

# 1st Samuel

## Lesson 47

*A psalm of David. 1 O LORD, oppose those who oppose me. Fight those who fight against me. 2 Put on your armor, and take up your shield. Prepare for battle, and come to my aid. 3 Lift up your spear and javelin against those who pursue me. Let me hear you say, “I will give you victory!” 4 Bring shame and disgrace on those trying to kill me; turn them back and humiliate those who want to harm me. 5 Blow them away like chaff in the wind—a wind sent by the angel of the LORD. 6 Make their path dark and slippery, with the angel of the LORD pursuing them. 7 I did them no wrong, but they laid a trap for me. I did them no wrong, but they dug a pit to catch me. 8 So let sudden ruin come upon them! Let them be caught in the trap they set for me! Let them be destroyed in the pit they dug for me. 9 Then I will rejoice in the LORD. I will be glad because he rescues me. 10 With every bone in my body I will praise him: “LORD, who can compare with you? Who else rescues the helpless from the strong? Who else protects the helpless and poor from those who rob them?” 11 Malicious witnesses testify against me. They accuse me of crimes I know nothing about. 12 They repay me evil for good. I am sick with despair. 13 Yet when they were ill, I grieved for them. I denied myself by fasting for them, but my prayers returned unanswered. 14 I was sad, as though they were my friends or family, as if I were grieving for my own mother. 15 But they are glad now that I am in trouble; they gaily join together against me. I am attacked by people I don’t even know; they slander me constantly. 16 They mock me and call me names; they snarl at me. 17 How long, O Lord, will you look on and do nothing? Rescue me from their fierce attacks. Protect my life from these lions! 18 Then I will thank you in front of the great assembly. I will praise you before all the people. 19 Don’t let my treacherous enemies rejoice over my defeat. Don’t let those who hate me without cause gloat over my sorrow. 20 They don’t talk of peace; they plot against innocent people who mind their own business. 21 They shout, “Aha! Aha! With our own eyes we saw him do it!” 22 O LORD, you know all about this. Do not stay silent. Do not abandon me now, O Lord. 23 Wake up! Rise to my defense! Take up my case, my God and my Lord. 24 Declare me not guilty, O LORD my God, for you give justice. Don’t let my enemies laugh about me in my troubles. 25 Don’t let them say, “Look, we got what we wanted! Now we will eat him alive!” 26 May those who rejoice at my troubles be humiliated and disgraced. May those who triumph over me be covered with shame and dishonor. 27 But give great joy to those who came to my defense. Let them continually say, “Great is the LORD, who delights in blessing his servant with peace!” 28 Then I will proclaim your justice, and I will praise you all day long. (Psalm 35)*

*For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time Doeg the Edomite said to Saul, “David has gone to see Ahimelech.” 1 Why do you boast about your crimes, great warrior? Don’t you realize God’s justice continues forever? 2 All day long you plot destruction. Your tongue cuts like a sharp razor; you’re an expert at telling lies. 3 You love evil more than good and lies more than truth. Interlude 4 You love to destroy others with your words, you liar! 5 But God will strike you down once and for all. He will pull you from your home and uproot you from the land of the living. Interlude 6 The righteous will see it and be amazed. They will laugh and say, 7 “Look what happens to mighty warriors who do not trust in God. They trust their wealth instead and grow more and more bold in their wickedness.” 8 But I am like an olive tree, thriving in the house of God. I will always trust in God’s unfailing love. 9 I will praise you forever, O God, for what you have done. I will trust in your good name in the presence of your faithful people. (Psalm 52).*

*For the choir director: A psalm of David. 1 O God, listen to my complaint. Protect my life from my enemies’ threats. 2 Hide me from the plots of this evil mob, from this gang of wrongdoers. 3 They sharpen their tongues like*

*swords and aim their bitter words like arrows. 4 They shoot from ambush at the innocent, attacking suddenly and fearlessly. 5 They encourage each other to do evil and plan how to set their traps in secret. “Who will ever notice?” they ask. 6 As they plot their crimes, they say, “We have devised the perfect plan!” Yes, the human heart and mind are cunning. 7 But God himself will shoot them with his arrows, suddenly striking them down. 8 Their own tongues will ruin them, and all who see them will shake their heads in scorn. 9 Then everyone will be afraid; they will proclaim the mighty acts of God and realize all the amazing things he does. 10 The godly will rejoice in the LORD and find shelter in him. And those who do what is right will praise him. (Psalm 64).*

*For the choir director: A psalm of David. 1 O God, whom I praise, don’t stand silent and aloof 2 while the wicked slander me and tell lies about me. 3 They surround me with hateful words and fight against me for no reason. 4 I love them, but they try to destroy me with accusations even as I am praying for them! 5 They repay evil for good, and hatred for my love. 6 They say, “Get an evil person to turn against him. Send an accuser to bring him to trial. 7 When his case comes up for judgment, let him be pronounced guilty. Count his prayers as sins. 8 Let his years be few; let someone else take his position. 9 May his children become fatherless, and his wife a widow. 10 May his children wander as beggars and be driven from their ruined homes. 11 May creditors seize his entire estate, and strangers take all he has earned. 12 Let no one be kind to him; let no one pity his fatherless children. 13 May all his offspring die. May his family name be blotted out in the next generation. 14 May the LORD never forget the sins of his fathers; may his mother’s sins never be erased from the record. 15 May the LORD always remember these sins, and may his name disappear from human memory. 16 For he refused all kindness to others; he persecuted the poor and needy, and he bounded the brokenhearted to death. 17 He loved to curse others; now you curse him. He never blessed others; now don’t you bless him. 18 Cursing is as natural to him as his clothing, or the water he drinks, or the rich food he eats. 19 Now may his curses return and cling to him like clothing; may they be tied around him like a belt.” 20 May those curses become the LORD’s punishment for my accusers who speak evil of me. 21 But deal well with me, O Sovereign LORD, for the sake of your own reputation! Rescue me because you are so faithful and good. 22 For I am poor and needy, and my heart is full of pain. 23 I am fading like a shadow at dusk; I am brushed off like a locust. 24 My knees are weak from fasting, and I am skin and bones. 25 I am a joke to people everywhere; when they see me, they shake their heads in scorn. 26 Help me, O LORD my God! Save me because of your unfailing love. 27 Let them see that this is your doing, that you yourself have done it, LORD. 28 Then let them curse me if they like, but you will bless me! When they attack me, they will be disgraced! But I, your servant, will go right on rejoicing! 29 May my accusers be clothed with disgrace; may their humiliation cover them like a cloak. 30 But I will give repeated thanks to the LORD, praising him to everyone. 31 For he stands beside the needy, ready to save them from those who condemn them. (Psalm 109)*

*A psalm of David. 1 I give you thanks, O LORD, with all my heart; I will sing your praises before the gods. 2 I bow before your holy Temple as I worship. I praise your name for your unfailing love and faithfulness; for your promises are backed by all the honor of your name. 3 As soon as I pray, you answer me; you encourage me by giving me strength. 4 Every king in all the earth will thank you, LORD, for all of them will hear your words. 5 Yes, they will sing about the LORD’s ways, for the glory of the LORD is very great. 6 Though the LORD is great, he cares for the humble, but he keeps his distance from the proud. 7 Though I am surrounded by troubles, you will protect me from the anger of my enemies. You reach out your hand, and the power of your right hand saves me. 8 The LORD will work out his plans for my life—for your faithful love, O LORD, endures forever. Don’t abandon me, for you made me. (Psalm 138)*

*A psalm of David, regarding his experience in the cave. A prayer. 1 I cry out to the LORD; I plead for the LORD’s mercy. 2 I pour out my complaints before him and tell him all my troubles. 3 When I am overwhelmed, you alone know the way I should turn. Wherever I go, my enemies have set traps for me. 4 I look for someone to come and help me, but no one gives me a passing thought! No one will help me; no one cares a bit what happens to*

*me. 5 Then I pray to you, O LORD. I say, "You are my place of refuge. You are all I really want in life. 6 Hear my cry, for I am very low. Rescue me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me. 7 Bring me out of prison so I can thank you. The godly will crowd around me, for you are good to me." (Psalm 142)*

## Chapter 23

### (5) David Delivers Keilah

#### (a) A Summary of David's Direction from the LORD (23:1-5)

Still hid in the forest of Hereth, David heard of the Philistine invasion at Keilah. The writer tells us how David delivers Keilah with a summary of David's direction from the LORD. Chapter 23, verse 1.

*"Then they told David, saying, "Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are plundering the threshing floors."<sup>2</sup> So David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" And the LORD said to David, "Go and attack the Philistines and deliver Keilah."<sup>3</sup> But David's men said to him, "Behold, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more then if we go to Keilah against the ranks of the Philistines?"<sup>4</sup> Then David inquired of the LORD once more. And the LORD answered him and said, "Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the Philistines into your hand."<sup>5</sup> So David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines; and he led away their livestock and struck them with a great slaughter. Thus David delivered the inhabitants of Keilah."* (23:1-5)

We must wonder what Saul was doing when the Philistines attacked Keilah, but the writer does not give us that information. We must also notice the point displayed in this passage. The point is, *"David inquired of the LORD."* This reference begins the first instance where we learn that the LORD communicated directly with David. In this passage, the LORD speaks to David twice. The next time the LORD will speak directly with David will occur in chapter 30.

With this victory over the Philistines, David has livestock and supplies of the spoils to provide for his men. In defeating the Philistines, David also freed the Keilahites from the Philistine threat. According to some scholars, Keilah was about three miles from David's stronghold in the forest of Hereth. To arrive at that thought, the scholars have selected a heavily wooded area in Judah; however, the location of the stronghold is not truly known. Be that as it may, if Keilah was only three miles or so from David's stronghold, Saul was a long way away in Gibeah. This point may answer why Saul was not involved in this battle as he had not heard of the threat of the Philistines at Keilah in time to react. But, the word of the battle will soon arrive at Saul's doorstep.

#### (b) A Summary of David's Instruction to Abiathar (23:6-9)

Evidently, David and his men remained in Keilah for a while, and Abiathar joined him there. The writer gives a summary of David's instruction to Abiathar. Verse 6.

*"Now it came about, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand.<sup>7</sup> When it was told Saul that David had come to Keilah, Saul said, "God has delivered him into my hand, for he shut himself in by entering a city with double gates and bars."<sup>8</sup> So Saul summoned all the people for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men.<sup>9</sup> Now David knew that Saul was plotting evil against him; so he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod here."* (23:6-9)

In response to Saul's reaction in hearing what David has done at Keilah, and that David has remained at Keilah, we learn that Keilah was a walled city with two walls and two sets of gates, a gate in each wall. The two walls are not mentioned here directly but are implied. A double gate meant a gate in an outer wall and a gate in an inner wall, like the description of the wall structures that we learned about at Jericho before the walls came tumbling down. The inner gate was closed at sunset to protect the city. Anyone coming to the city after sun set would be able to go through the outer gate but would have to identify themselves to the lookouts before the inner gate was opened to allow them to enter. Late, about 10 o'clock, the outer gate would be shut. Anyone arriving after

the outer gate was shut would have a much harder time getting into the city. A walled city like this supported several surrounding villages that were not walled. In times of trouble, such as the arrival of the Philistines in this case, would cause all the inhabitants of the surrounding villages to run to the walled city for safety. It was because of the walls of Keilah that David had time to arrive, plan an attack, defeat the Philistines, and enter the city as champion.

The news of David's victory spread fast with the elimination of the Philistines. His stay in Keilah was told to Saul who saw this as an opportunity to kill David. The writer does not do a good job of laying out this passage in chronological order. As we will see in many of the coming passages, this writer, writing this section, be Gad or Nathan, will make a statement of the end result and then back up to tell how the scene played out to come to the end result. In this case, the end result was that Abiathar arrived in Keilah with the ephod. However, in the steps to accomplish that task, it seems that Abiathar fled to David first and then David told him to bring the ephod. But a closer look shows that that order was not the case. David heard of Saul's plan from someone – we do not know whom. He then sent word to Abiathar to come to Keilah and bring the ephod that Abiathar was caring since the destruction at Nob of the priests. Abiathar took the ephod, escaped, or left the forest of Hereth, and came to be with David at Keilah for safety.

#### (c) A Summary of David's Prayer Concerning Keilah (23:10-12)

Once Abiathar arrived in Keilah, David decided to hear from the LORD again concerning Keilah. The writer gives us a summary of David's prayer concerning Keilah, and the LORD's answer to David's prayer directly. Verse 10.

*"Then David said, 'O LORD God of Israel, Your servant has heard for certain that Saul is seeking to come to Keilah to destroy the city on my account.<sup>11</sup> Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down just as Your servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant.' And the LORD said, 'He will come down.'<sup>12</sup> Then David said, 'Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?' And the LORD said, 'They will surrender you.'* (23:10-12)

David had saved Keilah from the Philistines, but the people of Keilah would not protect David from Saul. The LORD did not answer all of David's questions. He only answered the most important question. The LORD does that you know. Many of our questions for the LORD do not need to be answered. We are worried about all the *what ifs*. The LORD surely knows how to sift through our *what ifs*, and answer clearly what is important. In this case, the LORD basically told David that he and his men were not safe in Keilah.

#### (d) A Summary of David's Travels After Keilah (23:13a)

With the answer from the LORD, the writer, who was with David at the time, gives a summary of David's travels after Keilah. Verse 13a.

*"Then David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go."* (23:13a)

The writer has updated the number of men with David from four hundred to about six hundred. All of these men are leaving the forces of Saul. With the word from the LORD, David left Keilah. Where they went is not told in this passage.

#### (i) Saul Stops His Pursuit (23:13b-14a)

Evidently, Saul received word that David had left Keilah. With that, Saul stops his pursuit. Verse 13b.

*"When it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the pursuit.<sup>14</sup> David stayed in the wilderness in the strongholds, and remained in the hill country in the wilderness of Ziph."* (23:13b-14a)

Saul did not get to Keilah before he heard that David was no longer there. The writer takes this opportunity to tell us that David and his men were scattered in various strongholds *"in the hill country in the wilderness of Ziph."* We are accustomed to seeing towns with the same name in different tribal

areas and countries, but in this case, there were two towns in the tribal area called *Ziph*. One was in southern Judah and the other was in the mountains of Judah, about five miles south east of Hebron, near Carmel which we mentioned when Saul failed to destroy the Amalakites. Our writer tells us that this *Ziph* was in the “*hill country*.” The *Ziph* in southern Judah was not in the “*hill country*;” therefore, David and his men are back near the forest of Hereth, and scattered through the hills living in natural strongholds. We will soon learn that David was held up in the *wilderness of Ziph* in a place called *Horesh*. The Hebrew word for *Horesh* means *forest or wood* and is sometimes translated as forest or wood. It was located “*on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon....*” (23:19) More on that later.