

April 3

I Samuel 22-24, Psalm 52, 54, 57, 63

Hello and happy April 3rd to you. This is Lisa Ashton and today in Project 4:4 our readings covered I Samuel 22-24 and Psalm 52, 54, 57, and 63.

To start things off do you remember in yesterdays reading about David asking Ahimelech, the priest for help? Well today we see the grave consequences of David's bad decision. In 1 Samuel 22:22 we learn that as soon as David arrived in Nob to beg Ahimelech the priest for help in his flight from Saul, he knew he had made a terrible mistake. David said that when he realized that Doeg the Edomite was in the employ of King Saul and there at Nob, he knew he would return to Saul and tell him of David's visit. And THAT is exactly what happened. Saul heard of Ahimelechs help to David and accused him of conspiring against the king. The consequence? He demanded death for Ahimelech and his father's whole family. Abiathar, however escapes and is the one who has to bear the harsh news to David. David agrees to protect Abiathar and then we see his cry to the Lord in Psalm 52 against Doeg the Edomite.

As we begin chapter 23 I want you to notice that David has corrected a bad mistake from the instance with Ahimelech. NOW, before he will make a decision about where to go or what to do, he first decides to stop and ask the Lord about it. This is done before he'll attack the Philistines at Keilah; that is the first of a few observations I want to make with you about this little incident.

One of the things that distinguish a great man or woman from one who will never be great, is the ability to learn important lessons from their blunders and mistakes. In fact, the mistakes of great people are almost always found in the end to be blessings in disguise, or advantages, because of all that is learned from them. David learned an enormous lesson from the events recorded in chapter 22 and here in chapter 23. The price tag was high -- very high -- it cost the lives of all the members of Abiathar's family. It almost cost David his own life as well. But he did learn. For now David is seeking the counsel of the Lord before he acts. He asks what God wants before moving to the relief of Keilah. Upon hearing that, Saul is moving towards the walled city that David has just delivered, thinking if he could catch David inside the walls, a siege can be laid and the residents of Keilah will give him up. David inquires of God again, and finding that Saul's assumption regarding the willingness of the inhabitants of that place to turn their backs upon their own deliverer is true, David and his men flee to the wilderness. Ask God about it before you make an important move. That has become David's practice. Now I want us to pay careful attention as we move through the rest of the account of David's life. Let's see if we can determine how well he really learned the lesson that God is willing to give direction to His people when they ask and obey. That last word "obey" is crucial. Remember that because of Saul's disobedience, God stopped answering his inquiries for direction. Obedience to what you already know is a pre-requisite for receiving new or special guidance from God. In other words, don't expect to hear a new word from the Lord if you aren't being obedient in what he has already revealed to you. So let me ask you this, is there an area of obedience today that you need to address with God?

The second thing I want for you to notice about the record of David's intervention on behalf of the people of Keilah, is that the method by which he made his inquiries to God was apparently through the use of Urim and Thummim. That is why the ephod of the priests keeps getting mentioned in chapter 23. You will remember, I am sure, that when we studied the Book of Exodus, we learned about the garments of the priests in general, and of the high priest in particular. The ephod was the tunic worn by the priest whenever he came before the Lord. The tunic of the high priest was attached to a breastplate, which contained the Urim and Thummim. It was through the use of these instruments the priest was able to determine the will of the Lord regarding specific inquiries that were made of him. Upon the death of Ahimelech, Abiathar must have become the high priest, or he would not have the ephod which contained the Urim and Thummim. By the way, that makes Saul's revenge even more shocking than it already was. Not only did he slaughter a whole family of priests, he killed the high priest and his family.

The third thing I want for us to notice about the intervention of David and his men at Keilah, is that, although Saul is still recognized as king of Israel, it is David who is already acting like the king and moving to the rescue of a city under threat from the enemies of Israel. Saul is still king; David is the deliverer. That is interesting because the account makes it very clear that Saul had a bigger and better equipped army than David, but David responded more quickly to the need of the people.

Lastly, in chapter 24, I want us to look at how this whole incident at En Gedi relates to David's understanding of authority. Samuel has already anointed David as king. Jonathan has acknowledged the rightfulness of David's claim. God has told Saul that the blessing has been removed. And from chapter 23:17 we hear the first declaration from Jonathan that Saul knows David is his heir. A small, but fervent, group of people have already switched their allegiance to David and Saul has made no less than seven different attempts upon his life. Nevertheless, David calls Saul his master, and then he calls him the "Lord's anointed." David will not harm Saul. He even feels badly that God's blessing has been removed from the king. He truly believes that he is meant to be ruler over Israel and that the nation will be far more likely to experience God's blessing after he is king than at the present moment. But David's understanding of authority and of the importance of waiting for God's time is so strong, he will do nothing to unseat the present king or to usurp the power Saul has already forfeited. David will wait for God to establish him; he will wait for God to execute justice. He will wait for God to exalt him; he will not exalt himself. David understands authority and David exhibits humility.

I don't really think that on a personal level David had much respect left for Saul. The king was a foolish, weak man, a liar, a manipulator -- but David had all kinds of respect for the office into which God had placed King Saul. David believed that only God had the right to remove him from that office. As I look around at our society today, we do not have a very great understanding of authority and are tempted to develop rebellious and unhealthy attitudes toward the leaders God has placed over us - whether that be at our work, in our community, in our nation or in our church. Let's

remember that even if we have no respect for a particular leader it is still true that God is sovereign, and God has chosen to allow that one to occupy that office. Therefore we are to honor and respect the office, even if it is hard to respect the one who occupies it.

Well I hope you have been enjoying our journey through the life of David. I want to leave you with a verse from a Psalm you read today. David writes, "Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me." May the Lord's Word to you today be your help and your source of sustaining power. Grace.