

David's Wilderness Experiences (Part 4)

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[0 : 00] Well, we are in 1 Samuel, continuing in 1 Samuel, and so tonight, chapter 23.

! Chapter 23, and about halfway through, I'm going to stop just kind of going verse by verse and word by word. I'll reference some things that are in the last part of the chapter, but since I'm going to do it that way, I want to read the entire chapter, so we can kind of get the whole story all together in our minds before we pick some of it apart.

So chapter 23, 1 Samuel. Then they told David, saying, Look, the Philistines are fighting against Kaila, and they are robbing the threshing floors.

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 Kaila.

But David's men said to him, Look, we're afraid here in Judah. How much more than if we go to Kaila against the armies of the Philistines?

[1 : 24] And David inquired of the Lord once again. And the Lord answered him and said, Arise, go down to Kaila, for I have delivered the Philistines into your hand.

And David and his men went to Kaila and fought with the Philistines, struck them with a mighty blow, and took away their livestock. So David saved the inhabitants of Kaila.

Now it happened when Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, fled to David in Kaila, that he went down with an ephod in his hand.

And Saul was told that David had gone to Kaila. 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.

Then Saul called all the people together for war, to go down to Kaila to besiege David and his men. When David knew that Saul plotted evil against him, he said to Abiathar, the priest, bring the ephod here.

[2 : 30] And David said, O Lord God of Israel, your servant has certainly heard that Saul seeks to come to Kaila to destroy the city for my sake.

Will the men of Kaila 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.

Then David said, Will the men of Kaila deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the Lord said, They will deliver you. So David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Kaila and went wherever they could go.

Then it was told Saul that David had escaped from Kaila, so he halted the expedition. 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. So David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life, and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a forest.

[3 : 37] Then Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God. 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. So the two of them made a covenant before the Lord, and David stayed in the woods, and Jonathan went to his own house.

Then the Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, Is David not hiding with us in strongholds in the woods, in the hill Hakala, which is on the south of Jeshamon?

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, that's David, into the king's hand.

And Saul said, Blessed are you of the Lord, for you have compassion on me. 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.

[4 : 49] 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.

So they arose and went to Ziph before Saul, but David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the plain of the south of Jeshamon. 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. 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. But a messenger came to Saul, saying, Hurry and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land.

Therefore Saul returned from pursuing David, and went against the Philistines. So they called that place the Rock of Escape. Then David went up from there, and dwelt in strongholds at En Gedi.

[6 : 05] All right, so kind of a long chapter. A lot of difficult words to pronounce, but an interesting part of the story. So let me just remind you that we are still in that segment that I have called, kind of entitled this series of messages from 1 Samuel, David's wilderness experience.

His wilderness experience, because David is in exile, remember? Remember? He had been in the household of Saul. He had already been having a little trouble with Saul, but he had not yet fled from the presence of Saul.

But the last straw came. Saul tried to kill him. And so he fled, and he's now in exile. And he's on the run from Saul, from King Saul.

And Saul is in hot pursuit of him. In fact, you know, he's king of Israel. And all he seems to care about is getting rid of David.

He's spending all of his time, all of his energies, and the energies of his army. I mean, it takes an entire army to hunt down this one man. But Saul is in hot pursuit of him. He desperately wants David to be destroyed.

[7 : 17] That's Saul's goal, of course. And Saul is mad. I don't mean angry kind of mad. I mean, he's insane. He's absolutely wacko in his hate toward David.

I mean, you can pick this up as you get this when you read the narrative here. For the last several chapters, it's clear that Saul is fixated on his hate for David.

He's insane with hatred. So much so that in pursuit of David, Saul, king of Israel, leaves death and destruction in his wake everywhere he goes.

And you remember, in fact, the last time that I was teaching out of this book, you remember we were in chapter 22 and the sad, sad story of the priests of Nob.

But remember, not just the priests, but their families and many, many others. In fact, the Bible tells us that through Doeg, the Edomite, he, quote, struck with the edge of the sword both men and women, children and nursing infants, oxen and donkeys and sheep.

[8 : 32] I mean, it's almost shameful to include donkeys and sheep in that list. You know, infants even. And the Bible says he had destroyed 85 priests and their families, including all this livestock.

So terrible, terrible. This is Saul, insane with anger and hate toward David. And so this is David's wilderness experience.

And, you know, you ought to think about this, and not just simply from this part of the narrative of 1 Samuel, but even as we go on into 2 Samuel and read about other experiences that David had as king, some of them very tough experiences with his own family and so forth.

And we need to understand that it was because of these experiences, this wilderness experience and other experiences that David is going to have.

It is because of these things that David was such a powerful songwriter. I mean, you think about it. We have the book of Psalms, full of Psalms.

[9 : 44] Not all of them written by David, but the majority of them written by David. And, you know, his psalm writing or songwriting really captured the human experience.

That's why we love the Psalms. I was reading something the other day about a man whose mother had passed away. And she had been a strong believer all of her life.

And he went on to give testimony about her life. And in the course of getting stuff together, you know, after she died and going through the papers and other things, he came across her Bible that she had had for years upon years.

And he said, you know, he looked at that, and like most people, you know, when you look at it, the New Testament certainly is obviously read more than the Old Testament. He could see that with his mother's Bible.

Well, you know, the pages kind of frayed and the gold part of the edge of the pages all gone on the New Testament. But then we looked at the Old Testament.

[10:46] He saw one part of it that was just, I mean, just worse than any other part of the Bible. I mean, you know, the curled up pages. And he looked at it, it was the book of Psalms. And that's probably our experience too.

When it comes to the Old Testament, we probably read the Psalms more than any part of it. And so think about David writing all these Psalms. And he wrote from what?

His own experiences. And many of them terrible, hard experiences. And we're reading about here in 1 Samuel some of those hard experiences.

As David went through the wilderness. Spurgeon said this about that. He said, out, and you have to kind of look past some of the verbiage that Spurgeon used.

I mean, it's a very flowery language. But he said, out of a sour, ungenerous soil sprang up the honey bearing flowers of psalmody.

[11:51] Psalms. Had David never been cruelly hunted by Saul, Israel and the church of God and after ages would have missed this song. The music of the sanctuary is in no small degree indebted to the trials of the saints.

Affliction is the tuner of the hearts of sanctified songsters. I don't know whether only Spurgeon could say it or write it.

All right. So let's look at this chapter. And we're going to divide it into three parts or really three movements of the story. And the first one is this.

David rescuing by the power of God. He's the rescuer. And he's doing so by the power of God. So verse one, as we kind of look back over some of these verses.

Verse one says, then they told David. Who are they? We don't know. David's spies, I guess. He had his own secret service and keeps him apprised of the things that are going on in other parts of the land.

[13:01] Specifically where Saul is. So they told David, saying, look, the Philistines are fighting against Kailah. Which, by the way, is a small, very small town in the southern part of Judah.

Way south of Jerusalem. And so they report this to him. And they're robbing, robbing the threshing floors. That is, they're taking the harvest.

That's where the harvest would go. So this parent lay after harvest. And the harvest has gone to the threshing floors so that it can be prepared in order to be made into food, consumed, and so forth.

And so they're stealing the harvest. Which, pretty, pretty serious thing. Of course, in those days. Be like somebody invading Bartlesville. Or invading our country.

And, you know, stealing all of our grain elevators. And places where things are stored. Shutting down Walmart and food pyramid. And, you know, all the other sources of food.

[14:07] And just taking that away. We'd be in serious shape. We can't even begin to think about a scenario like that. In this day, to go into the threshing floors and rob to take away the harvest would be a very serious thing.

And so this is reported to David. And, again, Kailah is in Judah. That's David's home territory.

He's of the tribe of Judah. And so what does David want to do? Now, it doesn't tell us that this is what he wants to do. But, really, we can glean this. That this is implied.

What does David want to do in his heart? What does David want to do? I mean, he is of Judah. So what does he want to do? He wants to come to their rescue. I think we can safely say that.

Even though the Bible doesn't explicitly say it. He wants to go to their aid and help them. But David is a man after God's own heart. And David will not act unilaterally.

[15:11] He'll just get out there and act on his own. Do what he wants to do. What his flesh dictates. He's going to find out what God wants. Which is the right course. Isn't it? No matter what the situation is.

And so verse 2 says, Therefore David inquired of the Lord. He prayed. In a sense. I mean, we could compare this to prayer. I'll explain here in a minute. So he 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 Kaila. So he gets a very affirmative answer from God.

Instructions from God. Now, we're not told here just how David inquired of the Lord. You know, quite often you see that phrase in Scripture. Certain person inquired of the Lord and the Lord told him.

I mean, how did he do that? Is it just a word about simple prayer? And God spoke to his heart, which should be true, of course, of our experience. But now in verse 9, and we'll get to verse 9 a little bit later, but just to bring this up, David inquires of the Lord through a certain method that was made available in that day, one that's not available today.

[16 : 29] It's part of the Old Covenant, Old Testament. It's part of the priestly system. And that method, according to verse 9, was the ephod.

Remember, I mentioned this last time when we were talking about David taking the priest with him and the ephod. So he had, I mean, that's tantamount to saying that David, rather than Saul, had access to God through the priestly ephod.

It's part of the priestly garments. In fact, there are other elements to that garment. And part of that would be something that we really don't know for sure what it was, but the Urim and Thummim. Have you ever heard of that? The Urim and Thummim. The holy dice, right? Or maybe it was a collection of bones. You just throw it down, however.

Well, I don't know what they were. The Urim and Thummim. But they were used by the priest for God to give direction, for God to tell them what to do and tell them his will.

[17 : 38] And this is kind of part of the ephod. And so we assume that David is using that here. He uses it a little bit later. Clearly he uses it there in verse 9 following.

So we think that's what he's doing here. And so whatever it was, whatever it looked like, the Urim and Thummim, he used that in a way that would consult God to find out what God's will is.

And through that method of communication, God said, go for it. You want me to go attack the Philistines? And God said, yeah, do it.

Go and attack these Philistines and save Kaila. All right. Now that suits David just fine. I really think so.

That's what David wanted to do anyway. And so God says, that's exactly what I want you to do.

See, he's a man after God's own heart. His desire was in tune with God's desire, but he used the Urim and Thummim, or the priestly ephod, whatever it is, and God spoke to him clearly.

[18 : 43] Go and attack these Philistines. Save these people. And so that suits David fine. And he has, by the way, I mean, it's exemplified here, a God-given desire to act kingly.

I mean, he's going to be king one day. God has already chosen him. In fact, he's the king of God's choice. Saul was the king of the people's choice. That's the guy we want.

King like every other nation. And that's exactly what they got. But David is the king of God's choice. Okay? And so here he is, doing what is in perfect sync and in tune with God's call upon his life.

He's acting very kingly, wants to act very kingly, wants to go and rescue his people from the enemies of God. And by the way, you know, who should have gone to rescue the people of Kailah? King Saul. And what's he doing? Well, he's too busy killing his own people, you know, to go out and be the king to lead the armies of Israel against the enemies of Israel.

[20 : 02] And so David, he's not even the official king yet, but he is in God's eye a king. And he naturally wants to do the kingly thing. So this is what God tells him.

And so he presents this to his men. This is what God says to do. And they're not so sure about it, are they? In fact, verse 3 says, but David's men said to him, look, we're afraid here, where we are, here in Judah, how much more then if we go to Kailah against the armies of Philistines?

It's just, you know, they weren't sure about it. And we might say that they're just not as faithful as David. They don't have the courage of the Lord. They don't really trust God like David does. And, you know, we might come up with that explanation.

But logically speaking, we ought to think about their position here. And this is what they're thinking about. I mean, what were they afraid of in Judah?

Where they were. They're afraid of Saul. They're afraid of him and his professional soldiers. That's what they're afraid of. Look, we're right here. Judah, we're afraid here.

[21 : 16] I mean, forget about the Philistines and all of that. We're pretty dire straits right here where we are. And then what would they be afraid of in Kailah?

Well, the Philistines and their professional army, their far superior army, certainly more in number. I mean, we have to remember, we have to go back to chapter 22.

We have to remember who these guys are. These men of David. They're not professional soldiers. I mean, do you remember how David met them?

Who they were? These were people who were hiding out in the caves, hiding out from Saul. They were common people. The Bible describes them as discontented people.

Now, that could be, you know, used as a negative for people. I've met people who are discontented and they shouldn't be. These are discontented people because they've been disenfranchised by Saul, their king.

[22 : 17] And how many were there? 600. There were 600 of them. Now, I don't know how large the Philistine army was.

They were attacking the city. I'm sure it was more than 600. And I'm sure that they were seasoned soldiers. In fact, the Philistines were known to be a warring people.

They were taught to be soldiers from almost infancy. So they got a pretty good idea of the kind of enemy they're going to face there. And they also know King Saul and the armies of Israel.

And so, you know, give it to them. You know, that they would be afraid. They had, I guess we could say, a reason to be afraid. They were outnumbered and outgunned and all of that and they knew that.

And so, you know, they would risk really what they might do if they went to Kaila, as David said the Lord was leading them to do.

[23 : 23] They had to be thinking that we risked being caught there by Saul. Not only possibly losing a battle against the Philistines, but while we're there getting caught by Saul.

And so if Saul came at that inopportune time, then we'll be caught between a rock and a hard place. So they're thinking about this. And so you've got to say, David, we love you.

We really do. You know, we love you. But perhaps you didn't hear this quite right. You know. And so, and they might have even thought, you know, David's not a priest.

He's kind of new at this Urim and Thummim thing. And maybe he hadn't had enough practice.

Maybe, you know, I don't know if they had kind of a code book they looked at.

You know, they'd look at the Urim and Thummim and say, let's see, if it's turned this way and this color or that way, then this is what, you know, I don't know how they deciphered it. So maybe David is just not experienced in that.

[24 : 27] So you better go back and ask again. And so David, being the great leader that he was, I mean, a servant leader, he went back to the Lord.

And so verse 4 says, then David inquired of the Lord once again. And the Lord answered him and said, arise, go down to Kailah, for I will deliver the Philistines into your hands.

So he says a little bit more there too, doesn't he? Great assurance here. I mean, that answers the questions that David's men had, perhaps David had as well.

I mean, 600 men cannot do this on their own. It can't do it. The math doesn't work out there. But with God, we can do it.

And so not only did God reiterate his desire that David and his 600 men go and rescue the people of Kailah, but he also at the same time said, you're going to be successful.

[25 : 30] I'm going to deliver them into your hand. And so David's satisfied. David's men were satisfied. And so verse 5, just a short little verse about what happened.

No details. We kind of wish there would be details. And David and his men went to Kailah and fought with the Philistines, struck them with a mighty blow and took away their livestock.

So David saved the inhabitants of Kailah. Great, great story. Great end to that story. You know, getting back to this ephod, you know, we could almost wish that we had something like that today.

I know the worship pastor search team wish they had an ephod. Wish they could just pluck out a little pouch there in that ephod, the Urim and Thummim, whatever it was, and say, is this the right guy?

You know. Or maybe they might want to get even more specific and say, where should we look, tell us his name, and we'll go and call him and, you know, give us all the details.

[26 : 47] We could wish that we had an ephod today, some supernatural thing through which God reveals his will to us. Don't you wish you had something like that? Well, I'm baiting you here.

We actually have something better. Something better than an ephod. Yeah, we've got the word of God, but with that we have the permanent indwelling Holy Spirit in us who's been given to us, beside a number of other things, given to us to guide us into the truth.

Okay? You know, you could lose an ephod. I mean, you could have one and lose it. Somebody could steal it or maybe just misplace it. You know, I can imagine being at my house, I'm getting ready to make a really tough, really hard decision and I'm looking for that ephod.

I'm looking in the drawer where we always put it and it's not there. You know, so I call out to Sherry, Sherry, where's the ephod? And she said, have you tried looking in the drawer?

Of course, I've looked in the drawer. It's not there. Of course, in my house, she'd go there to the drawer and be there. You know, it wasn't there when I looked a while ago. I got the men with me there.

[28 : 10] Actually, the women are saying, uh-huh. Every time. I mean, I get so sick of it, actually, you know. It's right there in the cabinet. No, it's not. She goes and finds it.

Anyway, I digress. The ephod, it's not here. I can't find it. What's happened to it? Somebody's misplaced it. I told you. I might yell out to Jonathan, did you take the ephod?

Now, I know you've got some big decisions with college and all that. Do you have it? I mean, it's okay if you do. Just tell me where it is. I mean, you could lose an ephod. I mean, Saul lost his.

Now, in David's possession. But, you know, you can't lose the Holy Spirit. He is always with you. And he can't be misplaced. And nobody can steal him. And the throne gift that has been given every one of God's people, that throne gift being prayer, is something you can never lose.

[29 : 11] It can be unused, but never lost. Never lost. All right, so David, rescuing by the power of God.

Need to move on. David, number two, retreating by the providence of God. I might even add the word sovereign providence of God.

Verse six, now it happened when Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, fled to David at Kailah, that he went down with an ephod in his hand. All right, you might remember Abiathar in chapter 22.

He was the son of Ahimelech. What happened to Ahimelech? He got, yeah, and from Saul's work or Doeg's nasty work.

All the priests, but one of his sons escaped and escaped to David. Anyway, verse seven says, and Saul was told that David had gone to Kailah. 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.

[30 : 20] Most towns have bars, but that's a different kind of bar. Then Saul called all the people together for war to go down to Kailah to besiege David and his men.

Now, what a contrast between David and Saul. I mean, among other things. I mean, who's acting more kingly? Well, David is, of course.

David is. But notice how deluded Saul is. I mean, he has totally lost it. Totally lost it. He doesn't even know it. I'm not just talking about his mental thinking, his correct thinking.

Not only lost all rationale, but he's lost God. And he's deluded. He's told that David is at Kailah. And Saul has his secret service, too. He's got his spies out there. And Saul says, goody, goody. God, now get this, God has delivered David into my hand.

[31 : 24] Really? That's what Saul thought. And by the way, not God will deliver. God has delivered.

I mean, it's a done deal. He's celebrating a little bit prematurely here. And how wrong Saul is or was in this.

Someone has said, and I think it perfectly describes Saul, but it's an axiom of life. Someone has said that by the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil.

But by the fear of man, and that's what's going on between Saul and David. He fears David. But by the fear of man, they run themselves into evil. And that's exactly what Saul has been doing.

Headlong into evil and more evil and he becomes more and more wicked and diabolical and more and more resolved in his hate toward David. But Saul is right about one thing.

[32 : 28] David is kind of caught like a bird in a cage. It was a fortified city. It had gates and bars. And so the question is, can he trust the people there?

I mean, that would be a natural question. All right, I've just delivered them. We, you know, with a mighty hand, we have overcome the Philistines and we have not only saved the city but confiscated even the livestock belonging to the Philistine army.

So I guess they had T-bone steaks that night. And so there he is in the city. I'm sure they're celebrating and so he's got to be thinking, you know, can I trust these people here? And so verse 9 says, when David knew that Saul plotted evil against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, bring the ephod here. It is his time to pray. Your servant has certainly heard that Saul seeks to come to Kailah to destroy the city for my sake. And here's what David needs to know. Will Saul come down as your servant has heard? [33 : 35] Will he come down? I've heard that he's going to come. Will he come? Lord, will he really come? The Lord God of Israel, I pray, tell your servant, meaning is my intel correct here?

Is it accurate that he is coming? And the Lord said what? He will come. He will come. By the way, did he come?

No, he didn't come. We'll get back to that question here in a minute. All right, so with that question answered, then David needed to know something else. Verse 12, then David said, Will the men of Kailah deliver me and my men in the hand of Saul?

That is, can I count on their help? You would think that he could. I mean, I just fought for them. Will they fight for me?

Is the question. It's a reasonable question. And God answers. And the Lord said what? They will deliver you. Did they deliver him? Well, no, they didn't.

[34 : 39] Why? Because Saul never came. God said he would come. And God said the people would deliver David into Saul's hand. They'll turn you over to him.

All right? Now, there's an important lesson here. to learn concerning the sovereignty of God. Or the sovereign omniscience of God.

It's part of his sovereignty. And really a question between it, the sovereignty of God, and human responsibility. That is, what kind of action David should take.

All right? In God's sovereignty, he is omniscient. That is, he knows everything. About everything. And specifically, he knows all things before they happen.

And so, David, if God is omniscient, and he's asked God, he says, will Saul come? Yes, he will. Will the people deliver me?

[35 : 43] Yes, they will. So I guess David should just sit back and wait. I mean, what will be, will be. Right? God said it. God said the people of Kailah will deliver you to Saul, and so that's it then.

It's all over. No reason to buck against it. It's just going to happen. It's kind of a fatalistic approach. You know, there are some who have that kind of philosophy when it comes to the sovereignty of God.

almost a fatalistic what will be, will be. Like the lady who fell down the basement stairs, and she got to the bottom, she got herself up, brushed herself off, she said, boy, I'm glad I got that over with.

As if it was to be. Just going to happen. Some people have that kind of fatalistic idea about the sovereignty, the omniscience of God.

But we need to broaden our understanding of the sovereign omniscience of God. First of all, God knows everything. I can't minimize that.

[36 : 54] He knows everything, everything in the past, the present, the future. It means he knows what's going to happen the very next second. He knows everything in the future. He knows the end from the beginning.

He's omniscient in that sense. There's nothing that escapes his knowledge or has escaped it. He's not suddenly realizing something or something happening that catches him unawares.

He knows every single thing. That's true of the omniscience of God. Second, though, and this is important to know, God's omniscience also includes knowledge, complete, full knowledge of all contingencies.

All contingencies. And they're almost infinite. All possibilities. All scenarios.

And so he not only knows everything, past, present, and future that's going to take place, he also knows everything, past, present, future, that could take place.

[38 : 08] And how they will take place by, you know, if given, in given situations, and circumstances. This is how free will and human responsibility can work within the framework of the sovereignty of God, and it doesn't lessen God's sovereignty, not one degree.

He knows all ends, he knows all scenarios, all choices that could be made, and what will happen if they're made, and he knows all of this. He knows in advance all these scenarios, events that occur that will change a person's direction, and so forth, choices that are made, directions that are taken,

either by choice or by someone else's choice, forced in this direction or that direction, or you deliberately choose to do this, or do that, or say that, or you start talking about it, and it boggles the mind, all the possibilities.

And God knows all of those. He's omniscient, every scenario. And so, if David just sat there and did nothing, guess what?

The people of Kailah would turn him over to Saul. Right? But David chose to do something else, and his choice fit within the sovereignty of God.

And it changed everything, or what would have been. So was God surprised by it? Well, I didn't see that coming. No.

[39 : 54] Was God's knowledge of the future wrong in this case? no. Not at all. I'm trying to explain it the best a finite man can, and I'm sure others with finite minds could explain it even better than me.

But this is the sovereignty of God in his omniscience. God knew what David would do before he did it. He certainly did. He knows all things. And remember, God had chosen David to be king of Israel. and that plan is not going to be thwarted. Not at all. God's sovereign choice will come to pass, and it did come to pass, through whatever choice David made.

You know, the age-old question, you know, does God have that one wife for me, and I've got to find her? Well, the answer to that is yes and no. God knows all the choices I'm going to make.

God knows all of the directions I will take, and the people I will meet, and the connections I will make, and the redirections, and all those things, because he knows all ends.

[41 : 09] And he knows who that woman's going to be. And her name is Sherry. Okay. So we shouldn't get bogged down on trying to figure out whether God has that one person you know.

We just need to trust God, and he's going to give us that one person. All right, so what's David's responsibility then? I mean, there's God's sovereignty, there's David's responsibility.

Well, his responsibility is to get out of there. Get out. Retreat. That is a part of the purpose of God for David.

his responsibility was to act consistently with what he knew was God's call upon his life, and that's a good way to define it. And we can apply that to our lives, all aspects of our lives.

As believers, you know, we're always looking for the will of God. Well, just make sure that everything you're doing is consistent with what you know about God's will for your life.

[42 : 22] He called you, he loves you, he wants you to serve him. I mean, we don't want to do anything that doesn't make any sense with that. See? And lead us in other directions that are contrary to God's will, even contrary to his word.

So we just order our lives the best we understand, and as God leads us and directs us in a way that's consistent with what it means to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And not worry about, you know, the outcomes of all those things. So David, David's responsibility, get out of there, and he did that. Verse 13, so David and his men, about 600, rose and departed from Kailah and went wherever they could go.

Then it was told Saul that David had escaped from Kailah, so he halted to the expedition, so Saul never did go to the city. God spared Kailah.

He did not spare the people of Nob. You can go home tonight and try to answer that. So David was delivered, his 600 men were saved, and the people of Kailah were spared.

[43 : 33] So David rescuing by the power of God, David retreating by the providence of God, and David, one last thing, refining he's refining, he's being refined by the purposes of God.

And that's what we have really going on in the latter part of this chapter. So verse 14 says, And David stayed in strongholds in the wilderness and remained in the mountains in the wilderness of Ziph.

So it specifically names this place, wilderness of Ziph, we don't really know where that is. Saul sought him every day. I mean, he had nothing else to do.

He's king of the nation, but he's got nothing else to do but pursue David. But God did not deliver him, that is, David, into his hand.

And it's interesting that the word Ziph means to refine. It means to refine. The Hebrew word means to refine. And so this place that's called the wilderness, that's important, the wilderness of Ziph.

[44 : 39] Remember, this is David's wilderness experience, part of his wilderness experience. He's kind of going from one wilderness to another. And so the wilderness, the place called wilderness of

Ziph was a refining place for David.

A time for God to refine him, an opportunity for him to do that. And several things happened, a couple of things anyway, more than a couple, but two main things happened to David here in Ziph that were important to him.

One of them, a very good thing, very positive thing, something he needed, needed at that time. And something else that was very hard. So hard for him that he wrote a psalm about it.

We'll get to that here in a minute. But the first thing was Jonathan, Saul's son, comes to David there, meets with him, and encourages him.

And it's really very neat. Verse 16, he, that is, Jonathan went to David in the woods, a secluded private place, a place where he was hiding out, went to him in the woods, and strengthened his hand in God.

[45 : 52] I love that phrase. You know, don't get the idea that David had arrived, that he was just already so strong, and never doubted, never struggled, he certainly did.

And apparently he was at this time, in this wilderness, or this place of refining. And so he strengthened his hand in God, 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. This is Jonathan, this is Saul's son saying this. heir to the throne, Jonathan. And he's saying, I won't be king, you will be.

You will be king of Israel, and I shall be next to you, I'm going to be with you. As it turned out, he wasn't, was he? I mean, this isn't a prophecy, okay, this is Jonathan speaking, speaking out of his desire to encourage David, and also speaking from a fallible mind, and thought he very much wanted to desire to be with David, to be beside him, to support him as his king.

So I'll be with you. Even my father knows that. My father Saul knows this. In fact, really implying that this is the source of his anger toward you.

[47 : 25] All right, so we have that part that's very helpful to David. And then, secondly, we have the Ziphites, people lived in this wilderness, we have them betraying David to Saul.

And Saul pursued David to a place, they betrayed him, and he pursued him, the Ziphites went to Saul and said, he's right here in our land.

Saul said, go make sure where he is, and so they identified the place where David was, so Saul pursued him. The Bible says in verse 25, to a rock, to a rock.

A little bit later, that rock is going to be given a name, it's going to be made significant, this place. Now, if we're not told where it is, or what it was, really, it says the rock is part of the wilderness of Moun.

David had fled to that wilderness, I guess, adjacent to this wilderness of Ziph. It may have been a cliff, in fact, the word, the Hebrew word may refer to a kind of outcropping of rock, a cliff of some kind, or a place where you would have a good stronghold, you know, a strategic place, a rock.

[48 : 46] rock. But Saul was called away, wasn't he? Kind of interesting. And it really prepares us for what's going to come between Saul and the Philistines, but he's called away because of this report that the Philistines were attacking the land.

And so, the place, David's delivered once again. And so, the Bible says there in verse 28 that the place was called the Rock of Escape, forever named.

Now, I mentioned this a moment ago, but we have a record of David's prayer when he was being betrayed by the Ziphites. It's a psalm.

And it's Psalm 54. And so, I want to bring this to a close tonight by reading this psalm of David.

It's a relatively short psalm. And now that we have read the chapter, read the story, talked about that, we can see that coming out in this psalm, which is really a prayer.

[50 : 01] And I want to read the introduction there, which I believe, not everyone does, but I believe is part of the inspired text. It says, to the chief musician with stringed instruments, a contemplation, a contemplation or meditation of David when the Ziphites went and said to Saul, is David not hiding with us?

So this is his prayer. Save me. That would be our prayer too, wouldn't it be? Save me, O God, by your name.

He's kind of invoking the covenant, the covenant keeping God. His name is all wrapped up into that. Save me, O God, by your name, and vindicate me by your strength.

What did David need vindication for? He had not raised a hand against Saul. He was not an enemy of Saul. He said, well, he was going to be the next king.

He was chosen by God to be the next king, but that was God's choice. He said, vindicate me. I'm not a bad guy, not an evil guy, I'm not an enemy of Israel. Vindicate me by your strength.

[51 : 19] Hear my prayer, O God. Give ear to the words of my mouth. For strangers have risen up against me, that be the Ziphites, and oppressors have sought after my life.

They have not set God before them. That would be a reference to Saul. Behold, God is my helper. The Lord is with those who uphold my life.

He will repay my enemies for their evil. Cut them off in your truth. I will freely sacrifice to you. I will praise your name, O Lord, for it is good, for he has delivered me out of all trouble and my eye has seen its desire upon my enemies.

It's a prayer. Spurgeon, I'll quote Spurgeon one more time and we'll be finished. He said, as long as God hath an open ear, we cannot be shut up in trouble.

All other weapons may be useless, weapons we may have may be useless, but all prayer is ever more available. And that's true. So true.

[52 : 40] And you know it is, don't you? We know it by experience. Thank you.