

“The Heart of Benevolence”
1 Samuel 23:1-5
(Preached at Trinity, November 12, 2017)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. David's life was not unlike the life of every believer. There were times when his faith was great and God seemed so near. And then there were those times when the trials of life were so distracting that he functioned more on the level of rationality and human reason than on the level of faith. Such were the days when David's life seemed on the brink of destruction as he fled from Saul. He lied and deceived as he desperately tried to preserve his life.
2. By the time we reached **Chapter 22** David had arrived alone at the cave of Adullam and his faith was renewed. As he reflected upon the greatness of God in the cave he penned **Psalm 57**.
Psalm 57:1-2 NAU - "Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me, For my soul takes refuge in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge Until destruction passes by. ² I will cry to God Most High, To God who accomplishes *all things* for me."
3. Now as we come to **Chapter 23** we find David as a man who is looking to God for direction in everything.
4. David receives word that the Philistines were waging war against Keilah. In **Joshua 15** we read that Keilah was one of the cities assigned to Judah as a part of their inheritance. This means they were David's kinsmen. David faced a difficult decision. Should he remain obscure and avoid being discovered by Saul who is still pursuing him, or should he go to war against the Philistines and deliver Keilah?
5. This is the age-old tension of looking upon those who are in need. To what degree are we expected to make sacrifice for the good of those in need? It reminds us of the Parable of the Good Samaritan.
Luke 10:30-35 NAU - "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. ³¹ "And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² "Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ "But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, ³⁴ and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on *them*; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ "On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.'"
6. This is the heart of benevolence. The dictionary definition of benevolence is "a disposition to do good." But how to practice it can sometimes be difficult.

7. David saw the situation and evaluated the need but it would demand much from him. He immediately sought the will of God.
1 Samuel 23:2 NAU - "So David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?"
8. God's answer was clear, "Go and attack the Philistines and deliver Keilah."
 a. David's soldiers, however, weren't so sure this was the best thing to do. Wasn't it imposing unnecessary risk?
1 Samuel 23:3 NAU - "Behold, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more then if we go to Keilah against the ranks of the Philistines?"
 b. This prompted David to seek God's direction again as an affirmation. Again, God told him to defend Keilah from the hand of the Philistines.
 c. So, David went to war and God gave him victory.
9. What I want us to glean from this passage was David's heart of mercy towards the city of Keilah. Instead of turning away, he displayed a heart of benevolence towards them. We can gain some insight here regarding the nature of benevolence. Like David, we should seek the Word of God.
10. The Bible has much to say about caring for the poor and other acts of benevolence.
Proverbs 14:21 NAS - "He who despises his neighbor sins, But happy is he who is gracious to the poor."
Proverbs 21:13 NAS - "He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be answered."
Proverbs 28:27 NAS - "He who gives to the poor will never want, But he who shuts his eyes will have many curses."
- I. First of all, benevolence will often demand great personal sacrifice
 A. The text tells us in **Verse 1** that David had become aware of the plight of Keilah
 1. They were already under attack. The Philistines were plundering them, seizing their harvested grain.
 2. David could have easily ignored their plight. It would have made no difference in David's condition. In fact, by reaching out to Keilah David was exposing himself and his men to danger. David's men voiced their fears to David.
 B. Benevolence will always demand sacrifice
 1. The churches of Macedonia were praised for their generosity in giving to the poor saints at Jerusalem even in the face of their own personal poverty
2 Corinthians 8:2-5 NAU - "that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. ³ For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, *they gave* of their own accord, ⁴ begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, ⁵ and *this*, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God."
 2. Benevolence will cost us both of our possessions and of ourselves. We've heard the many stories of Christians hiding Jews in Nazi Germany.

- II. Benevolence demands careful prudence
- A. David didn't just leap to action
1. The people of Keilah were in a desperate situation. The Philistines were plundering their threshing floors and hauling off their grain. David carefully examined the situation.
 2. He sought God twice regarding whether or not he should go.
 3. He also gave attention to the concerns of his men
 4. Do we seek God's direction in all areas of life? We may not have an ephod or the Urim and Thummim but we are not left without direction. We have what David did not have—a clear word from God through His Word. Even something like the practice of benevolence should cause us to follow careful principles.
- B. Benevolence requires carefulness
1. Too often people expend themselves and their resources more from a motive of selfish satisfaction than actually helping those in need. Good intentions are not the same thing as caring for the needs of others.
 2. One volunteer on the front lines after the F-5 tornado swept through Joplin, MO commented: "Since many of us don't have the funds to write big checks, we raid our pantries and closets for stuff, which piles up in parking lots and drains resources—mainly volunteers who might have been more usefully employed clearing away rubble."¹
 3. It demands from us taking time to investigate. It's easier just to hand someone some money and move on. But are we really doing Biblical benevolence?
 4. We must give. We must help. But we must do so in a manner that actually helps.
- C. Benevolence must be directed by God's direction which is found in His Word. There are Biblical principles that should direct our giving.
1. The principle of private ownership.
 - a. The eighth commandment teaches the right to private ownership and the sin of taking someone else's wealth
 - b. Caring for the poor is not the redistribution of wealth. A wealthy man should be generous and compassionate, but should not feel guilty because he has while someone else does not have.
 - c. This is the flaw behind our government's welfare system which sees something evil about being wealthy. Seizing the possessions of one man in order to give them to another violates God's Law.
 2. The principle of work - We shouldn't give to those who refuse to work. **2 Thessalonians 3:10 NAU** - "For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either."

¹ Cheaney, Janie B., *World Magazine*. Ashville, NC, November 30, 2017, Page 14.

- a. The work principle was the principle behind gleaning
The law gave strict orders regarding how the harvest was to be gathered
Leviticus 19:9-10 NAS - "Now when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, neither shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God."
 - b. This allowed the poor to come and glean from the field—but it demanded work.
We can see this in practice in the Book of Ruth
 - c. The Bible teaches a work mandate. God has created us to work and earn our bread. Benevolence must not encourage idleness.
Pastor Cotton Mather encouraged his church members to be careful not to “abuse your charity by misapplying it.”
Pastor Charles Chauncey gave instructions to be careful in “the Distribution of Charity” so that they would not “dispense it promiscuously” and “bestow upon those the bread of charity who might earn their own bread if they did not shamefully idle away their time.”
 - d. During the 19th century woodyards were often located next to homeless shelters where men were given an axe and put to work chopping wood. People were classified as “worthy” or “unworthy” of charity based upon their willingness to work.
3. The principle of family
 - a. Families have a duty to care for their own when one falls into poverty – this would include widows, fatherless, aged parents etc.
 - b. Paul taught this when he gave instruction for caring for widows
1 Timothy 5:8 NAU - "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."
 4. The principle of caring first for other believers
Galatians 6:10 NAU - "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."
This was the practice of the early church
Acts 4:32-35 NAU - "And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one *of them* claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. ³³ And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. ³⁴ For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales ³⁵ and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need."

5. The principle of compassion.
 - a. David looked upon the citizens of Keilah with compassion. As king, it was actually Saul's responsibility to come to their aid. David demonstrated his heart of compassion.
 - b. Are we willing to care for someone who is hurting? How would we want to be treated if we were in the same situation?
 - c. As concerned as David was over his own safety and the safety of those following him, he did not disregard the needs of Keilah.

III. Benevolence demands faithful obedience

- A. David was careful but he was also obedient
 1. David was expected to care for his own survival, and he had a responsibility for those who were depending upon his protection—but he also had a duty to care for his neighbors.
 2. He was willing to make the sacrifice to deliver these people in need
 3. He sought God's direction, but when God said, "Go" David went.
1 Samuel 23:5 NAU - "Thus David delivered the inhabitants of Keilah."
 4. In other words, David had a heart to obey God and he obeyed
- B. God commands us to give regard to those in need – particularly to other Christians
James 2:15-16 NAU - "If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that?"
 1. God is a God of mercy and He always champions those who are poor and afflicted.
Exodus. 22:22-24 NAU - "You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. ²³ "If you afflict him at all, *and* if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry; ²⁴ and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless."
 2. God expects us to give
2 Corinthians 9:6-7 NAU - "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

Conclusion:

1. As Christians we must look beyond ourselves. We should care for others and help the afflicted when able.
2. But we must follow Biblical principles, not just run aimlessly following our good intentions.
3. While we should care for the afflicted we should be careful as we benevolence in conjunction with evangelism.
 - a. We should never use food, or clothes, or money as a means of attracting people to Christ or to the church.
 - b. Benevolence must not be used as a form of bribery to entice people to do something. It is simply a heart stirred over the needs of others.