

The Great Escape

Text: I Samuel 23

In this continuation of the life of David, we come to a chapter that speaks of the providence of God and the protection and guidance of God's servant. All through my growing up years I was told to never forget the words of Dr. George W. Truett, who said, "Success; what is success? Success is finding the will of God for your life and doing it." Acts 13:36a: "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God...."

I. THE REWARD OF OBEDIENCE

I Samuel 23:1-5

In the midst of David's constant fleeing from Saul, God gives him the order to deliver Keilah from the marauding Philistines. Common sense would say, save yourself and your loyal men; you don't have time to go on a mission. In the world we live in, we would also be tempted to just "hole-up" and wait for the rapture. But we have been given a Great Commission (Matthew 28:19, 20a). In the carrying out of Christ's Great Commission, we see a Divine protection (Matthew 28:20b; Mark 16:15-20). The Lord Jesus said in Luke 19:13, "And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come." In other words, our Lord was saying, here's your gift; now invest it; don't waste it and don't bury it. We are commissioned to do Christ's bidding until He comes. No matter how much we do for the Lord we'll always be able to say with the faithful servant in Luke 14:22: "And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room."

The Philistines had come to ransack the harvest of Keilah. David and his men fought and won a notable victory over the Philistines and got more than they bargained for, because the Philistines had come to capture the harvest and carry it away with their cattle. So after the victory, David received the spoils, i.e., the Philistines' cattle. God is so good to reward obedience. Psalm 91:7-16 shows the reward of the loving obedient servant of the Lord.

II. THE CONTRAST IN COMMAND

I Samuel 23:6, 7

What a stark contrast between the chosen king and the rejected king. The remaining priest of God, Abiathar had now joined allegiance to the true king, David. Along with the priest came the ephod.

A. David had a Sure Word.

I Samuel 23:6. The ephod housed the Urim and Thummim (Exodus 28:28-30). This was the method used to determine God's will in any matter. Now, since the canon of Scripture is complete, we may determine God's will by the "usin' and the thumbin'" of God's Word. II Peter 1:19: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Day Star arise in your hearts."

B. Saul had self-deception.

I Samuel 23:7. Saul is speaking as though God has led him. There is nothing sadder than speaking as though God has led you, when He has not led you. It could be

said of Saul what was said of Edom in Obadiah 1:3: “The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?”

III. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MAN

I Samuel 23:9-14

David enquired of the Lord to determine if Saul was going to come down to Keilah to seek him out for destruction and the Lord confirmed it was so. David further inquired of the Lord if the men of Keilah would double-cross him after saving them and their livelihood from the Philistines and again the Lord confirmed it. Then David took the initiative and fled with his men from Keilah. Here we see the foreknowledge of God working hand in hand with the responsibility of man. God told David what would happen and now David was responsible to act on what he knew. This principle is illustrated throughout the Bible. Here’s a classic example in Acts 27:22-44. Paul was given the definite promise from God that everyone would be saved. Acts 27:22: “And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.” And yet, we observe in verse 31: “Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.” Would anyone jumping ship drown? Most assuredly. Did God promise that although the ship would be destroyed that everyone would still be saved? Most definitely! We recognize God’s foreknowledge and predestinated purposes at work, but at the same time man’s volition is still required. Allow me to share three anecdotes:

- A. The helicopter and the parade
- B. A trip on the Queen Mary
- C. Playing chess with the chess master

IV. THE FRIEND AND THE FOES

I Samuel 23:16-24

- A. The blessed tie that binds.

In I Samuel 23:16-18, Jonathan and David made the formal blood covenant. They had already in their hearts agreed in covenant as seen in I Samuel 18:3: “Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.” Notice the different wording in I Samuel 23:18: “And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.” Five chapters later in the midst of the wood, these fast friends go into the formal covenant sealed by blood. This is illustrated with Abraham in Genesis 15 and referred to in Ezekiel 20:37 and Psalm 89:30-35.

- B. The bitter betrayal

I Samuel 23:19-24. Although David was a fellow tribal member of Judah, the men of Ziph (men of Judah) were more than willing to turn against him. It is at this time David writes the 54th Psalm:

1. David acknowledges the power in God’s name. (Psalm 54:1a).

Proverbs 18:10: “The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.”

2. David chooses prayer over worry (Psalm 54:2).
3. David declares God is his Helper (Psalm 54:4; Psalm 46:1).
4. David allocates vengeance into God's hands (Psalm 54:5; Psalm 94:1; Romans 12:19).
5. David will praise the Lord (Psalm 54:6; I Thessalonians 5:18).
6. David recognizes that there are no problems in his life exempt from God's deliverance (Psalm 54:7; Psalm 34:6).

V. THE MIRACULOUS MESSENGER

I Samuel 23:25-29

I Samuel 23:27: "But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land." Another name for angel is messenger. Psalm 91:11: "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." Hebrews 13:2: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

CONCLUSION:

- A. In Christ we have better promises in a better Covenant: Hebrews 8:6.
- B. In Christ we have better things in a better Covenant: Hebrews 12:24.

The story is told in the days of the Scottish Covenanters that a little lady was taking the risk to go deep into the woods to meet with the true church. On this Sunday morning Bloody Mary had assigned her knights the task to comb the highways and byways for the Covenanters who would dare to risk their lives to meet. Two knights found the Christian lady driving her carriage deep into the woods and cried out with lowered lances, "And where be you going on this Sabbath morning?" Knowing that if they knew where she was going, she would be killed (as many thousands had been) or imprisoned, leaving her children orphaned. But at that very moment, the Lord gave her a very truthful answer that these papal strangers to the saving grace of God would not understand. The godly lady said, "Ah! Kind sirs, I be going to me Father's House. For you see, me Elder Brother hath died. And today they are reading His last will and Testament and I have a great part in His inheritance." With that, the knights lifted their lances and said, "Then you may go free."

Thank God for the great escape (I Corinthians 10:13)!

-Pastor Pope-