

GOD IN CONTROL OF DAVID'S LIFE

1 Samuel 23:1-29 (Key verse 23:14b)

Day after day Saul searched for him, but God did not give David into his hands.

David was a brave young man, like many of the brothers here today. He was a warrior.....spoke well.....and was a fine-looking man. Most impressively, the Lord was with David. (16:18) Consequently, whatever mission Saul sent him on, David was so successful that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. (18:5) However, when Saul saw how successful David was, he was afraid that David would replace him as king! So he was desperate to kill David!! Saul twice attempted to pin David to the wall with his spear....(18:10-11; 19:9-19) Do you remember? When that didn't work Saul sent David into many battles hoping that the Philistines would kill him. But that also didn't work. Then, finally, in great frustration and fear..... Saul shouted at his son Jonathan: As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Now send someone to bring him to me, for he must die! (20:31) At this, and with Jonathan's help, David fled and made good his escape! (19:18, 20:42) And from that moment, day after day Saul searched for David.....to kill him. David became an outcast.....a fugitive in his own country.....For no fault of his own, David lost everything....his high position in the army, his home, his wife.....and his respected position in society. What a dramatic turnaround in David's life.

Indeed, humanly speaking, it seemed as if God abandoned David. Yet, as we will see in today's passage, God still loved David very much.....and God was STILL with David as before.....In fact, God was in complete control of David's life. That is why no matter how hard Saul searched for David, *God did not give him into Saul's hands.* I sincerely pray that through today's passage.....we may all deeply realise that God holds our lives also..... safely and securely..... in His loving and caring hands. Amen!

Look at verse 1. David was somewhere near an Israelite town called Keilah. Suddenly someone called out to him: "Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are looting the threshing floors." Now under normal circumstances, David would NOT have hesitated to immediately rush down to attack the Philistines. For he was a soldier with a high rank in the army! However, ever since Saul decided to kill David, David's life situation changed. He was no longer in service to the king. In fact, he was hiding from the king, in great fear of his life.

In that difficult situation, what did David do? Look at verse 2. David inquired of the Lord. Considering David's challenging life circumstances, to inquire of the Lord about this situation was impressive! Most people in David's shoes would simply ignore the people of Keilah. Saying that he already had too many problems of his own! But David was different.....Despite his own life problems, David was genuinely concerned about the people of Keilah. Moreover, despite the change of circumstances in his life, David still believed that God could use him to help the people of Keilah. So he asked God, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" The Lord answered him, "Go, attack the Philistines and save Keilah." Without hesitation, David immediately charged down with sword in hand....but then realised that none of his men followed him....they did not even move a muscle. Look at verse 3. They said to him, "Here in Judah we are afraid. How much more, then, if we go to Keilah against the Philistine forces!" Indeed, these were just ordinary men.....without any military experience or training. They were already afraid of hiding with David from Saul.....so to actually attack the Philistines was simply one step too far for them.

Look at verse 4. Once again David inquired of the Lord.....Wow! David truly trusted God to lead him in the best way. And the Lord did not disappoint. Once again the Lord answered David. This time, the Lord did not instruct David to "Go, attack the Philistines ...but merely said to "Go down to Keilah." This sounded much better to David's untrained men than "Go...attack the Philistines." Then God sealed the deal with a heart warming promise: "I am going to give the Philistines into your hand." At this, David and his men went to Keilahand against all odds, inflicted heavy losses on the Philistines and saved the people of Keilah. Moments earlier, this seemed impossible!! But because God was in control of David's life, David defeated the Philistines and saved the people of Keilah.

Now interestingly, while David was in Keilah..... Abiathar the priest came to David and brought the ephod down with him. (6) Do you guys know what the ephod was and what it was used for? Yes, the ephod was like a vest that the priest wore and used whenever they had to inquire of God. Why do you think, at this particular time, God sent a priest with an ephod to David? Look at verses 7-8. Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah....., and he said, [Ahhhaaa!!!!] "God has delivered him into my hands, for David has imprisoned himself by entering a town with gates and bars." Suddenly, Saul and all his forces were coming for David!. What a desperate situation David found himself in! Then in this situation, how did God control David's life? Did God send

reinforcements.....or perhaps horses with chariots.....or perhaps he just struck Saul down with lightning!!..... That is what most people would expect from God, right?!.....But that is not what God did. Instead, God sent a priest with an ephod to David..... to encourage him to inquire all the more of the Lord..... and more earnestly depend on Him. And that is exactly what David did!

Look at verse 9. When David learned that Saul was plotting against him, he immediately said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod." Then David inquired of the Lord most urgently. Look at verses 10-11. David said, "Lord, God of Israel, your servant has heard definitely that Saul plans to come to Keilah and destroy the town on account of me. Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me to him? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? Lord, God of Israel, tell your servant." What is the difference between the first time David inquired of the Lord and this time? Yes, because of the pressing situation.....this time around David prayed more earnestly and anxiously! Then how did God respond to David's urgent prayer? Look at verse 11b-12. And the Lord said, "He will.".....Again David asked, "Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me and my men to Saul?".....And the Lord said, "They will." With this David knew exactly what he should do.....they should flee!! Look at verse 13. So David and his men, about six hundred in number, left Keilah.....and when Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he did not go there. (13) In this way God controlled David's life and moved him out of harm's way.

Here we can learn that whether a situation we face is urgent or not, the best way to deal with it is to inquire of the Lord. Too often we are so busy looking for solutions based on our emotions or according to human logic..... That we simply ignore the Lord and fail to inquire of Him....In fact, we think that we are in control of our own lives.....But this results in us remaining stuck in one place..... or simply without any way forward. This is especially true for those unique situations that God purposefully sends our way; to humble our hearts and purify our faith. Like Saul searching to kill David! This was not something that David had the answers to. It was brought to him by God and therefore David had to deal with it with God!

The question is, what does it take for us to stop trying to solve our life problems on our own? To instead turn to God for guidance, like David? We need to remember that God is the one who is always in control of our lives. God was the one who chose David as the future king. God was the one who allowed David to enjoy much success. Yet, at the same time, God was the one who used Saul to push David into exile. God was in control of everything.....for his own good purposes.....to raise David as a shepherd king for his people Israel. When David remembered this, he could humbly inquire of the Lord to follow God's guidance.....and simply live according to God's plan!

But as we all know, sometimes things simply become too much, and we forget that God is in control. This was also true for David. Look again at verse 13. After fleeing from Saul in Keilah, David kept moving from place to place.....moving deep into the wilderness strongholds and in the hills of the Desert of Ziph.....where Saul would struggle to find him. But this did not discourage Saul in the slightest! Saul was as determined to find David as the very first day he tried to kill him. So day after day Saul searched for David.....which meant day after day, David had to watch over his shoulder to make sure he got away from Saul. Over time this struggle with Saul gradually wore David down.....until one day while David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. (15) At this David simply collapsed. Saul's persistence to find and kill David.....and the whole situation of having to always flee and in fear look over his shoulder.....became too much for David to bear. Then, in this difficult time, how did God take control of David's life?

Look at verses 16. In this very difficult time, God sent Jonathan, David's best friend, to help David. But how exactly did God want Jonathan to help David? Look again at verse 16...it says that Jonathan helped [David] find strength in God. So many times, when we see one of our friends....or brothers and sisters struggling with a life problem.....we think we should help them by giving them a solution. However, we can learn here from Jonathan, that this is not always what God expects from us. Because God was in control of David's life. It was God who led him into a difficult situation. Not to punish him or harm him.....but to prepare his heart to be a shepherd king..... Therefore, it was not Jonathan's responsibility to solve David's problemsor attempt to control the situation.....but to merely strengthen David in God..... so David could once again cope with his life situationindependently before God.....by inquiring of God.....and walking according to God's plan for his life. .

But exactly how did Jonathan strengthen David in God? Look at verse 17. "Don't be afraid," he said. "My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this." Jonathan was absolutely right about everything, (except for the fact that he would be second to David.) But how could Jonathan be so sure that his father would never lay a hand on David? And how could he be so sure that David will one day be king? I mean, the situation David was

in.....and with Saul searching day after day for David.....it seemed only a matter of time before Saul catches and kills David! Then how could Jonathan be so sure? Because he knew with all his heart, that no matter how bad the situation looked, God was in complete control of David's lifeand that God would make sure that His plans for David never failed. And definitely, it was God's plan for David to become king over Israel. The moment David remembered this truth.....that God was in control of his life.....his heart was strengthened in God. Look at verse 18. Then the two of them made a covenant before the Lord. Jonathan went home, but David remained at Horesh.....strengthened in God to walk on the life path God set out for him.

Indeed, this was another way God controlled David's life, to help him p[re]pare for the next challenge. Look at verses 19-28. While David was hiding in the Desert of Ziph, some of the local Ziphites saw David in his hideout place. They then went to Saul in Gibeah and betrayed David to him.

Meanwhile, David and his men had moved into the wilderness of Maon. When David heard that Saul and his men were searching for him, he went even farther into the wilderness to the great rock, and he remained there in the wilderness of Maon. But Saul kept coming after him in the wilderness. (24-25 NLT) Saul came closer and closer, until at one point Saul was going along one side of the mountain, while David and his men were on the other side, hurrying to get away from Saul. But Saul and his forces were closing in swiftly on David and his men.....It seemed only a matter of seconds.....before David would fall into Saul's hand.....when at the very last moment.....look at verse 27-28..... a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Come quickly! The Philistines are raiding the land." At this Saul broke off his pursuit of David and went to meet the Philistines. Was this a mere coincidence? Of course not! This was another example of how God was in control of David's life.

In this context, let's consider today's key verse, verse 14. Day after day Saul searched for [David] but God did not give David into his hands. Generally, when considering the fact that Saul searched for David day after day to kill him and considering the hardship it brought to David's life, we easily respond by saying, "It is really unfair! Why did this happen to David?" However, Saul's pursuit of David was a result of God's control of David's life. Indeed, it was God's Spirit who departed from Saul and it was God's Spirit who came powerfully on David. It was God who allowed an evil spirit to come on Saul. Also, it was God who used Saul to push David into exile. All of this happened under the firm control of God's hand! Just as the victory over the Philistines at Keilah, the subsequent escape from Saul, Jonathan's visit to David in the wilderness and the last minute message to Saul about the Philistine raiding the land. These were all proactive events that God pushed into David's life. But God did not only control what went into David's life. God also controlled what stayed out of David's life. For example, that David never falls into Saul's hands. No matter how hard Saul searched and no matter how hard he tried to kill David, he would never succeed, because God did not allow it. Indeed, God was in complete control of David's life. Amen

In conclusion. The day you and I accepted Jesus as our Christ, Jesus purchased our lives with His precious blood. At this, God took control also of your life and my life. Just like David, God now also have a specific plan and purpose for you and me. And to fulfill this purpose, God pushes certain things into our lives while at the same time withholding certain things from us. In this way, God controls our lives to fulfill his purpose for us.

Then what should we do?

Yes, we must fully surrender to God's will and fully give into His control over our lives.

But how can we do this?

Yes, we must inquire of the Lord like David, and then follow His guiding word. Instead of looking for solutions based on our human emotions or logic.

I sincerely pray that we rejoice in God, who is in full control of our our lives. And this ministry! Amen.