

Rob Mathis
Sermon
Rose Hill Church
7.6.25

I Samuel 23:9-18

⁹ When David learned that Saul was plotting against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring the ephod.” ¹⁰ David said, “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? 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 wilderness 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^[a] 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.

Review of this series so far:

Today is the fourth sermon in the series, “David-A Complex Man After God’s Own Heart”. So far, we have explored the family of Jesse, a man from Bethlehem, with 8 sons. The prophet Samuel is directed by God to anoint a new king for Israel; this turns out to be the shepherd boy David, youngest of the 8 boys. In week two we looked at David’s struggle against great odds as seen through the eyes of this shepherd boy, brought into the spotlight of the ongoing conflicts with neighboring Philistia, Israel’s sworn enemy. David literally faced the giant Goliath and single-handedly struck him down using a stone, a slingshot, and a big dose of God’s power and wisdom.

Last week we took a deep dive into the troubled life and times of Israel’s first king, Saul, a fearful, angry, and jealous man who exhibits deep and dark character flaws that have massive implications for the well-being of a nation.

We are continuing this story with David and his men finding themselves in the desert town of Keilah. They chose to go there at the behest of the people living there, who were desperate for rescue from the nearby marauding Philistine army. David and his men in fact attacked the Philistines and drove them out. Something King Saul was responsible to do but had abdicated this role in his obsession to hunt down and kill David and anyone who supported him.

Next, David hears from someone that Saul and his army are planning to destroy the town, kill all who support David and wipe out David and his troops. **Keep in mind a few things; first, Saul has become an absolute madman.** Earlier in 1 Samuel we see where Saul was responsible for the slaughter of a whole town, many dozens of priests, wives, children, babies and even their animals. Wiped out the town of Nob. Simply gone. Because these people had been in support of David.

So, David, while holed up at Keilah, asks God two questions; will King Saul come to Keilah, and will the people of Keilah, whom David

has just rescued from the Philistines, give David and his men up to Saul's troops. Keilah was a fortified city with walls and gates and bars, but the town and anyone hiding there would not be safe from the likes of Saul's powerful army. God speaks to David and tells him bad things will happen if David stays. The people (as people are prone to be) are fickle and God warns David that they will give up David to save their own necks. So, David listens to God and withdraws, not only saving his own life and the lives of his loyal troops, but also of the fickle townspeople seemingly caught between a rock and a hard place.

You know, when you look at this passage, there are some very amazing things written right into the fabric of this story; Obviously someone is telling David what Saul is up to. We see that in verse 9, and again in verse 15. Let's look at this part of the passage; **“While David was at Horesh, in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. The very next verse, 16 is very telling; “And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God.”**

Now, Scripture does not specify who told David of Saul's movements and plans, but clearly it was someone with inside scoop. Perhaps, the way this is written, the writer wants us to gather that Jonathan is feeding David this vital information on troop movements and plans and the intentions of his father King Saul. We don't know, but it is interesting.

So, it says here that Jonathan “helped David find strength in God.” Wow! That is powerful. Here is David, out in the wasteland desert of Ziph, far from the comforts of the palace, even farther from the comforts of what he knew in Bethlehem. He is with this tough-edged, rag-tag band of followers. They had to be tired, hungry, dirty, and fatigued from all the running. No one knows exactly how long David had been on the run at this point, but Saul chased him for literally years.

Yet you see the incredible value of having this very close relationship with Jonathan. A relationship that encourages David by pointing him toward God, the real source of our strength. **And Jonathan, in verse 17 goes on; “Don't be afraid. My father Saul will**

not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you.” When Jonathan says these words; “Do not be afraid”, it is very similar to how an angel would speak to someone. Directly, clearly, and unequivocally...” Do Not Be Afraid”. In Hebrew the word used is “yahray”. Interesting that this wording, these words, pop up 365 times in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. That is one day of being told, “Do not be afraid” for every day of the year! Take that to heart!

Keep in mind, this is not Saul’s will for Jonathan to be second in command, as Jonathan says here. Saul, in the depths of his soul, wants David dead, and wants his own family line to succeed. This story is so remarkable, as Pastor Brian talked about last week. Jonathan could have been jealous of David. But he was not. He was not because Jonathan, like David, knew God and trusted God. That is really the source of all we see here.

In this story, just compare the current king, Saul, with the future king, David. Saul is violent, murderous, disobedient, arrogant,

self-centered; what we would probably call today a sociopath and a narcissist. David is not. David is, to be sure, not a perfect man, as we shall later see in his story. But he continues to pursue God and God's will through thick and thin. These two leaders could not be farther from each other in their faith and righteousness.

When we look at this Jonathan, as compared with his father, we see such incredible faithfulness, love, and support by Jonathan for David. And these attributes possessed by Jonathan, are those given by God Himself. **What Jonathan showed are what are described in the New Testament as, "The Fruit of the Spirit"; Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control (Galatians 5:22-23).**

Here are three takeaways from our study this morning:

First, you see, God has a way of developing His people. This is so with David; In all these struggles of David we see it; hard hard times. David was on the run from Saul for years and years. His life was

threatened repeatedly, and people lost their very lives for supporting David during this time. Other examples in the Bible include Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, who was sold into slavery by his brothers as a teen, incarcerated for several years, falsely accused, and forgotten by those he had helped. But out of this pain and suffering God produced a man capable of saving the Israelites in Egypt. Moses, who as a baby was under the sentence of death by the Pharaoh, ended up being raised in Pharaoh's courts, yet was forced to flee Egypt under threat of death and lived in the Midian desert tending sheep for 40 years. He ended up leading upwards of millions of Israelites to freedom. **Folks, it is often in the crucible of hardship and struggle and pain and yes, suffering that we grow most closely to our Savior. So, that is my first point.**

Second, as followers of Jesus Christ, we must be a people of deep discernment. David knew Saul was wicked, but he was not sure of his movements or ultimate plans. But David sought God. He asked God. He listened to God. And in so doing, he obeyed God's direction. We must be this kind of people. Seeking God's wisdom, through His Holy

Scriptures and through much prayer and humbling ourselves before Him, as well as listening to those around us that God puts into our lives. Godly and loving and humble people.

Third, as followers of Jesus Christ we must be people of compassion and grace and forgiveness and not people of retribution and retaliation, nor should we cheer on such vile behavior. David very easily could have taken out his frustration and anger on the people of Keilah. David and his people had just saved this whole town from their enemies, risking their lives to do so! Yet these same people were going to betray David to save themselves. No, David did not serve up a nasty plate of retribution and unforgiveness. He did not. He actually, by his actions of leaving the city, saved that people from the wrath of Saul that Nob experienced earlier.

Today, when we look at who we desire to be our leaders, whether at the local level, county, state or even in Washington, DC, **we must evaluate our leaders in the same way God does. We must take note of their behavior, their willingness to seek God, to follow God's**

laws, and to treat others with dignity and respect. I tell you the truth, right now we are in a very precarious place in our nation, at all levels of our government. I am more and more convinced that our country has been and continues to be a very unwell nation. A nation that has, “In God we Trust” on our money, but we live like the almighty dollar is our god. We have had and I think continue to have people trying to lead who are liars, thieves, cheats and have blood on their hands. We say the Pledge of Allegiance in our schools, ending “With liberty and justice for all”. But we fail, as in ancient Israel, to give liberty and safety to those in poverty, and those afflicted and burdened heavily by all kinds of suffering.

I am not throwing stones at one political party or another, for there is enough blame to go around no matter who is in power, but let me tell you, when God’s people put money and possessions and consumption and self-will over what God has called His people to...watch out. We must be very wary of getting tricked into believing that mixing politics and religion and financial systems and the cry for safety and security

into one blender and then pouring ourselves a satisfying drink of it; a drink that in the mouth is so sweet and yet it produces a bitterness in the stomach like a sickening gall. **Be ye careful, for how a nation treats its weakest and most vulnerable is how that nation will be judged. How a nation spends their money...how a nation shows compassion on the world or does not...so shall that nation be judged.**

In closing, let me say this; David, at this point in our story, is the anointed King of Israel, but he is not the acting king. That time will come, and we will see it all unfold in the coming weeks, so stay tuned, for in David's case his life developed through the working out of God's will in his life, day by day. It came out through a nation seeking God, and God giving them a Godly leader. Let us all pray today and from here on out, for our nation, for our government at all levels, that righteousness might prevail; Listen as I read from 2 Chronicles 7:14, ¹⁴ **if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will**

hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Let us pray:

Our Father, Who Art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom Come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory forever. Amen.