

# David in danger

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[0:00] Today is a special day, isn't it, in the life of our church? Appointing, formally inducting! Jerome Pearson as elder. It's a special day in the life of our church. And we're at the beginning of the week of prayer. That's a special thing as well. But why bother to pray in January when days are cold, when things are feeling a bit wet today, when evenings draw in very quickly, gets dark very early, we might want to be on the sofa with a blanket over us, with a hot chocolate in the evenings, watching Call the Midwife, the Great Brodery Showdown, the Traitors, whatever you watch on TV. Why bother to pray? Why bother to come out and pray when it feels like we're in a good place at the moment in church life? Today is a special day. We have another elder in the life of our church. Why bother to pray? He's answered the prayers that we've been praying about in regard to that. Why bother to pray this week?

Why do we need to? Well, for help with that, we turn to 1 Samuel 23. But probably feels like we're in a situation far, far away from David here. None of us, as far as I know, are about to head out to war against our enemies. Why has Daniel turned us to here to help us to find encouragement to pray? Why couldn't we have gone to the Lord's Prayer or one of Paul's prayers in the New Testament? That would be more obvious, wouldn't it? But we as a church, we've been looking through 1 Samuel, and this is where we end up this week in 1 Samuel 23. I want to just tell you the story so far, in case you haven't been around for it. Over the last few chapters, we've seen these two characters, particularly Saul, who is the king in Israel. He's in that position still, even though God has said, I'm not going to have any more of your family as king. I'm going to start again with kingship in Israel. And so Samuel went to anoint David as king, but he's not there yet. And Saul hates David. He's a threat to him and his rule, and he wants David dead. And so David is very much on the run in these chapters. Last week, we saw David's family came to join him in the cave. We saw others come to join him, a whole load of unlikely people, people in debt, people in distress, people discontented. And they found in David a king in waiting who understands what it's like to be them. And then later in the passage, Saul ordered the priests to be killed. And we saw that one priest, Abiathar, who managed to escape from death and find safety in David. David. And so for David, we're seeing he has a growing team of people gathering around him. His influence is growing. They're for him. They're on his side. And actually, when we think about it like that, maybe we're not as far away from this situation as we think as a church. Perhaps we can relate to that in some way. It's not the same, but in some way we can relate. The Lord is adding to the leadership here at the church. We're having more and more people joining us on Sundays. We've got a good crowd here. Maybe we can relate to that in some way. But we can't rest on that. There's still work to do in this city. There's still the gospel to proclaim to a needy city. There's things in our church building that need sorting that we don't really know what to do with at the moment. We may have added to the leadership team, but that doesn't stop people in our church family from struggling, from going through hard times of different kinds. And so it is a special day for us as a church, but we need to keep looking to the

[4:55] Lord in prayer. Keep looking to him for wisdom and help. And David here, though his team around him is growing, there's kind of safety in numbers. He's got 400 or so men around him. He still has a work to do. He still has the same problems of a king who wants him dead. And so in this chapter, we're going to follow David and see what happens through chapter 23. So first thing we see is prayer. What's the situation that David is

in? There in verse 23, verse 1, when David was told, look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are looting the threshing floors. The Philistines are fighting a town in Judah.

Here's a little map. There's a red circle. That's where they are. Philistia is just over to the left of that. They're there in that town, the Philistines, fighting them. And it says there in verse 1, they are looting the threshing floors. What problem does that give? Well, if they're doing that, that means they're taking grain. And taking grain means no bread. The Philistines are taking key provisions for the people there, for the Lord's people. And so when David hears about this, he wonders whether he and his new fighting force should go off to Keilah and fight against the Philistines. Should he do that?

And so what's David going to do? Well, of course, you'd expect he wouldn't do anything. He's fearing for his life. Don't draw attention to yourself, David, because if you do, if you go off to battle and win, Saul's just going to get more jealous of you and want you dead even more. It would be silly going off to do anything about this.

I was in a school building for sort of half an hour on Wednesday helping my wife, who does schools work in Brighton Hove, saw this poster on the wall. In the event of a firearms attack, run, hide, tell. For David, in the event of a king, after your life, throwing spears at you, run, get out of there, hide. And this is telling the police, tell the Israelite police, whoever they are. That seems sensible, doesn't it? Run and hide. Don't be drawing attention to yourself by going off and fighting the Philistines. Well, what does David do where he considers going to fight?

Verse 2, he inquired of the Lord, saying, shall I go and attack these Philistines? And the Lord answers him, go attack the Philistines and save Keilah.

[8:16] Humanly speaking, this seems absolutely ridiculous. David, who is fearing for his life, who has gathered these 400 men around him who are in distress, who are in debt and discontented. David is thinking, I'm going to take these guys off and we're going to fight the Philistines. What's he doing?

And David's men feel the same. Verse 3, David's men said to him, here in Judah, we're afraid. How much more then if we go to Keilah against the Philistine forces? David and the men around him, they're afraid. The king wants to take David's life and he probably wants to take their life too. Saul will kill anybody on David's side. We're here in Judah and we're afraid. And you're saying we're going to go off and attack the Philistine forces. We're feeling very fearful of that. And this is going to attract the attention of Saul. David's men say we're afraid. How much more afraid will we be if we go and attack?

Well, verse 4, what does David do? Once again, David inquired of the Lord. And the Lord answered him, go down to Keilah, for I'm going to give the Philistines into your hands.

[9:47] The instructions of the Lord are clear. Go down and fight and I will give them into your hands. I will make sure you win the battle. Run, hide, tell. Seems very sensible in this situation, but that's not what the Lord is calling David to here. He's calling him to go off with this unlikely group of men who were afraid and go off to battle.

Verse 5. So David and his men went to Keilah, fought the Philistines and carried off their livestock. He inflicted heavy losses on the Philistines and saved the people of Keilah. Now Abiathar, son of Himalek, had brought down the ephod with him when he fled to David at Keilah. The Lord's word was right.

They went.

He details the life of Gladys Aylward, who was a missionary. He went off to China. An ordinary girl in many ways, growing up in London.

[11:21] But she felt a real heart to go to China. She found training at the China Inland Mission. And when she got there to begin her training, she was warned that it would take over a month to get there.

They would be expected to remain for at least seven years before coming home for their first leave. They will very often be short of money.

They will be without medical help in times of sickness or police protection in times of danger. And there were two women to every man in the mission.

So they would probably be single for the rest of their days. Gladys. But Gladys was sure that the Lord was calling her to China.

But the people at the China Inland Mission, they ended up sort of rejecting her and her application. She couldn't really get to grips with learning Chinese. She felt so sure that the Lord was calling her.

[12:31] And so she prayed with passionate earnest, it says here. She prayed this. Oh God, here's me. Here's my Bible. Here's my money.

Use us. God, use us. And after that prayer, things opened up for her to be able to go to China. An extraordinary story. And God really used her there. Humanly speaking, though, it seemed ridiculous. She'd be short of money, in danger that police aren't going to protect her, not with medical help there in China.

But she went, in obedience to the Lord. And perhaps this morning, as Jerome and Megan sit here, and Jerome's been inducted as an elder, perhaps they've thought at times during this process, is this silly?

Is this really what the Lord wants for us? But we've been praying about it together. Phil and I have prayed and discussed it with them. And we believe that God has guided us to this step.

[13:45] And we're walking out in obedience to the Lord. Sometimes that's what God does in our Christian lives.

We might not know how it's going to work out. It might seem humanly ridiculous. But God provides all we need as we head out in obedience to him and his words.

We're praying to him. As David does here, he prays. The men think it's ridiculous. But he prays. He trusts the Lord and his words. It doesn't mean it's always straightforward, going in obedience to the Lord.

And we see problems arise there in verse 7. Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah and he said, God has delivered him into my hands.

For David has imprisoned himself by entering a town with gates and bars. And so Saul called his forces for battle.

[14:55] Go down to Keilah and besiege David and his men. And Saul, you can imagine him rubbing his hands with glee as he says those words. God has delivered him into my hands. What a stupid move David has made here.

I've got him now. And so Saul, the king, calls his forces for battle. And they head down to Keilah to get David and his men.

And it's extraordinary that Saul moves very quickly when he hears it. It's David there. When the Philistines, who really are the enemy, there's no sign of him going down there.

David learns of the danger of Saul coming to attack him. And so what does he do?

Does he do, as the firearms attack poster says, and run away and hiding and tells the police? Well, no. He prays.

[15:58] Verse 9, when David learned that Saul was plotting against him, he said to Abiezer, the priest, bring the ephod. And then David starts speaking to the Lord.

Instead of running, he tells the Lord about the situation. He says to the priest, bring the ephod.

We've met the ephod a few times in 1 Samuel.

And this is a garment belonging to the high priest. On it contained the names of the tribes of Israel. And it contained these two stones, Urim and Thuman.

And these two stones were used for guiding the people of God to know his will for certain situations.

And so as Saul plots against David, and David finds himself in danger, David turns to the Lord.

And he asks these two questions in verse 10. Lord God of Israel, your servant has heard definitely that Saul plans to come to Keilah and destroy the town on account of me.

[17:06] And so here's the two questions. Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me to him? Will Saul come down as your servant has heard? Lord God of Israel, tell your servant.

Two questions. Will the people of Keilah hand me over? And will Saul come down as your servant has heard?

Extraordinary that David's even thinking that the people of Keilah may hand him over. He's gone in to save them. But as the Lord says, yes, they will.

They will hand you over. Handing over the saviour to death. Does that remind you of anyone? And so wisely, as David hears from the Lord, he doesn't need to ask anymore.

He knows the right thing to do is escape. Verse 13. So David and his men, they've now grown about 600 in number, left Keilah and kept moving from place to place.

[18:19] David leads his men out of there. And verse 14. We read this. Day after day, Saul searched for him, but God did not give David into his hands.

The Lord was providing protection for his servant David. David prayed to the Lord. He was in danger. He didn't know what to do.

He prayed to the Lord. And the Lord brought him to a place of safety. And in the Bible, we have the book of Psalms.

And many of them are written by David. And he wrote this Psalm, Psalm 54, around this time.

Which says, save me, O God, by your name. Vindicate me by your might. Hear my prayer, O God.

Listen to the words of my mouth. He was in danger. And so he prayed, save me. Save me, God.

Hear my prayer.

[19:20] Save me. The first and best place for us to turn. When we're in danger. When we're following the Lord. Trusting him and his word.

But we're going through times when we think, we're in danger. We're in danger here. We're in a hard situation. We don't know what to do about this situation.

Pray. Pray. By God's grace, the Lord has led us to a good place as a church, I think. Today is a special day for us as a church.

But we need to keep praying. Pray for Megan and Jerome as they've responded in obedience to the Lord and taken on this new role in church life.

Pray for their protection. Pray for them to keep looking to the Lord Jesus as they continue to serve him. And David didn't know what to do, so he turned to the Lord.

[20:18] We don't know what to do about various matters in church life. Let's turn to the Lord. Encourage you. Make efforts to come and pray with the Lord's people this week.

Take everything to the Lord in prayer, as the song reminds us. And David knew, as he says in the psalm, surely God is my help. The Lord is the one who sustains me.

May that be true of us this week. May we know that to be true for us as a church. We do already, I think. But we need to continue to remind ourselves that God is the one who helps and sustains his church.

And it just strikes me, we know this, but it strikes me prayer is a lot easier now. Now that we have the Lord Jesus. And none of us have to march down to a temple and make sacrifices and speak to a priest.

David here, he had to call in ABA, said, bring the ephod. We don't need to do any of that. We can pray right where we are, anytime, anyplace. On the school run, in a coffee shop, on a run, on the bus.

[21:38] Whatever it is, wherever we are, we can pray. And we can do that because of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you can't make a prayer meeting in this building, you're not restricted, though.

You can still pray this week. Pray at home. Set aside some time to pray to the Lord. And may we know that the Lord is our help. Because we do that.

Secondly, a lot more briefer, people. Prayer. Now we move to people. The Lord provided many people around David.

There's his 600 men now. But there's one particular person that I want to draw to your attention. Verse 16. And Saul's son, Jonathan, went to David at Horesh and helped him to find strength in God.

David and Jonathan, we've seen in Samuel, have a wonderful, wonderful friendship. Great example of friendship. An unlikely friendship in many ways because Jonathan is the son of Saul.

[22:48] Saul who wants to take David's life. But nonetheless, they had this wonderful friendship. And Jonathan went to David.

As he's in the wilderness, as he's on the run. Saul wants to take his life once again. And what does Jonathan do? He helps him to find his strength in God.

Here's the words that Jonathan says to him. Verse 17. Don't be afraid. He said, my father Saul will not lay a hand on ye. You shall be king over Israel and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this. Jonathan was reminding him of words from God. Remember when Samuel came to anoint you as king.

You will be king. The Lord has said so. It will happen. This is what God wants. Even my father Saul knows this deep down.

[23:53] God provides encouragement for David through this wonderful friend. And we can thank God today for brothers and sisters around us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

For those he puts alongside us to encourage us as we walk together with the Lord. Being here today should encourage us.

We should be encouraging each other. When we have tea and coffee after the service. Encourage each other to look to the Lord. Take encouragement in him. Speak to one another.

In love. I've been so encouraged. Even just in the last couple of weeks. A church member sent me a Bible verse at sort of just the right time.

Needed to hear that. Thank you. Encouraged by my own wife to pray about something that I foolishly had never even thought about praying about.

[24:57] Of course I should. Thank you. It's good that God gives us Christian brothers and sisters to walk through life with. But above all.

Jonathan comes with encouragement. To help David find his strength in God. And so even when we feel alone.

We can know the Lord is with us. Paul the apostle in the New Testament said this. In one of his letters. When he felt deserted by all those around him.

The Lord stood at my side. And gave me strength. So that through me the message might be fully proclaimed. And all the Gentiles might hear it.

And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. Perhaps you feel particularly on your own in a trial right now.

[25:57] Perhaps you feel lonely and longing for help. Know this. Take encouragement from this. As the apostle Paul does. That the Lord is with us.

He is by our side. In the Lord Jesus we have a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

How do we know that? The Lord Jesus came down to live in this world. He knew what it was like to be rejected by people he came to save.

He would hang on a cross. To die for us. In our place. The death we deserve.

He is the friend of sinners. He has shown that. The Lord is with us. Take encouragement from that. Thirdly and finally.

[27:02] Providence. The David and Saul saga. Sort of feels to me like one big episode of Tom and Jerry.

Do you know Tom and Jerry? The cat and mouse cartoon. Tom is the cat. Jerry is the mouse. In episodes of Tom and Jerry.

Most of them involved Tom's numerous attempts to capture Jerry. And the mayhem and destruction that follows from that. Tom rarely ever succeeds in catching Jerry.

Mainly because of Jerry's cleverness. Cunning abilities. And probably luck as well. In these chapters Saul keeps pursuing David.

He wants him dead. He wants to capture David. He holds spears at David. And David somehow escapes. He's sent men to David's house.

[28:06] And they just found a fake person in the bed. Saul plots. But David escapes. And we might say that's the clever cunning abilities of David.

And in some ways it is. But really as we look at this. With the eyes of faith. We see this is the Lord's protection over David.

The Lord's anointed king. A good summary of the Saul and David saga. Is in this chapter. We've read it already. Verse 14. Day after day Saul searched for him.

But God did not give David into his hands. But things in this chapter. Get really desperate for David.

The time is surely up now for David. Verse 19. The Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah. And said. Is not David hiding among us.

[29:04] In the strongholds of Horesh. On the hill of Hakala. South of Jeshamon. Now your majesty. Come down whenever it pleases you to do so. And we were responsible for giving him into your hands.

And so Saul replies. The Lord bless you for your concern for me. Go out and get more information. He even says. They tell me he is very crafty.

David's very crafty. People are coming to Saul. We know where he is. We're going to help you catch him.

And so Saul and the men. They head off. Verse 24. They set out and went to Ziph. Ahead of Saul. Now David and his men were in the desert of Mauan. In the Araba. South of Jeshamon. Saul and his men began the search.

[30:03] Things are hotting up here. And when David was told about it. He went to the rock. And stayed in the desert of Mauan.

David's hiding. And when Saul heard of this. He went into the desert of Mauan. In pursuit of David. It feels like Saul is so close to David. So close to capturing him.

At last. And look at verse 26. Saul was going along. One side of the mountain. And David and his men were on the other side.

They're on the same mountain. They're so close. David and his men were on the other side of the mountain.

Hurrying to get away from Saul. As Saul and his forces were closing in on David and his men. To capture him. They're so, so close. After all that.

[31:00] All the time. David's been on the run from Saul. Hidden in caves. Finally Saul's caught up with him. But. Verse 27.

Have a look. A messenger came to Saul. Saying. Come quickly. The Philistines are raiding the lands. What's Saul going to do? Is he going to keep chasing David down?

Forget the Philistines. I'm so close now. But the real enemies. The Philistines. Are really raiding the land. The situation's got really bad.

And so. Verse 28. Then Saul broke off his pursuit of David. And went to meet the Philistines. That is why they call this place. Sailer. Hamakaloth.

David's safe. Phew. We breathe a sigh of relief at this point. David's safe. And you might be thinking. Well that's just lucky. Isn't it?

[32:03] David can count his lucky stars here. He's safe. But surely we see the Lord at work. The Lord's providence at work.

Through the enemies. The Philistines. Raiding the land. Cause a diversion for Saul and his men. Adjust as things got so, so bad.

The Lord's hand of providence. Providing escape here. Keeping David and his anointed king safe. And alive. David may have a growing team around him. But he still faces the same danger from Saul.

He wants him dead. But through this chapter. We've seen David's trust in the Lord. David goes quickly to the Lord in prayer. Encouragement for us as we head into this week of prayer.

[33:03] The Lord provides answers for David. He provides encouragement through him. Through his friendship with Jonathan. And then the Lord's providence. We see he keeps his anointed king safe.

One final, final thing as we head towards the end. Where does God keep David safe? It says the place.

Verse 28. Sailer Hamalikoth. I've been trying to say that word all week. It means rock of parting. He's kept safe for the rock is David's. And rock, it comes up time and time again in the Bible. In 1 Samuel.

In this very book. In chapter 2. Hannah prayed. There is no rock like our God's. And David himself prays in 2 Samuel.

[34:06] The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer. My God is my rock in whom I take refuge. The Lord lives. Praise be to my rock.

Exalted be my God. The rock. My saviour. God is a rock between our enemies and death. He certainly is for David here. A rock. A firm thing. A safe thing. It's a refuge.

It's a place of safety. And all of us face the threat of death.

It's the reality for human beings. But the Bible shows us that in the Lord Jesus we find ultimate safety.

[35:02] A wonderful refuge. Between us. And death. Between us and hell.

For the Lord Jesus has come to stand in our place. On the cross. In order to bring us forgiveness. To rescue us from hell. He died. He died. The death we deserve. Took on the punishment that we deserve to face for our sin.

And in Jesus we find someone who has risen to eternal life. In him we find eternal life beyond the grave. So we don't need to fear death any longer.

And so Jesus. He is our rock of salvation. We flee to him for safety. Where there was that picture last week of Abiathar.

[36:07] The priest finding safety in David from death. That's what we need to do with the Lord Jesus. And this week David and his men find it in the Lord's providence.

As they reach this rock of parting. And the Bible shows us Jesus is the rock of salvation. Place of safety.

Let's pray. Father God. Thank you so much for your word. Thank you for how it speaks to us even today. Lord God.

We pray. Pray for your help. To pray. To look to you. Our great God. Help us to trust you.

We pray. Trust you and your providence. Working through our lives. We ask this in Jesus name.

Amen. Are we going to sing this song as an encouragement to help us?