time of need by reminding us to keep our eyes on God and cling to the promises He has given to us in His Word.

As one author put it—

*“As Barnabas has the reputation for being the great encourager in the New Testament, Jonathan models this virtue in the Old Testament. Everyone experiences times when they need to be encouraged—about themselves, their gifts or talents, their work, their children, or their relationship with God. And everyone needs to develop the gift of encouragement, because it is one of the most powerful forces in human relationships.”*

## **I. The Relentlessness of Saul**

## **II. The Encouragement of Jonathan**

## **III. The Conspiracy of the Ziphites**

### **1 Samuel 23:19-23 (NKJV)**

<sup>19</sup> Then the 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?" <sup>20</sup> Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of your soul to come down; and our part *shall be* to deliver him into the king's hand." <sup>21</sup> And Saul said, "Blessed *are* you of the LORD, for you have compassion on me." <sup>22</sup> Please go and find out for sure, and see the place where his hideout is, *and* who has seen him there. For I am told he is very crafty. <sup>23</sup> See 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."

Ziph was in southern Judah, about twelve miles south of Keilah, situated in the hill country.

I think it's very significant that Ziph signifies a "*refining place*".

You see the area was rich in minerals and at Ziph there was a smelter and refinery.

The spiritual lesson is that God often uses those who turn against us and seek to hurt us to actually be a part of the process of refining and purifying our faith by keeping us close to God and on our knees in prayer.

This is exactly what Peter said—

**1 Peter 1:6-7a (NLT)**

<sup>6</sup> So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while. <sup>7</sup> These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold...(Explain)

Now just because God can use adversity to purify and mold us into something useful for His glory—doesn't mean we take a fatalistic approach to our circumstances.

It was during the Ziphites treachery that David offered a prayer to God which was eventually written down and became Psalm 54—

**Psalm 54:1-3 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Save me, O God, by Your name, And vindicate me by Your strength. <sup>2</sup> Hear my prayer, O God; Give ear to the words of my mouth. <sup>3</sup> For strangers have risen up against me, And oppressors have sought after my life; They have not set God before them.

When David prayed this prayer things looked extremely desperate—the people of Keilah wouldn't protect him; the Ziphites had conspired against him and Saul and his men were closing in on him—

There was no one else but God Almighty who could save David and his men from what looked like certain doom.

I personally believe that God allows us, at times, to be in such a desperate place where there is absolutely no human way out to force us to cry out to Him in utter dependence—

Just like Moses and the children of Israel with the Egyptian army behind them and the Red Sea in front of them—why?

He does so to teach us that no problem is so big that He can't solve it or deliver us from it—and to teach us that *"when we're weak, we are strong."*

#### IV. The Deliverance of God

##### **1 Samuel 23:24-29 (NKJV)**

<sup>24</sup> So 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. <sup>25</sup> When 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. <sup>26</sup> Then 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. <sup>27</sup> But a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Hasten and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land!" <sup>28</sup> Therefore Saul returned from pursuing David, and went against the Philistines; so they called that place the Rock of Escape. <sup>29</sup> Then David went up from there and dwelt in strongholds at En Gedi.

The situation was so desperate that only a ravine or steep cliff separated David and his men from Saul and his army.

It seemed like it was all over for David and his guys.

But just when it seemed all hope was gone, God's providence came to the rescue in the form of the Philistines...(finish)

The hand of God was so evident in the deliverance of David and his men that they made a memorial of the spot—they called that place “**the Rock of Escape**”.

One pastor had this to say—

*“Without striking a blow, shooting an arrow, or hurling a spear, David was delivered. Sometimes when we try to take things into our hands, we only make matters worse. God would say, “Let the Rock be your protection. Watch and see what I’ll do as you trust in Me.”*”

Let me say again that Saul becomes a type of Satan in this chapter—the one who constantly and relentlessly pursues us to destroy our lives.

Jesus is the Rock of Escape—the only One Who can deliver us from the devil if we will but cry out to Him in our desperate circumstances.

The chapter ends by telling us that David quickly moved from Maon to Engedi, an oasis next to the Dead Sea, a place of safety with an ample water supply.

**Let’s finish this morning** by looking more closely at the idea that between the time God makes a promise and the day He fulfills that promise—there is often a time of waiting and testing.

All the trials and persecution in David’s life started when he entered into God’s promise that someday he would reign.

This is exactly what happens to all of us the moment we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and enter into God’s promise that someday we will reign alongside Him on His throne—*‘all hell breaks loose’*.

Just as Saul began to pursue and persecute David so does Satan begin to target us—this is what **spiritual warfare** is all about.

Spiritual warfare takes many different forms—it can take the form of outward persecution and adversities.

It can take the form of inward struggles with depression, anxiety, fear and anger.

Listen to how Paul described the spiritual warfare he experienced in his life, and the purpose for which God allowed it—

**2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (NLT)**

<sup>7</sup> even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud. <sup>8</sup> Three different times I begged the Lord to take it away. <sup>9</sup> Each time he said, “My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.” So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. <sup>10</sup> That’s why I take pleasure in my weaknesses, and in the insults, hardships, persecutions, and troubles that I suffer for Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Here Paul is saying that everything he suffered in his Christian life was allowed by God to shape and mold him into the instrument He wanted him to be—so that God could then use him in a greater way for His glory.

We see this in the life of David how that from the moment God promised him the throne to the time he actually sat down on that throne as king there were many years of trials—all of it was being used by God to prepare David for the ministry of king.

Between promise and fulfillment there will be a period of grinding and shaping, molding and pruning—and this process will sometimes take years before we’re ready to see the promise fulfilled in our lives—just look at the promise God gave to Abraham that someday his descendants would possess and live in the Promised Land—the land of Canaan.

From the time God gave the promise to Abraham until Joshua actually led the children of Israel in to possess the land of Canaan—was over five hundred years!

The point is that God is seldom in a hurry to fulfill the promises He gives to us because the most fruitful time, the greatest benefit comes—not in the fulfillment of that promise but in the waiting period.

The reason is because the time between promise and fulfillment is a time of waiting that produces patience, perseverance and teaches us how to walk by faith every day.

Every day that the children of Israel were in the wilderness waiting for God to fulfill His promise to bring them into the Promised Land was another day they had to trust God to provide them with food, water, protection etc.

In other words it prepared them and taught them to walk by faith which was necessary for when they finally entered the land and began to wage war against those giants.

And yet the time between God's promise and the fulfillment of His promise is not easy territory to live in—in fact it's some of the hardest times in our lives.

We pray, go to church, stay in the Word and try to be faithful in our walk with and service for the Lord but we don't really see anything happening—it's hard not to get discouraged (Hab.1; Luke 18:1).

One author had this to say about William Carey—

*“William Carey spent thirty-five years in India and saw only a handful of converts. Yet every Christian missionary who has gone to India since that time owes a debt to Carey. He planted so that they could harvest. He translated the Word of God into Indian dialects, so that virtually all missionary effort in India has been based to some extent on his pioneer work. Most of the fruits of his labor he saw only by faith. He had faith's patience and did not “grow weary in well-doing.” “Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient” (James 5:7–8).*

Let's broaden this out of the temporal into the eternal and we'll close.

When we gave our hearts to Jesus God made us a promise—that from that moment on we belong to Him and He would never leave us nor forsake us.

He further promised us that He was preparing a place for us in heaven (John 14:2)—but also that He would be preparing us for that place (Phil.1:6).

And that is the purpose of trials, sufferings, tribulations, persecutions and every other form of spiritual warfare—it's all designed by God to mold us and shape us—to equip us for the work He has for us on earth and to prepare us the best eternity possible. (Explain)

**1 Peter 1:6-9 (NLT)**

<sup>6</sup> So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you have to endure many trials for a little while. <sup>7</sup> These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

What has God promised you that, as of yet, hasn't come to pass?

Has He promised you that He would give you a spouse...or that He would save your spouse or bring a wayward child back to Him?

Has He spoken to your heart that He was going to heal your marriage or your body or your finances—but as of yet His promise hasn't been fulfilled.

Don't lose heart—keep on believing—and don't fight the time between promise and fulfillment—embrace it and learn its lessons.

Allow it to draw you closer to God and be like Abraham when he waited 25 years for God to fulfill the promise He gave to him and Sarah that they would have a son—and through that son more descendants than could be numbered—

**Romans 4:20-21 (NKJV)**

<sup>20</sup> He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, <sup>21</sup> and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

Start with the promises of God in His Word—they are the spiritual “Promised Land” for the children of God today.

And then you can seek Him for any personal promises He has for your life individually.