

Prayer

I appeal to You Almighty God, save me from all my enemies;
from anyone who tries to come between me and those I love
from anything which brings unnecessary distress into my home
from taking decisions which prove to be in nobody's interests
from placing my trust in things which look great but do no good
from looking to this world for help when all I need is found in You.
Save me, Almighty God; hear my prayer and restore my soul: AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: World Politics

*In the last two weeks we have prayed around the world, but without covering every country.
Pray for your own country, or other countries you are familiar with. Pray for the leaders.*

On-going prayers

- Give thanks for your home
- Pray for journalists working in dangerous places of the world
- Pray for those who are disadvantaged because of sickness

Meditation

Do you dream sometimes,
when not doing anything in particular
about what might have happened ...?

And then your mind just carries you away
to something that happened long ago;
a moment in time when something happened
which changed your life, for good or ill
a glance ... a word ... a touch ... a smell:
and life has never been the same again.

And does your spirit warm, just now and then,
to bring to mind the moment Jesus called?
Was it something someone said, or did?
Was it a passage from God's Word, or a prayer?
Or was it the hand of God in power, un-comprehended,
yet connecting every sinew of your spirit to the Father ?

Follow that vision, yet again.
What has happened since has happened,
but what can happen now is latent faith, unleashed!

Bible Study - 1 Samuel 23:1-5

¹ Now they told David, 'The Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and are robbing the threshing floors.'² So 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.'³ But David's men said to him, 'We are afraid here

in Judah; how much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?’

⁴ Then David inquired of the LORD again. And the LORD answered him, ‘Get up and go down to Keilah; for I will give the Philistines into your hand.’⁵ David and his men went to Keilah, they fought with the Philistines, brought away their cattle, and made a great slaughter among them. So David delivered the inhabitants of Keilah.

Review

David was on the run from Saul, but he followed the Lord’s instructions not to live in a cave (1 Sam 22:5f.), but move into the central regions of Judah with his band of around four hundred followers. He was more exposed there, but although it may not have seemed obvious at the time, it was a position from which he could begin to gain significant influence, as the following chapters of 1 Samuel describe. However, it must have been hard for David because he and his followers were certainly in danger from Saul and the armies of Israel, and in such circumstances it must have been difficult to know what was best out of the few options available, least of all what was right. It was a situation which called for the highest level of trust in God.

Yet the Lord had important work for them to do, as we discover in this passage. Although the story seems just like any other story of David fighting a battle (or at least a major skirmish), it was in fact very important. Here, for the first time, David broke out of his defensive shell and went of the attack. What happened was this. David received a report of a Philistine attack on the settlement at Keilah, one of the ‘cities’ of Judah which bordered on Philistine land. Saul was not interested in the plight of these people, because although he should have defended them, he was more interested in vengeance against David than his real work as King of Israel and Judah. So if David could defend these people from the threat of foreign aggression and incursion, then he would be doing the job of a King and build up his credentials in the eyes of these citizens for his eventual claim to the throne.

At every stage of this story, David and his men were very cautious, however. We gain the impression that David’s men were not at all sure that it was right to fight against the Philistines (23:3), but David sought the Lord’s guidance about what to do, and followed the answers he received. It is interesting that the way David made his enquiries is very similar to that process a King should follow. Although a prophet or priest (such as Gad or Abiathar) is not named in this part of the story, the phrase ‘enquired of the Lord’ (23:2,4) is almost always used in the Old Testament to describe a formal request by a King to a prophet or a priest. The priest or prophet would then discern God’s will; a priest for example, would sometimes use the ‘Urim and Thummim’, two stones placed in an ephod, a garment normally worn by a priest (Exodus 28:30, Numbers 27:21 etc.) with pockets for this purpose (If you read on you will discover that both the ephod and Abiathar the priest are mentioned in the verses following our story here - 1 Sam 23:9ff).

Because no one should fight a battle without consulting the Lord (Num 27:21f.), David makes his request about whether to go into battle (23:2). He received a positive answer, but was forced to reconsider by his men, who felt that this action might compromise them and expose their position to Saul. David asked again (23:4), and received the same answer; so he now had to exercise his authority as leader and carry through an unpopular decision in order to do the Lord’s will. Nevertheless, he succeeded, and managed to drive the Philistine away and return to the city of Keilah the cattle they had plundered (23:5).

There is more to this story, and you can read on in the chapter to see what Saul thought of the whole incident. However, its significance lies in the fact that here, for the first time,

David demonstrated that he was prepared to follow the Lord’s word and act like a King by defending the land of Judah.

When the Lord asks us to do something for him, it is very often true that we feel really busy and that the request is impossible and impractical. David shows us that following the Lord’s word when we are uncertain or preoccupied with our own concerns is in fact the very route we are often required to take. Why is it we all so much want to be certain of everything before we are prepared to do things? Nothing of consequence can happen if we always take such a stance. This story encourages us to be bold and trusting, and it also teaches us the value of knowing how it is that the Lord speaks to us, for David could not have acted properly if he did not know how to obtain God’s word on a matter.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. What were the reasons for David’s men to be cautious? Was it reasonable that they did not wish to go into battle?
2. Can you recall times when you have been led to do something for the Lord when everything seemed to indicate caution? How did this work out?
3. In your spiritual life, of what are you cautious now, and is it possible that the Lord is challenging you at this very point right now?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

The stories of David are full of surprises, and unless we read them carefully, then we will find that we miss a great deal. Each small part of David’s story is there in scripture not for the sake of completion, as if the writer was trying to compile a complete list of what David did – as modern historian might do. It has all been compiled to tell us how God works through someone’s life in real history, and we should read it as such.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *What do you think about all the stories of fighting in the Bible? Some find it really hard, and do not read the stories of David as a consequence. Discuss your feelings with a friend.*
- *What threats are on the borders of your church life and how should they be dealt with? Write down a list of those things which come to mind and use this list for prayer.*

Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, give us such an understanding of Your Word that we might always be ready to use it for the purposes for which it was given. May all our words and actions be influenced by its truth and beauty, and may we be constantly inspired by what it tells us about the power and effectiveness of Your work of Salvation. Praise be to You, Lord Jesus: AMEN