

Message #58**I Samuel 23:19-29**

A few weeks ago we were swimming in our pool with our grandchildren. Now our pool has a shallow end and a deep end. Ellie can now stand in the shallow end with her head above water, without a life jacket, but she is not permitted to go beyond the shallow end into the deep end unless she has a life preserver. Madden can swim like a fish so he does not need one, but Ellie does.

So on this particular day Ellie wanted to go into the deep end and she did not have on her life preserver. She had hold of a little blow up tube that I don't trust. She could easily let go and be in trouble or it could lose air and she could be in trouble. She was appealing to me to let her go into the deep end with it. As I was trying to figure out what to do, she said, "Grandpa, if I go in the deep end you will be there." I thought about that and said, "Okay you can come out to the deep water as long as I am there." When she said that, I thought that is how it works with God. We can go into deep waters, because He is there with us.

David found himself in deep troubled waters continually. What David would learn is that God was there with Him every step of the way. Saul was relentless in his attempt to kill David. He was not satisfied with the fact that David was on the run and was far away. He wanted David dead. In fact, Saul wanted David dead "every day" (I Sam. 23:14).

Not only were Saul and his men after David, but there were plenty of allies to Saul who also wanted David dead and were willing to help him. No matter where David went, he found himself in deep troubling waters. But when David was in those deep troubling waters, David learned God was right there with him and he was safe.

WHEN YOU ARE RIGHT WITH GOD, YOU MAY DISCOVER MANY WILL BE AGAINST YOU AND FEW WILL BE LOYAL TO YOU; BUT WHAT YOU WILL ALSO SEE IS THAT GOD WILL ALWAYS BE WITH YOU AND PROTECT YOU.

This is a remarkable story in the life of David. He was just a few moments away from death and at just the right moment, God intervened and providentially delivered him. God kept Saul from touching David. God kept the world from touching David. He protected him and that is something David would learn first-hand.

There are six critical, narrative parts to this story that we want to see:

NARRATIVE PART #1 – The Ziphites betray David to Saul. 23:19-20

The Ziphites were descendants of Jehallelel (I Chron. 4:16), who was a descendant of Judah (I Chron. 4:1). They lived about 25 miles north of Gibeah, in somewhat of a wilderness area. These were David's Jewish relatives, who should have been on David's side, since he had helped defeat the Philistines in Judah's territory (I Sam. 17:1, 52).

They knew Saul was trying to kill David, and even though David had not done one thing against them, they were obviously against David.

More than likely, these Ziphites believed if they helped Saul, he would be favorable to them. They probably believed they could get some reward money. We may assume that these people may have heard that Saul had killed the priests of Nob and they may have been afraid that Saul might snap and kill them.

We don't know whether the Ziphites are doing this because they are afraid of Saul, or whether they think they can get something from Saul, or whether they are jealous of David.

What we do know is that they went to Saul with very precise information about David. They told Saul exactly where David was and told him that if he came to their area, they would give him up.

They told Saul that David was in the stronghold area of Horesh, he was on a specific hill named Hachilah and that hill was located on the south side of Jeshimon. That was the kind of specific information Saul could use (**v. 19**).

In **verse 20** we learn that the Ziphites “all desire” and are enthusiastic about turning over David to Saul. We certainly can understand their fear of Saul, but what we don't understand is why they are so against David.

But what we do know is that they are on the wrong side. They have not sought God and they do not care about the word or will of God in this. They are actually aligning themselves with one who is demonic and not right with God, against David who is right with God.

People who join themselves to those not right with God, against one who is right with God, are devilish. They do not have pure motives. In the end, they will pay a high price.

In fact, David wrote a psalm about these Ziphites and asked God to destroy them—Psalm 54. He knew that he would see God do just that.

NARRATIVE PART #2 – Saul blesses the Ziphites. 23:21

What a joke this is. This blessing that Saul is pronouncing means nothing. It is nothing but air. Saul is pretending to be in a position to pronounce God's blessings on someone, and God is not in Saul's life.

The Ziphites are impressed with this, but this is a joke. Saul piously said, “May you be blessed of the LORD, for you have had compassion on me.” Saul sees himself as the victim who needs compassion. This is how delusional people may become.

Saul is in no position to do this. God is not listening to him. People who are not right with God can talk so piously about God. They know the lingo and they can even pray and pronounce their blessings. Their hearts are not right with God and they are hellish. Jesus called these kinds of people whited sepulchers, hypocrites and vipers.

NARRATIVE PART #3 – Saul gives instruction to the Ziphites. **23:22-24a**

Saul took advantage of this moment. In **verse 22**, he told the Ziphites to go back and carefully investigate the precise location of David. Go find out exactly where he is and who has actually seen him.

Saul said, “I am told he is very cunning.” Here is a classic case of demonic projection. Saul is the one who is cunning and deceitful and he projects this onto David, when in all reality David is not like this in any way. David is smart and not foolish in warfare, but he is not the one who is cunning.

People in sin often project their sin on others. People who want power will often allege someone else is power crazed. People who are lazy often project how hard they work. Saul was the one who was cunning and he projects this on David.

There is absolutely no doubt that David did know this country very well. As a shepherd, caring for his sheep, he travelled all around these areas and he knew the best hiding spots in the world. I doubt seriously that when he was growing up and caring for those sheep and looking at the geography and topography of the land, he ever dreamed he would be hiding in those same secret spots.

But this again shows the sovereignty of God even when David was growing up. Things that happen to you in your younger days and things you do as a child or jobs you have or places you go may, in fact, come full circle years later and you may be greatly used by God.

Saul said in **verse 23** there are thousands of people in Judah so go and find him and come back and I will go with you. At the beginning of **verse 24**, the Ziphites arose and went to Ziph before Saul.

NARRATIVE PART #4 – David was living and hiding in a barren wilderness. **23:24**

There are many words used in this verse that indicate that David and his men were hiding in a barren, dry, desert type of wilderness.

When we lived in Idaho, there was a desert called the Arco Desert that actually had a Nuclear Energy Plant in it. Just the perimeters of the big desert cover 300 miles. I envision David hiding in this type of area; it is all barren and dry.

The “wilderness of Maon” is a barren territory located about 5 miles south of Ziph. The “Arabah” is a term that refers to a desert type of wilderness area. The term “Jeshimon” refers to a barren, desert type of wasteland area.

The point to see here is that David, who is right with God, is not able to exist in some nice plush area. He is hiding out in barren, remote, desert type of terrain. Obviously he was a trained survivalist because not too many people can survive in places like this.

You must wonder what went through David’s mind. Jonathan had told him he would be the next king of Israel. So David was destined to become the next honored king of Israel and he is living an outlaw type of existence that seemed inconsistent with the promises of God.

NEGATIVE PART #5 – Saul pursues David out in the wilderness. **23:25-26**

When Saul pinpointed David's location, he chased him out in the wilderness of Maon. When David learned of this he "came down to the rock in the wilderness of Maon." This rock was apparently a good place to look out and defend.

According to **verse 26**, Saul and his men started up the mountain and David and his men were trying to get away.

They were apparently getting close to David, but that is when God sovereignly intervened. God's timing will always be the best timing and it will always be at just the right time.

NEGATIVE PART #6 – God sovereignly intervenes to deliver David. **23:27-29**

We need to do everything we can to protect ourselves and when we reach the moment where we cannot do anything more, God will be there in the deep water.

Saul and his men were intending to seize David. Had God permitted this confrontation, I am totally convinced that David would have won and Saul would have lost. But God had other plans.

At just the right moment, God sent a messenger to Saul informing him that the Philistines were making a raid on the land.

What irony this is. The one man who can defeat the Philistines and has beaten them every single time is the man Saul is trying to kill. God is sovereignly reminding Saul of this right here.

So Saul had to turn back from hunting David and that gave David the opportunity to escape to Engedi.

Engedi was an oasis east of Hebron above the shores of the Dead Sea. David and his men would have shelter, fresh water, isolation and protection.

What was David learning through this?

(Lesson #1) - Being right with God does not mean you always have it easy.

(Lesson #2) - Being faithful to God does not mean you will be immune from threats and warfare.

(Lesson #3) - Being right with God does mean God will always providentially protect you.

God promises that He will not leave or forsake His people. The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of trials and temptations (II Pet. 2:9). He will always keep His people one step ahead of the enemy.

(Lesson #4) - Being right with God means you can trust God that He will provide for you.

(Lesson #5) - Being right with God means in the end you win.