

Shepherd, Poet, Fugitive, King: The Life of David

Today's Message: "David Inquired of the LORD" / Jeff Kennedy 1/21/23

**Opening Scripture: Galatians 1:3–5**

**Introduction:** Imagine that today, you knew the future of your life in stark detail. In other words, you know what God knows about how your life will unfold. How would knowing the future with certainty change your decisions? We would likely be tempted to avoid difficult situations so that we never had to face those challenges in the first place. But in doing so we would rob ourselves of the growth that can only be delivered through trials. Seeking to sidestep pain and discomfort, we would deprive ourselves of facing our trials and, in them, the forces that shape us into the people that God intends for us to become.

**Transition:** In our story today, David is going to receive guidance by the Lord, and he will be told the future—but he receives this guidance and this knowledge of the future only *after he is led* into a difficult ordeal.

Today, we'll look at three scenes in 1 Samuel 23: David leads a rescue, David needs rescue, and David flees his captors by seeking God's guidance and His knowledge. All the while, God is making the fugitive into a king; he is forging a man who can reign over his realm.

**1. A Rescue Mission in Keilah (1 Samuel 23:1–6).** David leads a rescue mission to deliver the inhabitants of Keilah from Philistine oppression. It was reported to David, “Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and raiding the threshing floors.” <sup>2</sup> **So David inquired of the Lord:** “Should I launch an attack against these Philistines?” The Lord answered David, “Launch an attack against the Philistines and rescue Keilah.” <sup>3</sup> But David’s men said to him, “Look, **we’re afraid here in Judah**; how much more if we go to Keilah against the Philistine forces!” <sup>4</sup> Once again, **David inquired of the Lord**, and the Lord answered him, “Go at once to Keilah, for I will hand the Philistines over to you.” <sup>5</sup> Then David and his men went to Keilah, fought against the Philistines, drove their livestock away, and inflicted heavy losses on them. So David rescued the inhabitants of Keilah. <sup>6</sup> Abiathar son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, and he brought an ephod with him.

**The fearful response of David’s team is expected but needs leadership.** David’s men are initially fearful because they are behind enemy lines in Judah at the instruction of the Prophet Gad. David is proposing that they take on an impossible task against the entrenched Philistines. But their leader is David the shepherd, the poet, the giant killer—is now a fugitive, the scars of war visible on his skin, the giant’s blade heavy in his hand—David is a man of courage and faith, and he is no stranger to peril. And he knows that they are not here by accident. God is orchestrating the whole thing.

**Illustration:** There is a scene at the end of the book of Acts where God leads Paul onto a ship that is destined to crash on the rocky shoals of Koura in the Mediterranean. As the ship is breaking apart, Paul has to tell them (Acts 27:22, 25). “Now I urge you to take courage, because there will be no loss of any of your lives, but only of the ship... So **take courage men**, because I believe God that it will be just the way it was told to me.” Sometimes you have to **take** courage. And it takes a leader who trusts in God to stand in the midst of chaos and declare his faith, to encourage everyone to take courage, and trust in God’s sovereign plan. David and his men are facing their own storm. Fear is the natural response but so long as they are following God’s man and God’s word they really have every reason to take courage.

**David seeks confirmation of God’s will.** God has already spoken to him, but after seeing the hesitation of his men, he goes back to God to verify His direction for them. God confirms his Word, and they inflict heavy losses on the Philistines, rescuing the Keilahites. Strong faith sometimes needs confirmation. Whenever I think I’ve heard from the LORD and he is leading, guiding, and speaking to me—I always seek confirmation, especially if some intervening things have happened to cause me to waver. That is not a sign of weak faith. That’s a sign of wise faith.

Paul told the Philippian Christians, “I have you in my heart, and you are all partners with me in grace, both **in my imprisonment** and in the **defense and confirmation of the gospel**” (Phil 1:7). How is the truth confirmed? How is our faith demonstrated and validated? It is in trying circumstances where faith proves genuine. It is in the ordeal that we discover the validity and the value of our faith.

**Illustration:** Those in the field of security or cyber-security know this. Weaknesses in security systems or protocols may go unnoticed until they are actively put to the test. We constantly test the strength of any system to expose potential vulnerabilities. You may have thought you have an earthquake-proof home, but you'll never really know until the ground begins to shake beneath your feet. The trial both confirms the validity of our faith and reveals its value to us.

**We also see that Jewish faith and religion are at the heart of text.** The scene ends with the priest Abiathar, the lone survivor of the massacre at Nob, he brings to David a priestly Ephod—which is a symbol of God's voice and his presence. At all times, David is a spiritual man. Jewish faith and religion are at the very center of all that David does. He never leaves God behind.

Application: We take courage in the LORD, who confirms our faith in the midst of our trials, as we seek his presence and guidance in all things.

**2. Keilah Becomes a Trap (1 Samuel 23:7–8).** Now, David must save himself from the people he just saved. <sup>7</sup>When it was reported to Saul that David had gone to Keilah, he said, “**God has handed him over to me**, for he has trapped himself by entering a town with barred gates.” <sup>8</sup>Then Saul summoned all the troops to go to war at Keilah and besiege David and his men. Saul decides to march on Keilah and capture David. The mad king actually thinks that God is on his side, even though by this point he has disobeyed God’s commands, he has killed God’s priests, and he has repeatedly assaulted and attempted to murder God’s chosen anointed King, David, and by the way, when he’s not pacing around his palace like ghost, he can be found under the Tamarisk tree in the high places—and yet he thinks God is still on his side. It just goes to show that people can believe that God is for them and be totally unaware that God is actually against them.

**Tyrants almost always think they are doing God’s work.** They almost always assume that God is on their side and that their cause is righteous. How is it possible that this King who has walked away from God still believes that God is for him or with him? One of the ways in which sin blinds us is to convince us that a lie is true and that evil is good. And the reverse—that the truth is a lie and good is in fact evil. You will be told that it isn’t compassionate or kind to deny a person’s chosen identity, no matter how absurd the claim is. You will be told that real compassion is not telling the person the truth about themselves but is being tolerant of their delusion.

This is a symptom of someone who has chosen to become deluded and is now experiencing the judgment of delusion.

2 Thessalonians 2:9–12 The coming of the lawless one is based on Satan’s working, with every kind of miracle, both signs and wonders **servicing the lie**, <sup>10</sup> and with every wicked deception among those who are perishing. They perish because they did not accept **the love of the truth and so be saved**. <sup>11</sup> For this reason **God sends them a strong delusion so that they will believe the lie**, <sup>12</sup> so that all will be condemned—those who did not **believe the truth** but **delighted in unrighteousness**. Paul is here describing a time when everyone around us will choose to serve a lie. This level of idolatry happens when we demand to be loved in our sin with no sense of conviction for our lawless, immoral choices—and we put our demand to be loved despite our unrepentant above our love for the truth. The most unloving thing I can do is to deny the truth.

**Illustration: When my wife’s oncologist found cancer in her, it would not have been loving to let her serve a lie, thinking she was alright—when there was a cancer in her, threatening to take her life.** That would not have been an act of love. That would be cruel.

And notice what he says is the consequence and then the judgment for choosing a life in service to a lie, and that vaunts its need to be loved in sin above the love the truth—“God sends them a strong delusion so that they will believe the lie—so that all will be condemned—those who did not believe the truth but delighted in unrighteousness.”

I cannot think of anything more detrimental or dangerous than to reject the truth to serve a lie, to love yourself and to love your so-called truth above God's truth, because God judges them with the very thing they demand from God. They have chosen a delusional belief, and God gives them more than they can handle, leading to their inevitable judgment.

He wanted to save you from your sins, but you demanded to be loved in your sin—with no confession, repentance, or conversion of the heart. And now he has no recourse, no other option but to be our judge in that case.

Saul is living a lie—he is not King. He's been rejected by God. He falsely believes that God is on his side and the evil he does is actually good.

Saul loves himself more than he loves the truth, and his demand to be loved, to be acknowledged in his delusional state over loving the truth becomes his undoing.

If we want to embrace delusion, we can have it, and we will drink it to the dregs before we tragically discover that that delicious, self-serving, delusional belief was a cup of God's wrath all the while.

Remember what John said in John 3:19 "This is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people **loved darkness** rather than the light because their deeds were evil." He doesn't say, "People tolerated the darkness, or they accidentally stumbled into darkness; or they wandered unwittingly into it—no—we rejected the light of God's truth in Christ because in our sinful flesh we revel in darkness, we enjoy our sin, we parade it through the streets of our cities and have the audacity to call it love and any criticism of it calling it hate.

Totally deluded, thinking that the lie is the truth and evil is good.

Application: We must serve the truth rather than live in service to the lies in our culture.

**3. David Averts Capture through God’s Foreknowledge (1 Samuel 23:9–12).** David hears that Saul has learned of his presence there in Keilah and again inquires of the LORD.

<sup>9</sup>When David learned that Saul was plotting evil against him, he said to the priest Abiathar, “Bring the ephod.” Then David said, “Will the citizens of Keilah (the people he had just rescued) hand me over to Saul? Will Saul come down as your servant has heard? LORD, God of Israel, please tell your servant?” And the LORD answered, **“He will come down. And the citizens of Keilah will give you up.** <sup>12</sup>Then David asked, “Will the citizens of Keilah hand me and my men over to Saul?” **“They will,”** the Lord responded. So David and his men, numbering about six hundred, left Keilah at once and moved from place to place. David once again seeks God’s guidance because he has good theology. What does he know about God? He knows that God knows what Saul will do and what the residents of Keilah will do. We said before, David is a man of the Word—he knows who his God is, he has been instructed in the truth.

- **Isaiah 44:6–8** This is what the Lord, the King of Israel and its Redeemer, the Lord of Armies, says: I am the first and I am the last. There is no God but me. <sup>7</sup>Who, like me, **can announce the future**? Let him say so and make a case before me, since I have established an ancient people. Let these gods **declare the coming things**, and what will take place. <sup>8</sup>Do not be startled or afraid. Have I not told you and **declared it long ago**? You are my witnesses! Is there any God but me? There is no other Rock; I do not know any.
- **Isaiah 45:21** Speak up and present your case—yes, let them consult each other. **Who predicted this** long ago? Who **announced it from ancient times**? Was it not I, the LORD? There is **no other God** but me, a righteous God and Savior; there is no one except me.”
- **Isaiah 46:9-10** “Remember what happened long ago, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and no one is like me. **I declare the end from the beginning, and from long ago what is not yet done**, saying: my plan will take place, and I will do all my will.”

Why is it so important to know this about God? Because the LORD makes this a litmus for anyone or anything claiming to be god. God says, “Unless you have the requisite skill set, don’t even think about claiming that you are god. Who but God could predict the future from eternity past?” Foretelling the future is a criterion for being divinity.

**But this is no mere abstraction for David. Look at this beautiful song he composes: Psalm 139:16 A Psalm of David** “Your eyes saw me when I was formless; all my days were written in your book and planned before a single one of them began.”

- David paints a moving picture of God's omniscience. Before we even take shape, our path is laid out in God's “book.”
- We can rest in God’s sovereignty. We are not some random, self-assembled particles—we are intricately and carefully made as God foreknows and foreordains our lives.

Every believer in this room should take refuge in this truth—*God knows you. And God is working all things together for your good.*

**Romans 8:28–30** “We know that ***all things work together for the good*** of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. <sup>30</sup> And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified.”

- We said in the previous point that some people are deluded into thinking that God is for them when God actually opposes them, because they are serving a life of deception. But ***it’s also possible to be a Christian and think that God is against you, when in fact God is for you.*** Paul declares that even amidst life’s tribulations, God remains in control. He works all things, even hardship, for the ultimate good of those who love Him. Do you love God? Do you know that God is working everything for your good today?

**Ephesians 1:11** “In him we have also received an inheritance, because we were predestined according to the plan of the one who works out everything in agreement with the purpose of his will, <sup>12</sup> so that we who had already put our hope in Christ might bring praise to his glory.”

- We have received an inheritance, an eternal promise guaranteed, vouchsafed in Christ’s resurrection. We embrace his fate—the cross, and in so doing we embrace his glory—resurrection.
- This predestination is not a rigid fate but rather an expression of God’s unwavering love and desire for our participation in His glory through resurrection.

**Application:** When you don’t know “why,” you can trust the one who holds your future.

**Conclusion:** I have to tell you that there are things I wake up to every day, they don’t go away—as far as I know some of those things will remain unresolved until I go to glory. Other issues I’m actively praying for resolution. And one particular thing that I face has really got my number. There are days when I am so discouraged that I don’t even want to get up. The way I’m facing it is to get up about 4:30 in the morning, get to my office and just meditate on the goodness of God. All that he’s done, mulling over all that he’s accomplished in my life.

And I’ve found the Key that David knew—the key in Keilah is to know the God you serve and believe in. To go to Him and bask in his presence, meditating on his goodness to you through the years.

God doesn’t always give me the answer to my dilemma, a quick solution or a quick fix for my problem. But where I experience an absence of an answer, God’s presence fills that space.

- Will you get up and “take courage” in the LORD today. Will you seek his guidance in all things, and especially in your most trying situations?
- Are you willing to become a servant of the truth rather than to serve the lies of our fallen, deluded world?
- Can you rest this morning in the God who knows? Can you breathe a sigh of relief knowing the God who knows all things, he directs all things, and who is working all things out for your ultimate good—leading you on to resurrection glory?