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Help in Time of Need

I Samuel 23

Intro: When you compare **ch23** w/ **ch22**, you can't help but notice some amazing contrasts between the main characters. In **ch22**, at Nob, Saul becomes the **destroyer** of Israel while at Keilah, David becomes the **savior** of Israel. Saul complained that no one shared critical info with him but God (thru **Abiathar**) tells David everything he needs to know. Saul's sole companion is **Doeg** (Edomite murderer) who covers Saul's hands with blood; while David's most trusted companion is **Jonathan** (the king's own son) who **strengthened his hand in God**. Finally, the Philistines were always a dangerous **threat** to David but here at the end of **ch23**, they become his **welcome saviors**.

Of course, David doesn't have time to sit & savor these contrasts; he's on the run from Saul & his life is constantly in grave danger. B/c of this, David needs to see that God still provides for His servants in their darkest, desolate times. Apparently, David got the message, if **Ps 54:4** is any indication. But, what help did David receive? What particular resources did **YHWH** make available to His servant in his continuing times of trials. Ch23 can be divided into 3 parts; each dealing with a specific divine provision David received at the time he needed it most.

1-13- Divine Access Keilah's in trouble; Philistines were robbing the threshing floors: the work of an entire season is gone! Someone thought enough to carry the news to David. Why David? Why not Saul? B/c Saul wasn't fulfilling his role as king over Israel. It was Saul's job to protect Israel & fight the Philistines but he wasn't doing his job. So God called David to do it. You see, God loved His people too much to let them suffer b/c an unfaithful king. If Saul wasn't up to the task, God would raise up a man who was. **YHWH's** calling David to act like a king even b/c he was a king.

Now David is a scrapper. He a good man to have in a fight b/c he can handle himself well. Also, he's always had pretty good success against the Philistines. But despite his effective tactics & extensive combat experience, David didn't just run off to battle. He shows his wisdom & godliness in that the first thing he did was he **inquired of the Lord**. David's willing to fight but he has the presence of mind to ask direction from **YHWH** & he receives it! God assures him that he will have success against the Philistines. David's ready to go but his men aren't quite sure: it's 1 thing to hide out from Saul but quite another to expose yourself by entering into open conflict with a well equipped & motivated enemy. Their argument was pragmatic: we can understand their hesitancy but we shouldn't agree with it b/c the outcome has already been determined. But, David inquired of the Lord again & got the same response **with a promise!** Off they go. They attack the Philistines & drive them off, take all their livestock & rescue Keilah as **YHWH** had said.

Ephod- vs6= focus of section; explains how Keilah was saved & how David & his men were saved. **YHWH's** **guidance** directed David both to go to & get out of Keilah. Everything swings on Abiathar & the ephod he carries.

Saul thinks the Lord is blessing him when he hears David is holed up in a fortified city. He knows David withb cornered behind the walls of the city. It was true that God had lead David to Keilah but it was not true that God had delivered David into Saul's hand. Saul's in no place to discern the will of God b/c he cares nothing for the worship or service of God. Note: Saul calls the people **to war**. Against whom? Philistines, Edomites, Amalekites? No, against David. He wouldn't lift a finger to save the people of Keilah but he'll go there to kill David. Saul's sole motivation is **self interest**.

David is not witho options. He inquires of the Lord again thru Abiathar. He asks to specific questions of the Lord & receives to affirmative answers. He didn't need to ask anymore questions after that; he knew what he had to do. You can't overstate the blessing /privilege David enjoys in this section (divine access). David's advantage is in stark contrast to Saul's deficiency. Saul can't seem to get good intel from anywhere or anyone but David has access to **YHWH** & His guidance thru the appointed priest, the very priest whom, ironically, Saul had driven into David's arms.

You may say, "That's great for David but I don't get that kind of specific direction from God." Neither do I. B/c we don't need it. David's part in God's plan of salvation was much more critical than ours & his life played a greater role in the purposes of God's kingdom in this world than ours do. So, in practice, there's a big difference between David's experience & ours. David received what was essential for **YHWH**'s appointed king to have. for us, it's not so essential. Tho there's a **big** difference in practice, in principle, there's **no** difference at all between this elect king & ourselves. How was **YHWH**'s guidance given? Was it not in access to God thru the appointed priest? Isn't that the privilege every believer enjoys today, thru a much greater priest than Abiathar? That's what **Heb 4:14-16** teaches us. Doesn't that sound whole lot better than knowing what Saul was doing? We have all the **divine access** we'll ever need!

1 more thing: there's a school of thought in certain parts of the church that believes that everything God foreknows is predestined to happen: b/c God can see it happen – its going to happen. Well, this passage clearly blows that idea out of the water. David asked to hypothetical questions & received to definite answers. **YHWH** foresaw that Saul would come down & the men of Keilah would surrender David to Saul. But, neither 1 of those things happened. We must realize that the omniscience of God not only covers everything that's going to happen, it also covers all other scenarios depending on the choices people make. If David had chose to remain in Keilah, events would've played out as **YHWH** had said. But, David chose to heed the word of the Lord & make his escape & avoid dire consequences.

14-18- Divine Encouragement Again, we see how critical David's situation is & how merciful **YHWH** is to him. Saul's out there everyday searching for David & yet, **God did not deliver him into his hand**. Tho David may escape Saul, he can't escape from the shelter o the Most High God. This 1 phrase covers all the yrs of David's outlaw experience.

What's really strange – Saul couldn't find David to save his life but apparently, Jonathan could! He didn't seem to have any trouble finding David at all. What did Jonathan bring David? Divine encouragement! How'd he encourage David? By reaffirming God's promise to David (tobe king). I'm sure Jonathan's presence was a great comfort to David but the

personal presence of a believer doesn't quite have the abiding encouragement that the sure Word of God has. The best encouragement doesn't come by being cuddly with others but by reminding them of the great promises of God. Encouragement **from** God **for** the people of God always comes from the **Word of God**. Fellowship has its place in the Body but in a time when the Church wallows in "caring" & "sensitivity" believers should know that encouragement doesn't come thru emotional closeness, it only comes thru the Word of God.

When we consider the context of Jonathan's visit, we see how crucial it was to David at that time. David's just saved Keilah at great risk to himself & his men only to find out they would turn them over to Saul in a heartbeat. Next, he's about to face the betrayal of the Ziphites, his own tribesmen. David's stuck between the flakiness of Keilah & the treachery of Ziph. Into this mess strolls Jonathan, his enemy's son, with encouragement. After the disappointment of Keilah & b/for the betrayal of Ziph, Jonathan arrived to **put David's hand in God's hands**. God's timing is on point!

Shall we ask the hypothetical question? If Jonathan hadn't ministered to David, would the Ziphite betrayal have been more than David could handle? Would this treachery, so soon after the major disappointment of Keilah have been too much to bear? We don't know but what we can see is how important it is to have a faithful friend standing with you thru the disappointments of life. Tho we might not have a Jonathan, we have some 1 greater. Paul did to (**II Tim 4:16-17a**)

1 sad note: this is the last time these to see each other. Jonathan went home b/c he accomplished his mission: he strengthened David's hand in God. Tho he enjoyed his company, Jonathan was not the presence David needed.

19-29- Divine Providence YHWH reveals His providential care for David in the face of a near fatal betrayal. The folks around Ziph know David in in their neck of the woods & they tell Saul as much, probably hoping to gain his approval. It must've worked b/c Saul gushes his delight over them. Things start to move fast after that. The Ziphites return to look for David, David & Co. take off for Maon; Saul comes to hunt for David; David moves down to **the rock** & Saul's in hot pursuit. It looks like **the rock** could become a gravestone for David. The suspense is almost unbearable in vs26. In a classic pincer move, Saul's about to completely encircle David's band. He's tightening the noose, springing the trap.

David's capture, humiliation & likely death are so close, 1 can barely stand to keep reading but wait...what's all the noise? A messenger came to Saul with news of a Philistine invasion so Saul had to give up the chase. Do you see the providence of **YHWH**? Saul & his army was closing in on David...but than a messenger came. This wasn't a lucky break for David, This was the hand of God working directly on his behalf. Consider both the timing (**split second**) & the irony (**Philistines are David's personal Savior**). Even the Philistines can be pressed into the Lord's service!

God's providence is not just about timing, it's often about surprise too. In vs1-6, David & Co were unexpected saviors b/c deliverance (of Keilah) was the job of the king. But Saul didn't deliver Keilah, David did. Now, the Philistines are the unexpected saviors. **Who would've**

think it? The irony comes in the reversal of roles. In vs1-6 the Philistines were the enemy but in 27-29 they become the savior. This is often the mark of God's providence, strange twists, with a bit of divine humor thrown in for good measure. This section teaches us what God's providence is – the strange ways God works to keep His people on their feet. Does He only do this for David? No way! We all can testify of it some way.

David's commentary of this period of his life is encouraging & enlightening (Ps 54:4). Saul is not gone for good; David's troubles are far from over; his ultimate deliverance has not appeared. But ch23 shows us the resources God provides to His servants in the midst of their darkest trials so that they can withstand the pressure of them. Sure, the darkness is still there but Dale Davies posits the idea that maybe part of it is the shadow of the Almighty (Ps 91:1)

Believers: our encouragement? Fellowship (Heb 10:24-25). Many preachers emphasize 25a by itself, out of a desire for good attendance or the need to pay a large mortgage, but the emphasis isn't on church attendance but on ministry. Our ministry is to stir up love & good works thru exhorting 1 another from the Word. That's not just the job of the pastor/teacher, it's every believers job, it's the ministry of the church between & for the benefit of its members. But, like David, fellowship with like-minded believers isn't what we need most – it's no substitute for fellowship with the Lord.

Unbelievers: God's providence= role reversal. God often likes to take convention & turn it on its head. This was never more true than in God's great plan of salvation (II Cor 5:21). This is the greatest, most unimaginable role reversal of all time. The sinless Son of God was made to be sin for us so that we, as wretched, unrighteous sinners could put on (be clothed in) the righteousness of God. But this can only happen in Him. You'll never experience the fullness of what God created you to be outside of Jesus Christ. You'll never know the blessing of being free from the guilt of sin apart from Jesus Christ. You'll never receive the righteousness of God with out first receiving Jesus as your personal savior. Do you want access to God; encouragement from God; the providence of God working in your life for your benefit? Then you must accept the provision of salvation that's being offered to you by God Himself. It was achieved thru great expense on His part but He offers it to you free of charge. Will you accept it from His hand?

