

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

March 20

MONDAY

David learned of King Saul's plan to trap him in the walled-city. (Even the ears have walls) So, David borrowed the ephod from Abiathar and asked the Lord, "Will Saul destroy this city in order to catch me?" The Lord said that he would. "Will the people of this city turn me over to him rather than have their city destroyed?" The Lord again replied, saying, "Yes."

READ: I Samuel 23:8-12

When David asked for the ephod, he did a good thing. He indicated by that gesture that he wanted to hear from God on the matter at hand. We do the same thing when, at a moment of decision, we open the Bible. If David had asked the leading citizens of Keilah if they would hand him over to Saul, they would certainly have said no. After all, David had just rescued their city from the Philistines. But God knows the heart of man better than man knows himself! In other words, David was asking the right person when he asked God! As Martin Luther put it, the Right Man is on our side.

TUESDAY

David and his men, 600 strong at this point, left Keilah and wandered in the wilderness. They hid out in various natural strongholds and stayed in the hills. King Saul didn't bother the city of Keilah, but he pursued David with re-newed determination.

READ: I Samuel 23:13-14

David and his followers left the relative comfort of the city and moved into the wild. I'm imaging that David was somewhat discouraged by all this. Not only does King Saul hate him unjustly, but he knows that the very people whom he rescued would readily betray him. Was he to find justice nowhere? Although David longed for justice, and a comfortable life that goes with it, such a thing was years away. For the time being, God wanted him in the wilderness. It was there he is to learn some of the greatest lessons of his life. The "wilderness" we sometimes find ourselves in is one of dryness and barrenness, where there seems to be no justice. And no rest for the weary. Don't look for rest and justice; look instead for the lessons God is teaching there.

WEDNESDAY

David was still hiding out in the wild country - a sort of no-man's land southwest of Jerusalem - and King Saul's forces were still pursuing him. It seems as if Jonathan may have been part of those forces, for he *arose and went to David*, we read, suggesting that he slipped out unawares and found his dearest and best friend David. He encouraged David by telling him not to worry - that David would surely be the next king. When that day came, Jonathan pledged to serve him loyally. He added that his father, King Saul, in his own heart, knew all this as well.

READ: I Samuel 23:15-18

Jonathan sometimes gets bad press. He's accused of treason to his own father. But the Bible paints a different picture. Jonathan loved the Lord and served His purposes. Here, he came and *strengthened David's hand in God*. He did this by reminding David of God's promises to him, of the oil which Samuel had poured over his head (ie. the kingship which was his), and of all of God's goodness to him. In doing so, he strengthened David's hand for what lay ahead. Have you ever thought of yourself as a strengthener of others? Maybe what God has for you, is not to be a great pillar of the church, but to be the cement that holds the pillar steady. If so, isn't there a note you need to write? A phone call you need to make? Some cementing to do?

THURSDAY

The Ziphites told Saul that they knew where David was and that, if Saul would come to where they were, they would hand David over to the king. Hearing this, King Saul blessed them in the Lord *for having compassion on him*. (ie. for taking his side)

READ: I Samuel 23:19-21

It is difficult to evaluate from these few verses what motivated the people of Ziph to volunteer to hand David over. But David wrote Psalm 54 at this time, and put his finger on the real problem: (verse three) *Strangers have risen up against me, and oppressors have sought after my life. They have not set God before them*. The Ziphites were not interested in God or the things of God. Whatever their motivation actually was, it had nothing to do with God. Quite probably their willingness to betray David came from their animosity with one who lived and breathed the things of God. Let us not be surprised if the world rejects us. Or at the least, views us suspiciously. If we live (and breath) for Jesus, we cannot expect better than that, can we? Not in this world anyway.

FRIDAY

After the Ziphites offered to betray David, Saul gave them an order that they should search more diligently for the place where David was hiding. He told them that David was a crafty, tricky foe. Saul added that as soon as they were sure that David was trapped, they should send word to him so that he could bring the army down upon him. David evidently learned of all this, and he moved his camp.

READ: I Samuel 23:22-24

Is it not remarkable that Saul portrays David as crafty? (one who *dealeth very subtly* the KJV says) And yet, is it not Saul who is laying the and dealing in secret and stealth to catch David? How quick the non-believer is to accuse a child of God of his own sins! He must believe that everyone thinks the same thoughts as he. Yet, the believer has a new way of thinking! It's no longer what's-the-best-deal-for-me-in-all-this, but what-does-God-have-for-me-in-all-this? And how-can-I-follow-Him-in-all-this? Don't be shocked when the pot starts calling the kettle black!

SATURDAY

Saul pursued David and his men from hiding place to hiding place. At one point, Saul seemed certain of catching him, but a messenger informed Saul that Philistines were invading. Saul had to immediately take the army and stop that invasion. David was able to escape. Then he found refuge in the strongholds of the desert.

READ: I Samuel 23:25-29

Why did the Philistines invade Israel at exactly that moment? Because God planned to save David in that way. He sent an foreign army to do His job, we might say. The wisdom of God is never at a loss as to how to carry out His program and preserve His people. We will sometimes marvel at the gracious hand of God, as I am sure David did at this moment. And at times we will not even know what we missed. Or what missed us! We'll never see the car that did not race through the intersection because God stopped it up the street. We will never know about the deadly mosquito that did not bite our child. Nor will we see the angel of death whose hand God stayed at the last moment. We just trust the God of Great Mercy who does all things well!