

October 31

Scriptures: Read 1 Samuel 23 & 24

Key Verse: “Let the Lord judge between you and me, and let the Lord avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you.” (1 Samuel 24:12)

Overview

Though David was a fugitive in Israel, he risked everything to defend Israel, and the people still looked to him, rather than Saul, for deliverance. The Philistines, whom David had so often defeated with God’s help, were robbing the grain from the people of Keilah (in the fertile lowlands bordering Philistine territory). David twice inquired of God for guidance, probably through the prophet Gad. The first time he received the divine instruction to “go... and save Keilah” (23:2), since he had been ordained to be Israel’s deliverer. The second time, David inquired for confirmation because his men expressed doubts. God’s response was more specific that time, and He gave them confidence by saying, “I will deliver the Philistines into your hand” (23:4). David and his army knew that because of their small numbers (now grown from 400 to 600 men, 22:2; 23:13), an attack upon the Philistines without the help of the Lord would be futile.

It is surprising that, even after David had saved the people of Keilah from the Philistines, they were still willing to betray him; therefore, he had to escape from their city. David first inquired of the Lord before making any move. Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, brought with him the sacred ephod when he escaped Saul’s slaughter, and somehow through it the will of God was made clear (23:9-12).

When David knew Saul was coming to kill him and the people would not help him, he fled to the wilderness — a rough, desolate region of limestone rocks and caves between the Judean hills and the Dead Sea. During this period of hiding in the wilderness, David composed many of the beautiful psalms of praise to the Lord. He also met with Jonathan for the last time in this wilderness region of Ziph (about six kilometers southeast of Hebron). Jonathan went there to meet his dear friend David and, before renewing their covenant, he spoke words of encouragement to him that seemed prophetic: “Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel” (24:17). Yet, all the while, Saul continued his insane pursuit of David every day, “but God did not deliver him into his hand” (23:14). Saul was powerless before God who worked out all the timing of events in order to save David’s life. This was clearly evident in his escape from the mountain of Maon, when capture had seemed inevitable (23:26-28).

After Saul returned from dealing with the annoying Philistines, he wasted no time in his pursuit of David (24:1-2). Surely he had better things to do than chase someone who clearly meant him no harm. The purity of David’s motives was shown in the remarkable incident at En Gedi (an oasis in the limestone desert less than a kilometer above the Dead Sea on the east edge of the Judean desert). Providentially, while hunting for David, Saul went into the very cave where he was hiding. David could very easily have killed Saul, as his men urged him to do, but to him the thought of killing the anointed king and his father-in-law in revenge was abhorrant! He respected the authority of Saul as God’s anointed and would not take his life into his own hands; rather, he left Saul’s fate in the sovereign hands of God. David proved to be honourable and faithful to the

house of Saul, just as Ahimelech had spoken (22:14; 24:6). He showed the type of love for one's enemy that Jesus had and taught (Matthew 5:44). Even Saul testified to David's noble character. He realized that David, being more righteous and honourable than he, was worthy of the throne.

Prayer

Dear Lord, as David did not respond in harsh treatment to Saul and his family, even though Saul had wronged him terribly, so help us not to return evil for evil but do good to those who use us badly. Lord Jesus, You were the best example of this. We make You Lord of our lives. Amen.