

### INTRODUCTION

Each recent chapter of this book has driven a wedge between Saul and David so that they are growing further and further apart. It becomes increasingly obvious that God is with David and has abandoned Saul. It is becoming clearer that it is David and not Saul who is God's anointed King and further evidence of this is seen in this chapter. It is seen in three ways.

#### 1. DAVID'S ACCESS TO GOD (vs. 1-13)

It's harvest time and all the hard work of sowing and preparation for the harvest is over. The people of Keilah which was a fortified city about eight miles from Hebron and just a few miles from Adullam were looking forward to enjoying the produce of all their hard work. But then disaster strikes for the Philistines who the enemy of God's people attack Keilah and they begin looting the harvest (v 1).

They are seeking to reap what they did not sow and of course if successful the people of Keilah would be left hungry for the rest of the year. Under normal circumstances Saul would be the one notified of such an attack because as king it was his responsibility to protect his citizens but whether he was notified and failed to act or simply ignored we are not told. But we are told that David is notified and his band of merry men is growing for he now has another 200 men; so his followers now number 600 (v 13). But how will David respond? He responds like the true king that he is. He consults God as to what he is to do (v 2). The reason he is able to do this is that when Abiathar escaped from the slaughter at the city of Nob he brought with him the ephod.

A description of the ephod is given to us in Exodus 28; and the breastplate was part of the ephod and within the breastplate the Urim and Thummim were located. The Urim and Thummim were probably stones that were used by the Priest to discern God's will. God used the Urim and Thummim to answer yes or no to specific questions asked of him. David as the true King has the Priest Abiathar on his side and he has the ephod so he now has access to God.

Increasingly David is proving to be the true King and Saul is showing himself up as a king who has been forsaken by God. The Lord tells David to attack the Philistines and deliver Keilah like a true King (v 2). However David's followers need more convincing for they already have one enemy in Saul and they do not want to stir up even more trouble by picking a fight with the Philistines (v 3). But David consults the Lord again probably this time with the people present and the Lord assures them of victory (v 4). This encouraged David's army who undertook the dangerous mission. On reaching Keilah David and his men began by taking away the Philistines' livestock; this was to stop the invaders from moving any of the wheat and grain that they have already gathered (v 5). Then David and his men defeated the Philistines; they inflicted heavy losses upon them and saved Keilah. Here is David the king the Saviour of his people (v 5). The result was that David and his men now had a home; for they were welcomed into the fortified city of Keilah (v 7). However when Saul heard that David was in Keilah he was delighted for he believed that David had made a tactical blunder by living in a fortified city.

Out in the open David could move easily from place to place but in a fortified city all Saul had to do was to surround the walled city and sooner or later the people would have to surrender as supplies ran out. In the twisted workings of Saul's mind he saw this as God's will (v 7); poor Saul has not yet come to understand that God is for David and against him. Saul planned to besiege the city (v 8) but when David heard about this he faced a dilemma. Should he remain in the city and withstand a siege or would the people in order to save themselves give David up to Saul. So

David did what godly kings do; he consulted the Lord using Abiathar the Priest and the ephod (v 9). He asked the Lord if what he had heard about Saul was true and would the people of Keilah hand him over to Saul (vs. 10-12).

The answer that he received from the Lord was in the affirmative and so David leads his men out of the city in order to save themselves but also in order to save the city of Keilah for when Saul hears that David has left Keilah he does not bother going there (v 13).

There are two ways that we can apply this passage. We can see David as a type of Christ for he is the anointed of God who is the Saviour of his people. David acts to crush his enemy and deliver the people of God and so Jesus Christ acted in order to crush the enemy of sin, Satan and death and to deliver his people from destruction.

He does this not through physical force or military strategy but by giving his life in our place and taking our sin and God's wrath upon himself and releasing God's people from the grip of Satan and condemning Satan to defeat and everlasting torment. This is why Jesus is the only Saviour; only Jesus has defeated our enemies; no one else has done that and I know this is the case because Jesus rose from the dead to prove that what He did was accepted by God. Every other religious leader who has made claims of being a Saviour is dead today; they have been conquered by the enemy of death but Jesus is the only true Saviour who has conquered all our enemies including death and is therefore able to deliver us from eternal death and give us eternal life.

Therefore if you have not yet experienced the salvation that Jesus is able to give you then call out to him today for mercy and you will find him to be the only true Saviour of his people. The result will be that like David you will have access to God which brings me to my next application.

David has access to God and to his guidance through the appointed Priest and the appointed means. Just as he had access to God's word through the prophet Gad (22:5) now he has access to God's presence through the appointed Priest. Likewise every true believer today also enjoys this privilege.

We have God's word written and translated in our own language and we also have access to God through his great High Priest but this High Priest is not a mere man but it is the Lord Jesus Christ who is God's appointed High Priest for his people. Through Jesus' life death and resurrection He has opened the way for us to approach God through Jesus our Great High Priest. Listen to how the writer of the Hebrews puts this (Hebrews 4:14-16). We have a High priest who has identified with us and been tempted in the same way we are yet unlike us He did not give in; He did not sin. Therefore He understands what it is like to be human and to live in this sinful world and to face the daily battles that we face and He is able to sympathise with us. This is why the writer of the book of Hebrews encourages us to approach him with confidence and to seek mercy and grace from him in our time of need.

On the human level no one is allowed to approach a Monarch without permission being given; well here in the book of Hebrews permission is being given for us to approach this God who understands us better than we do ourselves and we approach him through Jesus who became one of us in order to open the way to God. Let me ask you how often do you approach this King? Do we make a habit of doing it? He wants us to come to him and pour out our hearts to him. He has all the grace that we need so we must approach him and ask him for his grace and thank him that we can approach him openly and this is only possible because of Jesus who has opened the way to God. This is a privilege that is not open to everyone; everybody cannot approach God for it is only those whose sin has been forgiven that have access to God. Therefore are you enjoying and making use of this access.

However if you have never been forgiven then the good news is that you too can have access by seeking his grace for salvation and forgiveness. Jesus has entered our world in order to deal with the barrier of sin the barrier that stops us approaching God therefore I encourage you to seek his forgiveness and enjoy this access and find grace in our times of need. The second piece of evidence that David and not Saul is God's anointed King is seen in the way that:

## 2. DAVID PRESERVED BY THE LORD (vs. 14-18)

After leaving Keilah David and his men moved southwards and took up residence in the wilderness of Ziph (v 14) which was 2,900 feet above sea level. It was a very hot, dry and rocky area which afforded good opportunities for hiding. But David's hiding did not depend on David's skills of hiding but upon the Lord (v 14) for although Saul sought David day after day the Lord would not give David into the hands of Saul because David not Saul was God's appointed King. God saw to it that David would be preserved and one day take up his position as king over all Israel but in the meantime God has to keep David hidden. But how was God going to preserve David?

We read that just when David heard that Saul was out to take his life (v 15) Jonathan comes to David in order to encourage him to keep trusting in God's promises (v 16). David must have been very anxious for his own life and he also must have felt the frustration of having to move from place to place so the Lord sends his trusted friend Jonathan to him in order to strengthen him. How does Jonathan encourage David?

It is not by giving him a hug and reassuring him but he encourages David by reminding him of God's word (vs. 16-17). He reminds David of God's purpose for him and David finds strength in the Lord.

The Lord preserves his people today by protecting us from our enemies who are out to destroy us if they can. Our enemies today are not people but they are the enemy of sin and Satan who is out to trip us up. But thankfully the Lord refuses to give us into his hands He preserves us and one of the ways that He does this is to send people into our lives who encourage us. This is one of the purposes for placing us in churches; God keeps us trusting in him by encouraging us through his people. But it is important that we understand how God encourages us; how He enables us to persevere in the faith. He reminds us of his word and his purposes that's how He does it.

There are times when we all need a hug and be reassured but although that might help us in the very short term to keep going, what we all need in order to persevere is to hear God's word and be reminded of his purposes. This is what I trust hearing God's word each Sunday does for us; it reminds us of what we know to be true and enables us to keep going and to keep trusting in our God even when times are hard.

Likewise it is important to understand that our perseverance in the faith does not ultimately depend on us for the Lord is the one who is preserving us for the fulfilment of his purposes but He uses our fellow Christians to do so. This is why it is important that we keep on reminding one another of God's word; and the best thing that we can do for one another when we are feeling low or frustrated is to read God's word to one another and exhort one another to heed it and obey it. David and Jonathan part company; they go their separate ways (v 18) but David in particular goes his way encouraged through his friend and by the word of God. Let us make it our goal today to encourage someone in the faith and the best way we can do that is by reminding each other of God's promises and his purposes.

But there is one final piece of evidence that David and not Saul is God's anointed King and that is seen in the way that:

### 3. GOD WORKS OUT HIS PROVIDENCE (vs. 19-29)

God clearly favours David over Saul and rescues him from Saul's hands through the means of providence. The people of Ziph probably had some sense of loyalty towards Saul and they also want to earn his favour so they go to Saul in Gibeah and disclose to him David's location (v 18). They told Saul that David is hiding in their territory (v 19) and they promise that if Saul comes to get David they will take responsibility for handing David over to Saul (v 20).

Saul pronounces a blessing upon the people (v 21) which just shows that even Saul can be religious when it suits him and then Saul asks the people of Ziph to make preparations for him. They are to find out exactly where David is and to list all his hiding places (vs. 22-23). Saul was aware that David was crafty in his moves so accurate information was going to be the key in catching him. Of course Saul had not reckoned on the fact that the reason Saul could not catch David had more to do with God's plan than David's craftiness.

The people of Ziph do their homework and discover that David and his men are in Maon (v 24). They inform Saul who sets out with his army in pursuit of David (v 25). Saul and his men were going along one side of the mountain and David and his men are going along the other side of the mountain.

But as the tension builds and as it seems certain that Saul will finally capture David (v 26) suddenly a messenger comes to Saul to tell him that the Philistines are raiding the land (v 27) and so Saul is diverted and leaves David alone as he goes to deal with the threat of the Philistines (v 28). That place is now known as Hammahlekoth (rock of parting v 28) and David and his men flee to the stronghold of En Gedi (v 29).

If you do not believe in a God who is sovereign and in control of everything; a God who works out his purposes in this world then you might consider David to be very lucky. With luck like that you might encourage him to put his £1 on the national lottery. But of course we all know better than that and with the eyes of faith we see that here is one example of the variety of ways that God preserves and delivers his people from their enemies. We also ought to marvel at God's timing; it was just when everything looked bleak and David seemed to be doomed that God moves.

We should also be amazed at how God uses his enemies in order to preserve his true people. God works out his purposes in our lives in ways that often surprise us. Can we not all recount stories of the surprising ways that God has worked in our lives? Have we not been surprised at how God has helped us and have we not been surprised at the sort of people that He has used to further his cause? How often has God used those who outwardly oppose him to do his people good?

Of course often the unbeliever is not intending to do good to God's people; just as it was not the Philistines purpose to help David out; but God who is sovereign uses whoever He wishes in order to bless his people. It is also strange that so often God waits to the very last minute before He acts to change the situation for the better. A certain church declines in number and is at the size where the question is being asked should it close. They actually try to sell the building because they can no longer afford to keep it; but suddenly it's the unbelievers of the community who raise an objection to the selling of the building and before long that little church gets unwanted publicity but in the ways of God He uses that incident to begin to build that church again.

That is simply how God works; his timing is always perfect not from our perspective but from his and He always intends to bless his people even in the midst of trials and tribulation. That is why in every situation of life and in every hardship we must rely upon our Sovereign God to work out his purposes. We must continue to trust him and depend upon him and look to him to change our various situations in ways that will bring glory to his name.

We must live in the knowledge that God is sovereign and He is working his providence out in this world and in our lives and therefore whatever our current situation may be personally or collectively as a church that is the circumstance or situation that God has planned for us at this time and He wants us to trust him in the midst of it all and watch how He works his providence out at just the right time in order to bless his people.

Therefore let us be amazed at God's providential ways and rejoice in his goodness and grace towards us.

Amen