

# 1 Samuel 23

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, turn with me to 1 Samuel, chapter 23. We're continuing in our series in this book tonight.

It's a bit of a long chapter, so I'm going to start by reading the first half, and then we will get into some of the second half as we go along. 1 Samuel 23, if you're looking at a pew Bible, that's page 245.

Now they told David, Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Calah and are robbing the threshing floors. Therefore David inquired of the Lord, Shall I go and attack these Philistines?

And the Lord said to David, Go and attack the Philistines and save Calah. But David's men said to him, Behold, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more than if we go to Calah against the armies of the Philistines?

Then David inquired of the Lord again. And the Lord answered him, Arise, go down to Calah, for I will give the Philistines into your hand. And David and his men went to Calah and fought with the Philistines and brought away their livestock and struck them with a great blow.

[ 1 : 15 ] So David saved the inhabitants of Calah. When Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, had fled to David, to Calah, he had come down with an ephod in his hand.

Now it was told Saul that David had come to Calah. And Saul said, God has given him into my hand, for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars. And Saul summoned all the people to war, to go down to Calah, to besiege David and his men.

David knew that Saul was plotting harm against him, and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring the ephod here. Then David said, O Lord, the God of Israel, your servant has surely heard that Saul seeks to come to Calah to destroy the city on my account.

Will the men of Calah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down as your servant has heard, O Lord, the God of Israel, please tell your servant. And the Lord said, He will come down. Then David said, Will the men of Calah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?

And the Lord said, They will surrender you. Then David and his men, who were about 600, arose and departed from Calah, and they went wherever they could go. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Calah, he gave up the expedition.

[ 2 : 25 ] And David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand.

Have you ever been betrayed? Maybe you sacrificed to help someone who is desperate and in need. Maybe you loaned them some money when they were broke, or you spent long hours on the phone or in person walking with them through a crisis.

Or you advocated for them when they were wrongfully accused. But then perhaps sometime later, you came to them and you needed their help.

And they seemed to quickly forget all that you had done for them. And they left you hanging and made excuses or seemed to think nothing of it.

Maybe there was someone that you thought you could count on. A long-time friend, or a neighbor, a family member, trusted co-worker, maybe even your husband or wife.

[ 3 : 33 ] And then they cheated on you. They talked behind your back, hid the truth from you, stole your money, and now you're dealing with all the painful consequences.

Being betrayed. And you know that you can't trust them anymore, and it hurts. This was David's situation in this chapter. Twice, not just once, but twice, he was betrayed by people who should have been on his side.

First, as we just read, he was betrayed by the people of Calah. Now, the people of Calah had been in trouble. Verse 1, the Philistines were fighting against them, robbing their threshing floors.

In other words, they were seizing the stores of grain, their food storehouses. They were frustrating their work, and they were threatening their ability to feed themselves.

They were threatening their very lives. And David stood up for them. And he went down to Calah. He fought with the Philistines. He brought away their livestock, struck them with a great blow.

[ 4 : 40 ] It says, David saved. He rescued the inhabitants of Calah. Courageously. And you know, at this point in the book of Samuel, David is not a powerful king with a great big army, reigning from a huge palace, and he just sends a detachment out there to do the job.

He's hiding out in the wilderness, running away from Saul, who wants to kill him. It says the people that he was commanding were in distress, in debt, and discontented.

Just imagine leading that group of people. Distressed, indebted, discontented. We talked about that last week. But that's where David was. He wasn't doing that well himself, but he sacrificed to go down to Calah and take a risk.

And he saved them by God's power and God's grace and God's direction. And he won a great victory on their behalf. But then, when David needed help, the people were ready to hand him over.

Saul summoned the people to besiege David, surround Calah, and David said to the Lord, will Saul come down? Yes, will the people surrender me? Yes, they will surrender you. And so David fled.

[ 6 : 03 ] And it said, he and his men went wherever they could go. Now, in one sense, the reaction of the people of Calah was understandable. They had the whole king of Israel trying to mobilize the whole nation to besiege their small city.

And in the last chapter, Saul's henchmen had just massacred all the priests at Nob and had leveled the whole town. So we can understand why the people of Calah would be fearful.

Why they might think, let's save our own skin by handing over David. They were just trying to stay alive any way they could.

But you know, what they had forgotten was that they had just been in the same situation with the Philistines. The Philistines were besieging them. The Philistines were robbing their threshing floors and David came down to save them.

And now they were in the same kind of situation with Saul threatening them and they're ready to hand David over who had just delivered them from that same kind of situation. So there you go.

[ 7 : 12 ] David was betrayed once by the people he had just rescued. But he was also betrayed a second time by the people of Ziph. Go down to verse 19.

Then the Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah. So David, verse 14 says David was staying in the wilderness of Ziph. Verse 19, the Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah saying, Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh on the hill of Haculah which is south of Jeshamon?

Now come down, O king, according to all your heart's desire to come down and our part shall be to surrender him into the king's hand. These guys go to Saul on their own initiative.

They don't wait for him to threaten to besiege their city. They say, Saul, we want to help you. Here's this guy David. We'll help you capture him. Now both Ziph and Calah were in the territory of Judah.

David's home tribe. They should have been loyal to David more than anywhere else in Israel. And yet they're ready to hand him over. The people in Calah were flaky and fearful.

[ 8 : 29 ] The people in Ziph were simply treacherous and unreliable. And as a result, David was left to fend for himself. He was out in the wilderness. Five times in this chapter, verse 14, verse 24, verse 25, it says David was in the wilderness.

Hiding out in the wilderness. Hiding out in the wilderness. David was betrayed by men. That's the first thing we see in this chapter. And you know, if you've been in a situation like this, there's temptations that come when we've been betrayed.

Right? Temptations to despair. And just want to completely give up. Temptations to become bitter and enraged.

And have bitterness and rage burning deep within us. Temptations to never trust anyone ever again. And simply try to live a self-enclosed, self-protected life.

You know that we see that God draws near to David when he's been betrayed. We see three ways in this chapter that when David had been betrayed by men that he was strengthened by God.

[ 9 : 54 ] So first we see God gave him guidance from Abiathar, from a wise counselor. Second, we see God sent him encouragement from a faithful friend, from Jonathan. And third, we'll see that he sent him protection from the rock itself.

So we're going to go through these three ways that God strengthened David and see how he strengthens us as well. So first, the guidance of a wise counselor.

This is Abiathar. Abiathar appears in verses 2 through 12. Actually, verse 6 is where he's first mentioned. But verse 6 says, when Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, had fled to David and Calah, he had come down with an ephod in his hand.

Now, an ephod was an instrument that the priests in Israel were authorized to use in the Old Testament to seek God's guidance in particular situations.

We don't know exactly how it worked, but it was a particular instrument that God had set apart for them to use in order to seek guidance. And verse 6 says, Abiathar came down with this instrument for seeking guidance from the Lord.

[ 11 : 06 ] And it's actually a key verse in this section. So if you look at verse 2 through verse 12, there's actually an interesting outline to it.

So at the beginning in verse 2 through 4, David inquires of the Lord twice. Should I go down to Calah? At the end, verse 9 through 12, David also inquires of the Lord twice.

Is Saul going to come down and will they hand me over? In other words, do I need to leave? In the middle, verse 5, if you sort of take the next step toward the middle, verse 5, David went down to save Calah.

In verse 7 and 8, Saul goes down to besiege Calah. There's a contrast, right? David goes down to save them. Saul goes to destroy them. And verse 6 is this middle verse. So this is a way that a lot of ancient stories were organized.

They'd sort of be symmetrical on the edges and have an important statement in the middle that sort of is the key to the story. And verse 6 is that key that says, Abiathar had come down to David with an ephod in his hand.

[ 12 : 15 ] And so, the way the story is organized, I think we're meant to see that Abiathar and the ephod was the way that David inquired of the Lord, not just in verses 9 through 12 at the end, but also in verse 2 through 4 at the beginning.

So in other words, Abiathar, the priest, the wise counselor, gave David the guidance he needed. So first, he gave David guidance from the Lord to go down to Calah and rescue the people.

And then, he gave David guidance he needed to leave and get away and don't stay. Now, you might ask, well, so what does this all mean?

Right? So if you want guidance from the Lord today, the ephod doesn't exist. It's not one of God's appointed means of guidance in the New Testament.

It was there for a time in the Old Testament. It's not available anymore. But, if you're looking for guidance, let me give you three things to start with. Number one, Jesus is our great high priest.

[ 13 : 22 ] Abie Ather was a priest. Jesus is our great high priest. We can draw near to him in prayer. And it says we can seek grace and mercy to help us in our time of need. So that's the first thing we should do is seek out God and draw near to Jesus through prayer.

Second, we can read the scriptures which show us God's character and his purposes, broadly speaking, for our lives. Third, we can seek counsel from older and wiser believers or even just other brothers and sisters in Christ who are walking the road with us when we face difficult and complex decisions or challenges.

And you know, a good counselor like Abie Ather will sometimes encourage you to step out in faith and be strong and courageous like David in the beginning.

David and especially his men were a little fearful. They're like, really? we're hiding out in the wilderness and you want us to go rescue this city from the Philistines? That's like inviting trouble.

It's like making our life that much harder and putting us in that much more danger. Really? And God says, no, go. Be strong and courageous. I'll be with you.

[ 14 : 39 ] And sometimes that's what wise counsel looks like. It's saying, God is with you. Trust that he's with you.

Even when the odds seem to be stacked against you, extend yourself. Sacrifice to help someone else who's in need. Be strong and courageous and go forward. But you know, sometimes a good counselor will also advise you to use wisdom.

Like at the end. Will Saul come down? Yes. Will they surrender you? Yes. Get out of here. Leave. Right?

Stepping out in faith is not the same thing as being naive about people. Sometimes you need to keep your distance from people who aren't trustworthy.

And sometimes even if you're willing to forgive someone, which we should be willing to forgive someone, it's not necessarily wise to trust them. Sometimes we need to recognize if someone is flaky and not put ourselves in a situation where we're absolutely depending completely on them.

[ 15 : 57 ] That's what we see here at the end. There's this wise balance that sometimes God says to us, be strong and courageous. And sometimes he says to us, use wisdom and be careful.

And that's what wise counsel looks like from one believer to another by the grace of God. So David was courageous to go down and save Kayla and he was wise to get up and leave when he needed to.

And so that's one way God strengthens us. It's through the guidance of wise counselors. And if, like Dave, if you're in the wilderness, if you've been betrayed, that's something we need.

We need God's wise counsel that God provides through one another. Second, second way God strengthens us is through the encouragement of faithful friends.

Verse 15 through 18 talks about Jonathan. Let me read those verses. David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh and Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh and strengthened his hand in God.

[17:10] And he said to him, do not fear for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel and I shall be next to you. Saul my father also knows this.

And the two of them made a covenant before the Lord. David remained at Horesh and Jonathan went home. This is the last time that David and Jonathan meet in the book of Samuel.

But we see once again what we've seen all along is Jonathan's fierce loyalty to David. His steadfast commitment to him. Even when David was betrayed, even when he was hiding out in the wilderness, Jonathan sought him out.

He went out to him to encourage him and reaffirm his loyalty to him. In the New Testament it says, in the book of Hebrews it says, encourage one another every day.

It also says, let's not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing but let us encourage one another. That's part of why we gather every Sunday.

[18:16] And in small group Bible studies during the week to encourage one another like the Bible says. Like Jonathan did for David. And Jonathan is a great example of what Christian encouragement looks like.

You know, first of all, Jonathan's encouragement was intentional. Think about what Jonathan did to go find David in the middle of the wilderness. Jonathan didn't just wander into church some night and, you know, the service ends and somebody comes up to you or, you know, you see somebody and you say, hey, you know, I was thinking of you this week.

I wanted to encourage you. You know, I was praying for you. Whatever. No, he didn't just run into David. He didn't just run into him on the street casually.

It says, he rose and went to David at Horesh. David was hiding out in the wilderness. Think, imagine Jonathan. Okay, David's hiding out from Saul.

I have to go find him. I don't know where he is. He's constantly moving around. I can't ask anyone who might betray me to Saul. Right?

[19:23] He has to go through all this danger, all this difficulty, climbing the rugged hills, trekking through the woods, wandering through the desert, trying to find David to encourage him. You know, what does it look like for us to intentionally encourage one another as brothers and sisters in Christ?

you know, maybe you notice that there's someone who you haven't seen for a few weeks here at church. Or maybe someone shared a prayer request in your small group that they've been struggling with depression or discouragement or doubt.

Or maybe you know a fellow believer who's just swamped. They're swamped with work or they're swamped with family responsibilities or health problems. What would it look like to encourage them intentionally?

Well, first of all, I think it looks like noticing that someone needs encouragement. Sometimes, honestly, we're too self-centered to even notice when our brothers and sisters, even sitting right next to us, need encouragement.

You know, but what if you know someone needs encouragement? Well, maybe start by praying for them regularly. If someone shares a prayer request at your small group, pray for them sometime during that week.

[ 20 : 41 ] And then maybe shoot them a text message or call them and say, I just wanted you to know I was praying for you today. Or I just wanted to check in and say, how's it going?

I know you're going through a rough time. Or maybe you even need to do what Jonathan did. Maybe show up at their doorstep and bring a pizza. Say, here, I wanted to bring you dinner.

You know, or drop by their office. Sometimes there's no substitute for actually showing up in person. Now, I'm not talking about stalking. Okay? I'm not talking about stalking somebody that you don't really know or somebody who doesn't really want you to encourage them.

I'm talking about what it looks like to treat each other like family in the church. These are the things that you do for family or close friends. And that's what the Bible calls us to be for each other.

It's brothers and sisters in Christ who have each other's back. And who go through the trouble to intentionally encourage one another.

[ 21 : 49 ] But you know, what Jonathan does here, well, and the reason we can do that is, think about this, that's what Jesus Christ has done for us.

Jesus has sought us out when we were lost and wandering. He's brought us near to Himself. He sent His Spirit to encourage us and be with us when we're depressed or despairing or feel betrayed or alone.

He's there. But what we also see in Jonathan is that encouragement is not just intentional. Encouragement's about, and encouragement's not just about being with people yourself.

It's about pointing people to God. What does Jonathan do? Verse 16, it says, He strengthened David's hand in God.

What does he say to him? He says, Don't fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. He, he, he, he, strengthens David's hand in God.

[ 22 : 57 ] All right, he brings God's word and God's presence to David. And he reminds him of God's promises that one day David would be king. Now sadly, Jonathan actually wouldn't be standing beside him.

Although David would care for Jonathan's family. Jonathan dies before David becomes king. But, but it is true that God had promised David and he had sent the prophet Samuel to anoint him, after all, right?

God had made a promise that David would one day be king. And Jonathan reaffirms God's promise. So that's, that's what true Christian encouragement looks like. It's not just going to be with people because you know what?

Jonathan could only stay with David for a short time. Eventually, he returned home and actually he, it, this is the last time that we have a record that Jonathan saw David. You know, you can't always be there 24-7 for every single person you're trying to encourage.

And you can't expect somebody else to do that for you either if you need encouragement. But what you can do is go and be with someone and remind them of God's word and remind them of God's presence.

[ 24 : 10 ] And you going to be with them is a physical reminder, a physical sign to them that God hasn't left you alone and he won't. And even when you go home, God hasn't left them.

So that's what Christian encouragement looks like. Jonathan strengthened David's hand in God even though it seemed like everything was up for grabs.

You know, throughout this chapter there's actually, if you've noticed, the word hand occurs over and over. And verse 4, God says to David, I'll give the Philistines into your hand.

Then verse 7, Saul says, oh, God has given David into my hand. Verse 11 and 12, will the men of Gath surrender me into Saul's hand? Yes, they will. But then verse 14 says, God didn't give David into Saul's hand.

And so there's this sort of question. Everything seems up for grabs. Saul's, is it in Saul's hands? Is it in David's hands? And Jonathan says, remember, you are in God's hand.

[ 25 : 15 ] And Jesus Christ said, I'm the good shepherd and I give my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish and no one can snatch them out of my hand.

So if you have put your trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and your Savior and your good shepherd, no one can take you and snatch you away from God's good hand. Be reminded of that.

So, that's encouragement. So we've seen wise counsel. We've seen friendly, the encouragement of a friend. And third, we see protection from the rock.

Verse 24 to the end of the chapter. Let me read. Now David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon and Saul and his men went to seek him and David was told so he went down to the rock and lived in the wilderness of Maon.

And when Saul heard that, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon. Notice, wilderness, wilderness, wilderness, wilderness. Saul went on one side of the mountain and David and his men on the other side of the mountain and David was hurrying to get away from Saul and Saul and his men were closing in on David and his men to capture them and a messenger came to Saul saying, hurry and come for the Philistines have made a raid against the land.

[ 26 : 32 ] So Saul returned from pursuing after David and went against the Philistines. Therefore, that place was called the Rock of Escape. Seems like Saul's closing in.

Saul's on one side of the mountain, David's on the other. David's trying to get away and suddenly a messenger comes to Saul. Saul has to go off and deal with another threat to his kingdom.

David's saved just in the nick of time and he says it's called the Rock of Escape or the Rock of Parting or the Rock of Divisions. And you know, what you see in this story is that there was one thing that stood between David and death.

Between David and Saul who was coming after him. It was the rock, the mountain that he was standing on. Right? Saul's on one side, David's on the other side, Saul's coming after him and the only thing that's standing between Saul and David is that rock.

Right? And that rock was a physical demonstration of God's presence protecting David.

[ 27 : 48 ] Now the book of Samuel begins and ends with a song. It begins with the song of Hannah and in the beginning of Hannah's song in 1 Samuel chapter 2 Hannah says there is no rock like our God.

And at the end of Samuel 2 Samuel 22 it ends with David's song and David's song begins The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer.

My God is the rock of my salvation who brought me out from my enemies who delivered me from men of violence.

You see God is that rock that stands between us and our enemies and between us and death. He's our refuge and our strength in times of trouble.

And even when your friend has visited you and gone and even even if you're still looking for wise counsel you can still depend on God to be your rock.

[ 29 : 05 ] God's the one constant the one that we can count on even when nobody else is there for us. And that psalm that Pastor Nick read between two of the songs Psalm 54 was written it says when David was in the wilderness of Ziph and the Ziphites went to Saul and wanted to hand David over and he wrote that psalm that says God is my helper God is the upholder of my life he is the one he is the rock.

David was betrayed by men but he was he was strengthened by God. Through his guidance through through encouragement and through protection.

Now what do we take away from this? I want to step back from this chapter for a little bit and just talk about where we are in the story of David. As I've said this section of Samuel focuses on David being in the wilderness when David was betrayed when people were seeking his life when he was enduring great hardships and only later on would David be exalted and come to rule over a glorious kingdom.

And there's a pattern in the Bible that suffering comes before glory. The wilderness comes before the promised land.

and betrayal and hardship come before the kingdom. In the New Testament in Luke 24 Jesus said to his followers on the road to Emmaus he said was it not necessary that the Christ the anointed one the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory.

[ 31 : 00 ] And it says beginning with Moses and all the prophets he showed them interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And sometimes you might wonder well where does it say in the Old Testament that the Messiah would suffer and then be glorified?

Well yes it says it in Isaiah 53 and in Psalm 22 and in some of the prophetic texts but you know this story of the story of David in the book of Samuel sets a pattern that goes through the whole Bible.

And in the story of David God was laying down a pattern for the future Messiah the ultimate king King Jesus. And the pattern of David's life was suffering that eventually led to glory.

And that's the very road that Jesus walked. He went into the wilderness he was betrayed he was humiliated he was killed.

But then God raised Jesus from the dead and just as David was strengthened by God in the wilderness and later on exalted to be the greatest king of Israel God strengthened Jesus through his sufferings and then God exalted him as Lord and Savior over all in his resurrection and he's our king our great and true king.

[ 32 : 23 ] So in the story of David we see a picture of Jesus who's to come but we also see a pattern of our lives as believers in Jesus. Because the New Testament also says it says in Acts 14 22 through many hardships we must enter the kingdom of God.

And just like David had to live in the wilderness and go through sufferings and even be betrayed. The Bible says that that's often what will characterize our life on earth.

But there is a glorious kingdom to come. When Jesus comes again and if we put our trust in him we will be part of that eternal kingdom. And all the suffering and all the time in the wilderness and all the betrayals and all the tears will be washed away.

And in the midst of while we walk that path we can be confident that like David even though we may be betrayed God will provide.

He provides through wise counselors like Abiyathar he provides through faithful friends like Jonathan and he provides by being our rock who protects us who stands in between us and death.

[ 33 : 45 ] Isn't that what Christ did on the cross? And one day in the resurrection he'll bring us to glory. Let's pray. Lord God we thank you for your faithfulness to David.

We thank you that even in a dark time of his life when he was betrayed twice Lord we thank you that you strengthened him. We thank you that you did not abandon him.

And Lord we thank you for your son Jesus Christ who walked this road of suffering and glory of betrayal and yet of the kingdom.

And Lord we pray that you would strengthen us encourage us. Lord help us to be for one another wise counselors and faithful friends and help us most of all to point one another to rely on you as our rock.

May you be our rock in the midst of the storms of life. And may you lead us safely home to you.

[ 34 : 59 ] We pray these things in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.