

26. Victories In God

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Everybody loves to win. If you don't believe me, just watch any football game, especially championship games. When one team does a touchdown, they danced around the end zone or spike the ball, meanwhile the players dump a ten-gallon icy Gatorade on the back of their coach. How about their loyal fans? The ones who painted on their bare upper bodies in the middle of winter in Minnesota. Baseball or basketball are not much better. When they win World Series games, they jump on each other and make a big pile of players and spray champagne on to each other in their locker room.

To have that wonderful victory, it takes a tremendous amount of works and failures. Victory does not come in easy and cheap. It is the same way, spiritually. To have victories in God, God put us through many difficult training courses to strengthen us.

We are going to see David going through caring, but being betrayed by the people whom he cared for, encouraged by a friend, and betrayed by someone he didn't harm and let's not forget the constant deadly chase from Saul.

It was important that David lives, for it is he who would deliver Israel, establish the kingdom in glory, and become the father of Christ in the flesh. Satan uses Saul to seek to kill David, but God is too strong for the enemy. As long as David seeks the mind of the Lord, God gives him protection and victory.

A. VICTORY AT KEILAH – CARING FOR OTHERS

1 Samuel 23:1-8 Then they told David, saying, "Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and they are robbing the threshing floors." 2 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." 3 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?" 4 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. 5 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. 6 Now it happened, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, that he went down with an ephod in his hand. 7 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." 8 Then Saul called all the people together for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men.

What do you get out of this?

In the midst of his own trouble due to Saul, David cares enough to help the people of Keilah who were being attacked by the Philistines right after their harvest. The threshing floors were hard and flat surfaces where grain was trampled or crushed to separate it from the straw. Sometimes threshing floors served as storage areas.

Instead of jumping into action, David is cautious to ask God for the direction he should take.

When David inquired of the Lord, he was willing to do just as the Lord commanded. Sometimes we inquire of the Lord, but our minds are already made up. And we pray to God to give His blessing on it. That isn't really inquiring of the Lord at all. What a good attitude we should learn from him! He could have gone with what the people want to please them. But David concerned about pleasing God more than pleasing people.

David had two great reasons for saving the town of Keilah: the command of God, and the need of the people. David was willing to spend himself, to endanger himself, so that he obey the command of God, and meet the need of the people. It is not enough to know God's will, we must have a commitment to obey God's will even when it is difficult.

The ephod was the outer vest of the priest. Its value was probably due to the Urim and Thummim attached to the breastplate. By means of the Urim and Thummim, God could be consulted and His will determined.

How did the priest use the Urim and Thummim to inquire of the Lord? The names Urim and Thummim mean "Lights and Perfections." We aren't sure what they were or how they were used. Most think they were a pair of stones, one light and another dark, and each stone indicated a "yes" or "no" from God. The idea is that High Priest would ask God a question that could be answered with a "yes" or a "no," reach into the breastplate, and pull out the stone indicating God's answer.

Many Christians today would consider the Urim and Thummim as crude tools of discernment; sort of an Old Testament "Magic 8-Ball." In fact, using the Urim and Thummim was more superior than the tools many Christians today use – relying purely on feeling, or on outward appearances, or simply using no discernment at all.

Today, if we have the same focus on God's Word, He will guide us also. One old country preacher was asked to explain the Urim and Thummim. He said, "Well, this is how I understand it. When I need to know God's will, I get out my Bible and I do a lot of usin' and thummin' through my Bible, and God always speaks to me." More Christians would know God's will if they did more usin' and thummin'.

Saul who thinks that he is righteous with God, thought that the Lord delivers David into his hands. We tend to twist the facts the way we want when we are not right with God.

Saul is in no place to discern the will of God, because he cares nothing for the worship or service of God. We've learned that the Spirit of God left him because of his disobedience in the previous chapters. The only thing he cares about is getting David so that he can stay in power. Saul wouldn't go to Keilah to save the people of Keilah against the Philistines, but he would go there to try to kill David and save his throne. Saul is totally motivated by self-interest.

B. VICTORY IN NOT BEING LITTLE

1 Samuel 23:9-13 When David knew that Saul plotted evil against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod here." 10 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. 11 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." 12 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." 13 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.

Please give me your interpretation of this portion.

David asked the Lord two questions. God gave him an answer to the first question.

Feeling desperate, David asked Him the second question again. Why would the people of Keilah betray the man who just saved their town? No doubt, they heard of Saul's brutal massacre of the priests and their town Nob, so they knew Saul would stop at nothing to kill David.

Instead of revenging for the future, David simply leads his people out of harm's way of Saul. David, who was a great warrior, humbled himself and escaped. David's humble heart saved the city of Keilah from Saul's massacre.

In this, he shows the same heart as the greater Son of David, Jesus, who through His humble action spared us against not only satan, but against the righteous judgment of God. David directed Saul's attack against himself instead of Keilah, and so did Jesus who took God's judgment onto Himself, the Son of David, instead of us.

We learned David and his 400 men were staying in the wilderness from chapter 22. But by the time they were leaving from Keilah, there were 600 men with David. God was adding more and more people to David's army.

C. VICTORY IN THE WILDERNESS – ENCOURAGING THE WEARY ONE

1 Samuel 23:14-18 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 15 So David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. And David was in the Wilderness of Ziph in a forest. 16 Then Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God. 17 And he said to him, (1) "Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. (2) You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Even my father Saul knows that." 18 So the two of them made a covenant before the Lord. And David stayed in the woods, and Jonathan went to his own house.

What is your interpretation of this?

The wilderness of Ziph is the barren region about 4 miles southeast of Hebron. This region had many ravines and caves in which David's men could hide.

What patience David had, to be able to endure daily danger and persecution! He could have fought against Saul, but he preferred to wait for God to give him the victory.

Saul looked for David in every nook and cranny, but he couldn't find him. Because God hid David and his men from Saul. However, did you notice Jonathan didn't have a problem finding David? Man can intend, attempt, and work all kinds of evil, but God is still in charge.

Jonathan gave him two reasons to not fear:

- 1) David could reject fear because God would ultimately protect him.
- 2) David could reject fear because God's promise would come to pass.

How moving it was when Jonathan met him in the wilderness – at the risk of his own life – to reassure him and encourage him! Sad to say, Jonathan was never allowed to reign with David, because he was slain in battle with his father. The righteous often suffer because of the sins of others.

D. VICTORY OVER THE ZIPHITES – DEPENDING ON GOD'S PROTECTION

1 Samuel 23:19-29 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 20 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." 21 And Saul said, "Blessed are you of the Lord, for you have compassion on me 22 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. 23 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." 24 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. 25 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. 26 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. 27 But a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Hasten and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land!" 28 Therefore Saul returned from pursuing David, and went against the Philistines; so they called that place the Rock of Escape. 29 Then David went up from there and dwelt in strongholds at En Gedi.

What kind of interpretation are you getting from this paragraph?

Ziph was in Judah and its inhabitants should have been loyal to David. But instead they betrayed their rightful king to Saul. Psalm 54 is for David's prayer to God for deliverance. His choice of words reflects a man without bitterness. He could look his enemies squarely in the eyes without malice or resentment, because he had released them to God and He had dealt with them in His own sovereign and perfect way.

Let's declare war on those longstanding habits we cultivate against others – negative feelings, unforgiveness, resentment, competitiveness, grudges, jealousy, revenge, hatred, retaliation, gossip, criticism, and suspicion. Let's leave this rugged, ugly, well-worn road forever. The only alternative route to take is love. The longer we live and the more time we spend with the Lord and with others, the more we should be driven back to answer to most people's problems: sincere, Spirit-empowered, undeserved love. It's called living by grace. Once Christ is in full focus, it's amazing how powerful love can be.

Saul was so spiritually warped that he could say to the betrayers of an innocent man, "Blessed are you of the Lord." Again, Saul uses religious jargon to impress the people around him that he looks holy and righteous and aligned with God in spite of his disobedience to the Lord and that God is no longer with him.

The mountain stood between David and Saul, just as the cloud stood between Israel and the Egyptians. They are on the same mountain, separated by the ridge.

It seemed that Saul would finally capture his man, but an invasion from the Philistines forced Saul to return home. Certainly God is in control of circumstances and delivers His own at the right time.

God is so gracious and merciful to protect His own. The hand of God was so evident that David and his men made a memorial of the spot: they called that place the Rock of Escape.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) To have a victory in God, we need to know the Word of God that guides us in our daily walk with Christ.

2) To have a victory in God, we need to encourage one another with the Word of God and the love of God.

3) To have a victory in God, we need to trust God's faithfulness.