

THE Rock COMMUNITY CHURCH

1 Samuel 23:1-14

“Shall I Go?”

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Anaheim Hills, CA | RockCC.com

27:05

Good morning again. So just so you know, not only do you look good, you sound really good. That was great. So I have a question for you. How do you make important decisions? Do you do a lot of research or do you maybe go around and get a lot of advice from others?

27:33

Do you just flip a coin at some point? At what point in your decision-making process do you go to the Lord for guidance? At the beginning, middle, end, or only in case of emergency? In our passage today, David will have to make some urgent life or death choices.

28:04

How will he decide what to do? We're going to find out after we pray together. Let's pray. Father, always, when we open your word, we ask for your Holy Spirit to teach us and give us understanding. May we have ears to hear and hearts to receive your precious, precious word into our lives, we pray

28:29

In the name of Jesus our Lord, amen. Okay, our passage today is 1 Samuel chapter 23 verses 1 to 14. It's gonna be on page 299 if you are using the Bible in the chair near you or in front of you or behind you or under you.

28:51

In chapter 21, quick review, chapter 21, David began his journey on the run from Saul. He went to tabernacle in Nob where the high priest, Ahimelech, gave him holy bread and the sword of Goliath. Then David had to leave Israel to seek refuge with the Philistines in Gath, but that did not go particularly well if you remember chapter 21.

29:20

So chapter 22, David escaped from the Philistines, hid out in a cave where he was joined by his family and about 400 other down-and-out people. They followed David to Moab where he left his parents under the protection of the king of Moab.

29:42

And then a prophet named Gad told David to go to Judah. So David and his followers went to Judah and they stayed in the forest of Hereth. I'm sure you remember all of this. And chapter 22, we also saw King Saul order the murders of Ahimelech the high priest and about 80 other priests from the tabernacle because Saul believed they had betrayed him by helping David.

30:13

And then, of course, the innocent men, women, and children who just happened to live in Nob where the tabernacle was were also slaughtered. Only one priest escaped. His name was Abiathar, Ahimelech's son.

30:29

He found David and told him what happened and then David took Abiathar under his protective care. And that's where we ended last week. All caught up? Let's enjoy chapter 23, verses 1 to 14. Now they told David, behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are robbing the threshing floors.

30:54

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 Keilah. But David's men said to him, behold, we are afraid here in Judah.

31:08

How much more than if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines? Then David inquired of the Lord again and the Lord answered him, arise, go down to Keilah for I will give the Philistines into your hand.

31:23

And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines and brought away their livestock and struck them with a great blow. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah. When Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, had fled the Philistines, fled to David to Keilah, he had come down with an ephod in his hand.

31:41

Now it was told, Saul, that David had come to Keilah, 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 Keilah to besiege David and his men.

32:00

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 Keilah to destroy the city on my account.

32:19

Will the men of Keilah 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, well, the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul.

32:36

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

32:52

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. Don't you love the word of God?

33:09

Are you amazed? Are you amazed at this passage? What we just read, think about this, what we just read happened so long ago. These are events from ancient history, but because these are the Lord's words, they come packed with meaning and purpose for your life and my life today, as we're going to see.

33:32

Absolutely amazing. Let's start with verse 1. Now they told David, behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are robbing the threshing floors. David and his men were hiding from Saul in the forest of Hereth.

33:51

That was in Judah. And news came to him that the Philistines were attacking the city in Keilah and they were raiding the threshing floors. This means the Philistines were coming in and they were stealing the harvested and separated grain that the people of Keilah needed to survive.

34:09

I have a map for us to look at. The name Keilah, you'll see it, it's in the middle, third dot from the top in the middle. The name Keilah means fortress. It means fort, fortress. It was located in the western foothills of Judah and the forest of Hereth is really where our map says forest of Horesh.

34:31

I think that's a misprint on the map because Horesh is further south. But either way, the Forest of Hereth where David was is right there by Keilah. So David's hiding place was right in the neighborhood when he heard about the Philistine attacks.

34:48

What a difficult dilemma for David. Should he go help those dear people in Keilah that he cared about or should he stay hidden and protect the 400 followers that he cared about? He wasn't in Saul's army anymore.

35:10

He had no official responsibility to respond to the attack but his heart wanted to go save the people in Keilah. He already had all the trouble he could handle just staying a step ahead of Saul. Was this really a good time for him to go fight with the Philistines?

35:34

How is David going to decide what to do? Should he just stay put, study the situation for a while? His older brothers were there. Maybe he should go to his older brothers and seek their counsel. Maybe he should flip a Hebrew coin.

35:50

What did David do? Verse 2, therefore, David inquired of the Lord. Shall I go down? Shall I go attack these Philistines? And the Lord said to David, go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah. That word, therefore, is really important because it connects verse 2 with verse 1.

36:14

Do we see that? In verse 1, David had a difficult dilemma. Therefore, in verse 2, he went straight to the Lord. Isn't that great? Do we see that? Do we see that? David needed to make a big decision. So his first priority was to bring that decision to God.

36:39

If we learn nothing else today, can we learn this for ourselves? Going to God first is the most brilliant decision we can make in our decision-making process. Going to God first is the most brilliant part of a brilliant decision-making process.

37:03

David asked the Lord, he said, God, shall I go? Shall I go to Keilah? And God answered, go, attack, save Keilah. That's a very clear answer from the Lord, isn't it? But it immediately created three huge problems for David.

37:27

Problem number one, David must go attack the skilled and experienced Philistine army with his group of castaways. Let's remind ourselves about the men under David's command. Let's turn back to chapter 22 verse 2, 1 Samuel chapter 22 verse 2.

37:46

We read this last week with Pastor Mike. And everyone who was in distress and everyone who was in debt and everyone who was bitter in soul gathered to him, that's David, and he became commander over them.

38:03

And there were with him about 400 men. David's dudes were not special forces, were they? His army was made up of men that were stressed out, taxed out, and bitter as all get out. David certainly knew how to lead them into battle, but did these guys know how to follow orders and fight?

38:31

David was going to have to find out the hard way in the heat of battle. There was no time for training or to go recruit better fighters. Second challenge, remember in Chapter 21, David sought refuge from King Saul.

38:44

He ran to the Philistines. He might need their help in the future, and in fact he will. So wasn't it a really bad idea for David to go kill a bunch of Philistines? Third issue, if David goes to Keilah, Saul is surely going to hear about it and come running, not to help David kill Philistines, but to kill David.

39:11

So David had at least three valid reasons not to do what God told him to do, but he had one all-important reason to go. What was that reason? What was the reason? Yes, God told him to go. Here's another vital lesson for us. For you, for me, learning, something we need to learn.

39:39

Obeying the Lord is the best decision we can make. Obeying the Lord is the best decision we can make, always without exception, even when we think we have reasons not to obey Him. Now, when David told his men what God wanted them to do, they all had an immediate response, and it wasn't, hallelujah, let's go get them, right?

40:05

Let's look at verse 3, but David's men said to him, behold, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more than if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines? Verse 2 begins with another important word, but that word connects verse 3 with verse 2.

40:29

God answered David in verse 2 but in verse 3, here comes an objection from David's men. They said, David, look, in case you haven't noticed, we're not like the guys you're used to commanding. We're not the brave heroic types here.

40:51

We're all really scared, hiding here in Judah. We're hidiers, not fighters. So, we're panic-stricken right now about this crazy idea of going and attacking the whole Philistine army in Keilah. Verse 2 and 3, if we're looking closely, gives us a picture, I think, of what probably goes on in our own head sometimes.

41:21

We pray for God's direction. He answers us in His Word or through the Holy Spirit, and then we question God's answer. like David's frightened men did. Have you ever said, you don't have to raise your hand, but have you ever said something like this to God? God, I'm afraid to do what you're telling me to do, so Lord, you need to change your plan.

41:51

You know I never leave my comfort zone. If I try to obey you, if I try to obey you, I'm just going to fail miserably. I know that very well. It wasn't hard for me to write that. Yeah, we all pray that prayer.

42:11

Look at verse four. Then David inquired of the Lord again, and the Lord answered him, arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the Philistines into your hand. David did not lash out at his men for their fear, but, but their fearful response gave David something else to pray about.

42:38

David wisely inquired of the Lord again. He double checked with God. Mickey McDermott, who will be here a second service, Mickey McDermott would call this measuring twice and cutting once, right? He double checked with God.

42:53

And I wonder, this is just wondering, if David's prayer sounded something like this, Lord, are you sure you want me to attack with these guys? I mean, they're, they're all shaking in their sandals. But then, but then our patient, loving, faithful God answered David with a promise, with a promise, that you and I need to remember too.

43:21

He said, God said, go to Keilah because I will give you the victory. The Lord said, David, David, you don't need to worry about your resources. I've got you, and I'm the only resource you need. Man, don't worry about your resources.

43:46

God's got you. He's the only resource you need. Okay, let's see if we're paying attention. Who was going to give David the victory over the Philistines? His 400 men? No, his one and only God. Who gives us the victories in our battles?

44:15

Same answer, same God. Same God for your battles, my battles. Let's look at verse 5. Isn't this great? Verse 5. Then David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines and brought away their livestock and struck them with a great blow so David saved the inhabitants of Keilah. Are you encouraged by this verse?

44:43

Oh my goodness, David and his scaredy cat soldiers went. They went to Keilah. They obeyed God even when they were terrified. Fear should not stop us from obeying God. Fear should motivate us to cling to the Lord all the more.

45:04

Don't let fear stop you. Don't let fear stop me. Let's let fear motivate us to just hold tighter to God. Now the verse tells us the Philistines did not drop their weapons and run away when they saw David and his troops coming.

45:21

David and his men, those scared men, had to fight. It got noisy and bloody. Another valuable lesson is right here for us to learn. When we obey the Lord, it does not mean it will be easy or painless.

45:43

Sometimes God's perfect plan for our lives includes hard battles, hard battles on the way to victory. God gave David and his ragtag troops an overwhelming triumph and a whole lot of Philistine livestock as a surprise bonus.

46:10

So here's a fun fact. Faith and obedience to God brings unexpected blessings. Faith and obedience to God brings unexpected blessings. Let's look at verse 6. When Abiathar,

the son of Ahimelech, had fled with David to Keilah, he had come down with an ephod in his hand. This verse tells us, it feels like a little insert, but this verse is telling us how David was making his inquiries of the Lord.

46:43

Abiathar brought his father's high priest ephod from the tabernacle. So what? So this. Look on the screen. There's a picture here. A linen ephod on the left was the ordinary vestment for all the priests.

46:59

But the high priest ephod on the right was much more elaborate, wasn't it? And on the ephod was a breastplate that was attached. It had the 12 stone, 12 precious stones that were engraved with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel.

47:14

And also in the high priest breastplate, they carried the Urim and Thummim. Urim means lights. Thummim means perfections. In ancient Israel, the Urim and Thummim were used to determine God's will, but no one knows what they looked like or how they were used because the Bible just doesn't tell us.

47:38

Maybe they were gemstones engraved with a yes or no answer that God manipulated or God controlled in some way, but we're not told. So I don't want to guess any further. Now, when we seek the Lord today, we don't need the mysterious Urim and Thummim because we have God's Word, we have the Bible, and every believer in Christ has the Holy Spirit living in us who will help us understand and follow God's will.

48:10

But God still works in mysterious ways in our lives, doesn't He? You think the Urim and Thummim were mysterious? How about the way God works in your life? Have you ever been struggling with something and you needed an answer from God?

48:26

And that answer came from a passage of Scripture you read that day or from a message that Sunday? Has that ever happened to you? Mysterious. Have you ever prayed for guidance and you set off on your destination and somehow you ended up somewhere totally else where you didn't expect but it was right where you were supposed to be?

48:48

Mysterious. Have you ever had a door closed of opportunity? Just have it closed and then another door opens? Mysterious. God's methods often leave us bewildered but always blessed. God's methods often leave us bewildered but always blessed.

49:18

Let's look at verse 7. Now it was told Saul that David had come to Keilah 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. When Saul heard that David was actually in Keilah, he was really pleased because he thought God led David right into his hands.

49:44

God led David right into a trap. What did Saul mean when he said David has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars? What did that mean? Well, I'll tell you what it did not mean. It did not mean that Keilah had lots of entrances and lots of places for David to go and get drunk.

50:05

That's not what that meant. Let me tell you what it did mean. First there's a picture for you. This is what Keilah kind of would look like. Remember, the name Keilah meant fortress or fort. It was surrounded all the way around by a towering wall and the gates and bars actually literally translates to mean two doors and a bar.

50:28

Keilah was a fort with only one entrance, and it was a big gate with these big heavy doors on hinges that would swing shut and be locked with a big bar. It means Keilah, the fortress, had one way in and out, so it really would be an easy way for Saul to trap David inside, a place that only had one way in and out.

50:55

Let's look at verse 8. And Saul summoned all the people to war to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men. Saul gathered all the king's horses and all the king's men to go surround Keilah and starve the people out and force them to surrender David or die.

51:15

What a king, huh? How do you think David's soldiers must have felt as they marched? They couldn't defy the king, so now they're marching, and they're going after David, who just a very, very short time ago was their most valiant commander.

51:34

And David was the man that faced Goliath and saved them all, and here they were marching to get him. You know, I bet you those men were hoping and praying that David would be long gone before they got there.

51:48

Let's look at verse 9. David knew that Saul was plotting harm against him, and he said to Abiathar the priest, bring the ephod here. David knew Saul was coming, but he didn't panic, he prayed. Another note to self, isn't it?

52:10

Saul's coming, David didn't panic, he prayed. Verse 10, then David said, O Lord, the God of Israel, your servant has surely heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah to destroy the city on my account. Can you hear the emotion in that verse?

52:31

David was still grieving over what Saul did to the priests and citizens of Nob on his account. Now he feared Saul would just slaughter everyone in Keilah because of him too. Let's look at verse 11. He said, he asked of the Lord, will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand?

52:52

Will Saul come down as your servant is heard? Oh Lord, God of Israel, please tell your servant. And the Lord said, he will come down. David asked two questions, didn't he? But he only got one answer from the Urim and Thummim and we're not told why, he only got one answer.

53:11

David asked, will the people of Keilah give me up and will Saul come down? And the Lord answered, yes, Saul is coming, Saul will come. So let's look at verse 12. So then David said, will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?

53:27

And the Lord said, they will surrender you. When David repeated his first question, God said, yeah, yeah, David, the people are going to give you up to Saul. Now, at face value, this sounds like an ugly, ugly betrayal from the people of Keilah that David just rescued, doesn't it?

53:51

But if we think about it, do these people really have a choice? It would be suicide for them to defy the king with his army all around the city that was sitting there just ready to starve them out and then attack.

54:04

Let's look at verse 13. And David and his men, who were about 600, arose and departed from Keilah. And they went wherever they could go. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the expedition.

54:23

David had about 400 men, if you remember, in chapter 22. Now he has about 600, so perhaps some men of Keilah have now joined him. Saul canceled his march toward Keilah when a messenger told him that David had escaped.

54:42

Now, we aren't told if Saul threw his spear at the messenger or not. Just saying. Does verse 13 make you sad? This is the saddest part. A few chapters ago, David was cheered for his victories. Women sang songs about him.

55:09

Now, after this incredibly courageous rescue mission to Keilah, David and his men had to scatter like criminals to find any place they could go hide. Let's look at verse 14, or the last verse. And David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness in the hill country of the wilderness of Ziph.

55:32

And Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand. Let's look at our map again, the one we started with. The wilderness of Ziph, you see it there near the Red Sea, was part of the Judean desert.

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It was rugged terrain, but it was a really great place to go if you wanted to disappear from your enemies. God led David here. God protected David here, but it certainly wasn't a comfy retreat at the coast.

56:03

Again, we see God's plan for us is not always easy, but it's always right. When you're going through something that's not easy, remember, it's always right. The harsh wilderness of Ziph, here's a picture of what Ziph looked like pretty, isn't it?

56:24

Not too many hotels. The harsh wilderness of Ziph was the perfect training ground for God to work in David's life. As one commentary noted that David became a man after God's own heart in the shepherd's field, but he became a king in the wilderness.

56:48

He became a king in the wilderness. Let's look at verse 14 one more time. 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.

57:06

Does verse 14 make you smile? Yeah, remember in verse 7, Saul pompously said, God has given David into my hand. And here in verse 14, God says, no, I did not. Nope. God protected David from Saul anywhere and everywhere.

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Saul tried to get him. So that's our last verse today, but we have time for a quick recap quiz. One question, multiple choice. Are you ready? Here's the question. Ready? Who was in control of every event in our passage today?

57:52

Before you answer, here are your choices. Was it David, Saul, the Philistines, or God? The answer is God. Can we remember that for our lives too? Let's remember that whatever we're worried about, God is in the control of our events too.

58:28

Let's think about David's journey in our passage. God led David into Judah not just to hide in a forest like Robin Hood in his merry men, but so David could be right there, right there to save Keilah. God brought Abiathar to David with the ephod so the Lord could give him direction.

58:51

God gave underdog David a blowout over the mighty Philistines. God gave David the information he needed so that he could escape Keilah before Saul and his army arrived. God prevented Saul from getting his hands on David every day after that.

59:08

Our passage is really not about David at all, is it? It's all about God. That's the story of our lives too. That's the story of our lives too. Today, we've seen how David wisely relied on the Lord for all of his decisions.

59:31

Saul had a huge army. Saul had every advantage except for one. David was trusting in the Lord and Saul was not. God was with David, just like God is with you and I, you and me, when we are facing overwhelming forces against us.

59:51

So as we close, I want to remind us of something David wrote in Psalm 56. We looked at this just a couple of weeks ago when David was in another life or death jam, but there's a reason I want to look at it one more time with you and then we'll finish.

01:00:05

Psalm 56:3, David said, When I'm afraid, I put my trust in you. That was David's prayer to God. When I'm afraid, I put my trust in you. David was well acquainted with fear and so are we. How many times are you afraid in the night and in the day?

01:00:29

Every time something comes along to scare us, we can pray a very simple but powerful prayer based on Psalm 56 and it goes like this. It'll be on the screen for you. I know this prayer very well. God, I'm afraid of fill in the blank, but I put my trust in you.

01:00:56

God, I'm afraid of what the doctor is going to say. I'm afraid of what my boss is going to do. I'm afraid of what tomorrow will bring, but I put my trust in you. This is a prayer we can pray every day, hour, minute, and we can fill in the blank with whatever we're worried about at the moment.

01:01:22

Sometimes we're going to need more than one blank, aren't we? This is also a good prayer to pray out loud. Not so God can hear it, but so we can hear it. We need to hear ourselves name our fears and then proclaim our trust in God.

01:01:38

Whatever you're dealing with today or tomorrow, trust God with it. Trust God with it. Whatever decisions you're wrestling with, be sure you seek the Lord's guidance sooner rather than later. And don't lose heart when things get difficult.

01:02:01

God's got you. God's got you. And sometimes God's perfect plan for your life and my life includes some hard battles on our way to victory. Our prayer team will be here to pray with us, pray with you at the end of the service if you'd like prayer.

01:02:21

Also, we have a wonderful tool right out the door to the right, a prayer wall. You don't have to come forward if you're shy, and you can just quickly write a note and leave it in the prayer wall or leave it in the box by the prayer wall, and we will pray for you.

01:02:35

Let's bow our heads together. Father, thank you. Thank you for this passage today that shows us how trustworthy you are, how faithful you are, how kind and patient you are, how powerful you are, how personal you are.

01:02:55

Father, please forgive us for all the times we think life is all about us instead of all about you. Help us, help us learn to use our fears as motivation to cling to you all the more and trust you all the more.

01:03:11

Father, we love you and we need you and we thank you in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen. We're going to share communion together now. Why do we do that? Because Jesus told us to. Let's read His words when He gathered with His disciples for the last time and for the last supper before He went to the cross, Matthew 26, verses 26 to 29.

01:03:39

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, take, eat, this is my body. And He took a cup and when He had given thanks He gave it to them saying, drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

01:04:01

I tell you, I will not drink it again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. Communion is at the very heart of what it means to be a believer. Communion is a holy sacrament given to us by our Savior for us to just humbly and gracefully

01:04:23

remember what Jesus did for us on the cross. When we take Communion today in just a minute, let's also look forward to the day when Jesus will return, and then we will all share Communion together with Him.

01:04:40

What a day that will be. God's Word tells us to search our hearts and confess our sins to the Lord before we come to His table, and we must be sure we come with true faith in the Lord Jesus only for our salvation.

01:04:56

Please do not come and just go through the motions. I'm going to lead us in a brief prayer of Communion, and I'll step away. You will have a quiet time to prepare your hearts, and when you're ready, come and get the elements, take them back to your seat, and have Communion there.

01:05:11

Let's pray together. Father, thank You for loving us so much that You sent Your Son to die for our sins so we can live forever with You. Before we come to your table today, please show us if there be any wicked way in us, so we might confess our sins to you now and be cleansed from all unrighteousness by your grace and your mercy.

01:05:33

And it's in the name of Jesus, our Savior, we pray. Amen.