

The God Who Provides

Series on 1 Samuel

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Bible Text: 1 Samuel 23

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Well do turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 23.

Whenever we gather in a group like this there are represented so many different kinds of experience. For some of you life has led you into hard places. There are a series of events and incidents in your life and as you look back at them you wonder why it is that it seems that if anything can go wrong it does go wrong. But others of us, apparently, our lives go on an even straightforward, undisturbed, unruffled sea without any storms to assail us. So some of you are used to crises. You are used to problems and, frankly, if somehow or other the next phase of your life were undisturbed you would think there was something seriously wrong that there wasn't something seriously wrong, while those who are used to the undisturbed sea, when anything goes wrong it seems as if when anything goes wrong we get angry. We get frustrated. We get frustrated at God. We think it is our right to have an undisturbed, even flow to our lives day by day. So we despair, we doubt. We rage against the God who has dared to allow something to disturb our hearts.

Now in between those two extremes, of course, there are the rest of us. The rest of us life is sometimes easy and sometimes hard. But one thing none of us can ultimately avoid is that there will be difficulties. There will be problems. There will be troubles in our lives. I am sorry that comes as bad news to you if you have never thought of that before. But it is there. It is a reality.

Now come into the situation. Some evangelical teachers today who are telling us that actually it is our right as Christians to enjoy health and happiness and even life undisturbed by the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, that if anything goes wrong with your life, the problem is yours. Your faith is weak. Your trust in God is shaky. You have brought this on yourself, that if only you tried harder, if only you believed more, if only you could reach deep inside into the inner most resources of your heart, you would find the strength to overcome. You have it in you to be a better future.

That is the kind of teaching... just in case you thought I was saying that, I am quoting. That is the kind of teaching that you often hear, isn't it? You read it in books. If you go into a Christian bookstore usually the best sellers are books that tell you that very kind of stuff. Believe in yourself. You are your best keeper. You can have your best life now.

[?] You have to say that in the Bible that is not the picture that is painted. When the Lord Jesus is explaining to his disciples why it is that even though they had been walking around with the Messiah for three years and in the company of the Messiah had seen disease and demon infestation almost eliminated in Palestine, that nonetheless it was the way that the anointed one had to go that he must suffer. He must suffer. He said, in fact, if you look at the Bible you will soon discover that it is a principle in Scripture that the anointed one, the Christ must suffer and then enter into his glory.

And Jesus in saying that about himself as the anointed one, is reflecting, of course, the experience of David who is in the Old Testament the ultimate anointed one. He is the christ. He is the messiah with a small M if you will. He is the forerunner of the Messiah and the Christ, the anointed one who is to come.

And as I look around this room this morning I find there are Christian brothers and sisters here and do you know the Bible says that you also are anointed. You have an anointing from the holy one, you have been christed in that sense. You have been caught up into the ministry of the Messiah and in your connection with him, here is the deal, here is the rub. Just as it was for David and just as it was for Jesus, so it will be for you. You must suffer and then enter glory.

That is the way it is, suffering, then glory.

So I am going to look at the story of David. We need to remind ourselves of that fact. Here is David and, if you read the book of Psalms, you find this to be a consistent theme. Here he is in this occasion as the righteous sufferer enduring misunderstanding and loneliness and rejection and betrayal and physical abuse by his enemies just as you and I may find from time to time in our lives.

Now that is our lead in, then, to this chapter. And in dividing up the chapter I want you to observe, as you read it through again, alter, that the use of the word "hand" is repeated over and over again in the chapter. There is David's hand and there is Abiathar's hand and there is Saul's hand. And there are a whole number of hands that denote a power struggle that is going on in this chapter. And the question that the chapter raises is: Whose hand will prevail? Whose hand will win in the end?

Well, with that in mind, let's look how the story falls into place, because, first of all, I want you to notice the helping hand of God. It starts with a crisis, a crisis that comes to David's ear. And at one level, of course, this crisis is none of David's business. He is not the king. He does not have any official... he does not have any national responsibility to defend Israel. That is the king's job. But David hears that there is a problem. He hears that this town Keilah is under threat. Keilah on the western border of Judah near Philistine territory is being raided at harvest time regularly by the Philistines so that the people of Keilah are doing the hard work. They have done the planting. They have watched the growth. They have harvested the crops. They are threshing it out with a view to making food for themselves. They have been doing all the hard work and the

Philistines are marching in, chasing them away and they are taking the goods for themselves.

And this is not only irritating for the people of Keilah, you understand, this is actually threatening to the people, not only threatening their livelihood, but threatening their lives. They don't have resources to fall back on. They don't have anything in the freezer that they could take out. This is their livelihood and their life that is under threat. It is a serious incursion by the Philistines.

David hears about this. What will he do? Will he do anything about it? Will he respond to this? Why should he respond to it? His life is in danger. He is under pressure from Saul and Saul's forces. Should David do anything at all?

The first thing we hear is that David prays about it. He inquires of the Lord about it. He says to the Lord, "Look, I can't hear this news that people are attacking Israel. The Philistines are attacking Israel and do nothing. I cannot do nothing about this. I have to do something about this." He says to the Lord, "Lord, should I go to the defense of Keilah. Should I act as their deliverer, their Savior, their rescuer? Can I do this? Is this in your will?"

That is how the story begins here in this little section. It begins with a man who is being chased by his enemy, a man who is under threat of his life, but a man who senses that he has a responsibility to God.

Ever since the Goliath incident where David as a young man had put himself in harm's way and been triumphant over the enemy Goliath in defense of Israel against the Philistines, ever since that day, he had assumed if not legally or publicly, he had assumed the role that God had originally given to Saul.

Saul, you will remember, when he became king had been given a job description and the job description of the king was quite straightforward in 1 Samuel chapter nine verse 16. And it was this.

"He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines."¹

That was his job. And Saul had over and over again failed to do that. In fact, even as these events in chapter 23 are getting underway, Saul is even at this very moment massacring an entire town of Israel. A city of Israel is coming under Saul's direct attack and its people, men, women and children and animals are being destroyed entirely, utterly put to the ban, put under the judgment, put under the curse by the king who should have been their representative and their Savior.

So here we have the king acting as a destroyer of Israel and here we have David the outlaw and he is acting as the Savior of Israel. So there is a big contrast between Saul on

¹ 1 Samuel 9:16.

the one hand and David's willingness and eagerness to serve and to save in sharp contrast to Saul the antichrist figure.

And you notice David's absolute dependence on God. He inquired of the Lord. He comes to God with the issue. You know, once before he had gone to a town, the town of Nob, a town that is just at this moment being massacred by Saul and his men. He had gone to that town on a visit and he hadn't inquired of the Lord. He had gone there for help, but he hadn't gone there having inquired of God and he put that town in harm's way and now that town is being massacred as terrible things are happening there in the town of Nob.

This time he casts himself on God. "God, what do you want me to do? My instincts say that I must go to the rescue of this city. Is that what you want me to do?"

And he decides that God decides that is what he wants David to do.

So that is where it begins and then it moves on to David's men. David's men don't feel the same sense of responsibility. David's men, like the very famous tennis star who would throw down his racquet in anger and explain to the umpire, "You cannot be serious, man."

These men respond to David the same way. "You cannot be serious. Saul is out to get us. His soldiers are everywhere trying to find where we are hiding. And when they hear that we are here in the region of Keilah, they are going to come and get us. you cannot be serious about this."

Now what should David do to these men? These are his men. After all, he is their leader. What should he do to them? Will he do what Jack Bower would do to them? Jack Bower would hold them against a wall, slap them around, punch them and threaten terrible things, take out his handgun and start shooting around their feet till they are jumping up and down until the terror of their leader made them do it. David could have done that.

But he doesn't do that. He doesn't terrorize his men. He doesn't bully them into coming to his aid. What does he do? In full sight of them all what does he do? He turns again to the Lord. He goes to the Lord again and he inquires of the Lord. In other words, he shows them what you do when you are feeling pressure or when you are feeling scared. He shows them what you do. You go back to God. You go to God and you cast yourself on God. He is demonstrating to them what he does when he is afraid or when he senses that the enemy is crowding in upon them. He sets the men his example and he shows his unbelieving men that he wants to depend on God.

And, again, he is given the reassurance by the Lord. The Lord answered him again.

"Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the Philistines into your hand."²

² 1 Samuel 23:4.

And he would have reported this to them. The Lord said to me, I, the emphatic I, I am giving the Philistines into your hands.

Now, you see, David had a secret weapon, didn't he? David had a secret weapon which was, of course, the intelligence that God had given to him at this point in the story. God reveals to David what the outcome of the matter is going to be.

During the Second World War the Allies managed to get their hands on the codes to the Nazi intelligence reports where orders from the high command were coded and sent to those under them. And the Allies got a hold of these codes. They could decode all these orders that were going from the German high command down to the forces on the ground. And they had to keep this a secret. If they were going to shorten the war, the Allies had to keep this a secret.

My grandparents were living in Coventry, a city in the center of England at the time and it became the authorities, Churchill and others became aware that there was going to be a massive bombing campaign against Coventry which produced a lot of the equipment, the heavy equipment for the army. And they needed to make a decision. They needed to make a decision. Do we tell the people of Coventry that is coming or not. If we tell them then it will get back to the German high command and they will know that we have broken their codes.

And it was a very hard decision to make. But they had to make it and my grandparents were there in Coventry when it was effectively bombed, carpet bombed and demolished everything there could stand was destroyed. Everything was destroyed as wave upon wave of aircraft came over depositing their heavy bombs in that area.

Well, the Allies had intelligence and that gave them confidence to make some decisions that in the end shortened the war probably by some years and saved many more lives.

David had intelligence that he had got from God. God gave him the Word.

Now you say, "Well, God doesn't speak to me like that."

And if you told me he was speaking to you like this, I am going to tell you I would just have to say to you I don't believe you. Sorry. I don't believe you. God doesn't speak like this to everybody. Even in the Bible he doesn't speak to everybody the way he spoke to David. David is unique in salvation history. He is one of a kind in salvation history. He is one of these few people in the history of humanity that has got a gift of prophecy to whom God speaks directly. He spoke to David directly and he gives him an insight into what is going to happen.

His story is in the Bible so you can read it. You don't need to know what is going to happen tomorrow. You don't need to know what is going to happen next week. God doesn't tell you, because you don't need to know. God's intelligence is on a need to know basis. David needed to know why, because David's experience was going to get into the

Bible so you could read it. So that whenever I am afraid I will trust in the Lord. Why will I trust in the Lord? Well, I go back to David's story and I see that, in fact, history is not an unscripted piece of randomness, that history is, in fact, something that is scripted by God. It has been written by God. God knows what he is going to do next. I may not know. I don't need to know. I really don't need to know. Why? Because I am called on to trust that the Lord knows. How can I believe that the Lord knows? The Lord sends me back to his Word and tells me this story today in order that I understand that the Lord knows what is going to happen. He knows. And the Lord helps David. The Lord helps David, first of all, by showing him what the future is going to be, by telling him there is going to be a good result. The hand of God is helping his servant here.

And then when David and his men eventually get their act together and they attack the city, they achieve a great victory and the hand of God helps David's hand to be effective in winning a victory over the Philistines in this battle.

But then God helps David even more in verse six.

Just after this happens Abiathar the son of Ahimelech comes. He flees to David.

Now this background to the story is the massacre that has just taken place in this town of Nob where all the priests are. All of the priests, their wives, their children, their animals their livelihood, everything is demolished, destroyed, burned. There is nothing left.

But amazingly, while those people are in paradise and they are with the Lord and what is left of them is destroyed, one man escapes and goes straight to David. And you might wonder why he went to David especially since David is the man that got them into trouble by visiting there. [?] But he goes straight to David because he realizes that David is the Lord's anointed. He goes straight there and we are told that Abiathar is carrying the linen ephod.

What is a linen ephod?

Well, it is kind of a cloak. It is a kind of clothing that you wore if you were a priest. All of the priests wore an ephod. But this was a special one that the carried. It was the high priest's ephod. And the high priest's ephod was connected to a breastplate and on the breastplate were the names of all the tribes of Israel and connected to the breastplate was the Urim and Thummim. We have absolutely no idea what that was, but it was a means of discerning the will of God. The high priest could use it to discern the will of God. It was yet another way of knowing what the will of God was. It was kind of your confirmation piece of knowing the will of God.

This is a remarkable thing. It is a remarkable indicator of the providence of God and the help of God because here is David now not only has he been told as a prophet what is going to happen and not only has he seen the hand of God with him against superior forces winning a great victory over the Philistines, but now he has in his camp one of these men descended from the high priest who has then qualified himself to be a high

priest and he is carrying the very divine means of reinforcing the will of God, the revelation of God and not only that, now he has all the constituent parts of building a new Israel, an alternative kingdom. He has himself designated by God the future king. He has Gad who is a prophet. And he has now this man Abiathar who is a priest. He has a prophet, priest and king. He has people, 600 of them who are gathered around him. Here is a nucleus of a new Israel. All the things are coming together, but more than that, even more significantly than that, when Abiathar comes to join the band of David and his merry men, Abiathar comes as the priest with the ephod which is the last remaining indicator of the presence of the Lord, that is, the I am, the God who is the covenant Lord of Israel. He is... in other words, God is moving camp from Saul of Gibeon to David where he is there in the desert near Keilah this time. God has shifted camp. He is giving this vivid public demonstration that he is putting his hand on David publicly before the rest of the people. He is putting his hand on David as the one who is authorized to act on his behalf. The helping hand of God.

What a contrast to Saul who all the while thinks that whenever anything goes in his favor, that God is with him. David, a lot hasn't been going in his favor. He is a fugitive. He is an outlaw. He is an outcast. And yet he has been reassured that now that in this multiple way that the Lord is with him.

Saul on the other hand, he just sees something going in his favor and he assumes God is with him, because it was told to Saul, verse seven:

“...that David had come to Keilah. And Saul said, ‘God has given him into my hand...’³

He is there in the town. He has nowhere to hide. We can go there, besiege the town and we have him. [?] Round him we are going to capture him and overwhelm him. And he assumed that God was on his side.

Never assume just because everything is going well in your life that God is on your side. Unless your relationship with God is right, you can't assume anything. Unless you have an ongoing relationship of submission to the Word of God and of seeking the face of God and of praying to God, don't assume just because everything is all right, just because everything works out that therefore God is on your side. It may not be the case. You may be kidding yourself, fooling yourself just as Saul did.

Well, there is the helping hand of God.

The second thing we see in the story is the strengthening hand of God. This is one of the key thoughts in the last third of this book of Samuel is that God's anointed experiences suffering on the way to the throne. The Son of Man said that the Messiah, the Christ must suffer. And so we find him in this story, first of all, suffering rejection. David suffers rejection. Here he is. He has now got the constituent parts of the new and true Israel together, the prophet, the priest and the potential king. And here he is the true

³ 1 Samuel 23:7.

Savior of Israel. While Saul who should have been the savior is off massacring and destroying an Israelite town, here is David. He has gone to the rescue of these people.

And what does the town do? The town says to him, “Thank you very much for rescuing us. We really appreciate the rescue you went to and your speed in performance. We thank you that you have really been very successful in absolutely destroying the Philistine army. Now we can get back to our normal lives and we really would like if you wouldn’t be here. We have heard the story now through Abiathar of the massacre of the town of Nob. The last town you were associated with, David, they were massacred. We really do not want you around these parts.”

And they are rejecting their savior. Can you imagine the disappointment that goes along with it? David cannot believe that they could do this to him. He goes to God with his questions.

“O LORD, the God of Israel, your servant has surely heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah, to destroy the city on my account. Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? O LORD...”⁴

You notice how he pleads the covenant name of God. I am. Oh, I am, he says.

“O Lord, the God of Israel, please tell your servant.”⁵

And the Lord said, “Saul will come down and they will surrender you. They will surrender you. You can’t trust them.”

President Harry Truman once said that if you want to find loyalty in Washington, then you should get yourself a dog.

Well, David the future king, he finds similarly that these people are not going to be on his side. You know, they will take what he has to give them. He will be their savior one day, their outcast the next. They reject him. So he is rejected. And then, verse 14, he is isolated. He remain in the region in the strongholds in the wilderness in the hill country of the wilderness of Ziph. Saul sought him every day, every day. Here he is on then run. He is isolated now. He is isolated, rejected by these people that he has helped and saved. And now he is on his own. He is on the run and on his own.

I want you to look at verse 14 again. Look at all that it says.

“And Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand.”⁶

That verse, that last part of the verse, wraps itself around David’s outlaw experience. God did not give him into Saul’s hands.

⁴ 1 Samuel 23:10-11.

⁵ 1 Samuel 23:11.

⁶ 1 Samuel 23:14.

But God has a gift for David and I want you to notice this, because there is an exception. Here he is isolated, rejected. And God sends into his life someone in verse 15, someone whose staggering commitment to him, somebody who is against all odds loyal to him, kicks into play right here.

See, this is my question. The Bible says that the believer is to persevere in his or her faith to the end. My question is: How does that happen? How does God enable you and I to keep believing, to keep on trusting when everything else is falling apart or when our faith is threatened either by ideas or by influences or by incidents that are destabiling? How does our faith survive? How is it meant to survive? When you are betrayed, when you are isolated, when you are hemmed in by your circumstances, how do you keep your eye cleared and your heart strong and your faith persevering in those circumstances?

Or, to put it in New Testament terms, those who are born of God are to endure to the end in order to be finally saved. So how has God ordained that? His people who will endure to the end will endure to the end? How does he ordain that that endurance takes place?

Listen to these words from Hebrews three.

But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.⁷

What the writer is saying is this. Unbelief is a possibility. Sliding is a possibility. Losing confidence is a possibility. What are we to do about this? What is God’s provision for this?

Well, the answer is: exhort one another. We need each other. We cannot do this Christian living on our own. We cannot be isolated from each other. We need one another if we are going to preserve to the end. That is the way it is. And that is what Jonathan does.

You notice, Jonathan rose and went. Well, whatever was involved in that. There is intentionality involved there. There is effort. There is perhaps frustration. There is the effort of finding where David is staying. There is danger because his father could have found him en route. And he knows all about this relationship that Jonathan and David have as friends. So Jonathan takes the initiative. Jonathan is intentional. Jonathan goes to encourage David.

And you say to yourself, “David, David, who is deep, David who is writing the Psalms for goodness sake that we repeat in church Sunday by Sunday, David who knows God, David who is strong in faith...”

Yes, David who needed Jonathan to be there for him. He had been rejected. There was more to come. There was more to come. Jonathan needed to be there before the more

⁷ Hebrews 3:13-14.

came. And you know what Jonathan says to him. Do you notice how Jonathan supports him? Jonathan comes along and put his arm around him and said, give him a squeeze and say, “Hey, go, guy. You will be ok. You will be fine. You know, you have got the resources. You are an extraordinary guy, you know. You are really amazing. Everybody knows how good you are. And they have seen you in front of Goliath. Everybody... you will be fine. You know, you can face any foe, any enemy you can beat them. You just need to believe in yourself.”

You know, reach deep inside...

[?] one of these televangelists. Reach deep inside your soul today and you draw out from inside of your soul all that energy God has poured in there and you translate it into the way you live your life for the rest of the week. Believe in yourself.

Is that what Jonathan does? No. Notice what he does. It is not anything that, you know, personal presence was good. It was good that Jonathan was there. Human touch is good. Sometimes you need somebody to squeeze your hand or give you a squeeze on the shoulder. Sometimes that is what you need.

But notice what David needed was to hear something.

“Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you.”⁸

“I will be under you,” that is effectively what he says. Translation is an I do here.

Do you notice what he says? Don’t fear. Do not fear.

Wherever you see that expression in the Bible—and it is all over the Bible, it is always used when there is something to be afraid of.

When the angel appears to Mary and says to her, “Do not fear,” he is not just saying to Mary, “I know meeting an angel is a scary thing, Mary, but don’t be scared.” No, no, no. What she really needed to be afraid of what was what he was just about to tell her.

“You are pregnant and God has done a miracle in your womb and how are you going to explain that to anybody?”

I mean, that was a really big thing to be scared of. She was right to be afraid. Whenever that phrase is used, it is because there is at every natural level reason to be afraid.

Jonathan says to David, “Don’t be afraid.” And he reminds David of something David must have told him, that experience recorded in chapter 16 where the prophet Samuel had anointed David as a boy to be king over Israel and he is saying to David, “Remember, the word of God. Remember the word of God. Remember the word of God. Remember the

⁸ 1 Samuel 23:4.

promise of God. Let the promise of God so grip your mind that it overcomes when you can see all you can see is the enemy, all you can see are those who are opposed to you. Let the Word of God win over what you can see.”

You see, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. So we are to walk by faith and not by sight. How do I walk by faith? Faith comes by hearing. It is the Word of God that makes the difference. It is the Word of God that God has appointed, you see, for us to encourage one another.

You say, “But I don’t hear God talk to me.”

What do you think this is? Sunday by Sunday, this is God talking to you. It is his Word. It is speaking to you personally, to you. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

Some of you will know that there was a problem with my visa and you have know idea just how near it came—to use the language of one of the authorities—how near I came, we came to me being marched onto a plane one Monday morning and being sent back where I came from. That is how close it came.

That Sunday night was a bit of a difficult night, because we had no idea which way it would go. Everybody was telling me that. The people were telling me that. We had no idea which way it would go. And I have to confess that I knew the people were praying, but I did lie awake somewhat and got up in the middle of the night to find that somebody, a friend had sent me a text and the text was from Proverbs 3:24.

“If you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.”⁹

Have no fear.

I had been lying down and I wasn’t sleeping and I was a bit afraid. What was I going to do if I was deported?

Then there is a command, “Do not fear.”

And what, you see, what that friend did and that text did was this. It did what Jonathan does to David here. Jonathan takes David’s hand and he puts David’s hand into the hand of God. That is what he is doing. That is the best thing you can do for anyone because after you have buttered them all up and told them how great they are and even after you have sat with them and held their hand. At the end of the day, all of that is nothing. At the end of the day all of that is useless. You need to get their hand into the hand of God and you do that by showing them the promises of God, by telling them the Word of God, by connecting them to that which is firm and certain and secure, because with the hand of God it really doesn’t matter what happens tomorrow. It doesn’t matter what happens tomorrow. You will still have God. You will still have God.

⁹ Proverbs 3:24.

Jonathan's strengthened David's hand in God.

Well, you really get the rough thing here because the first lot, they get the whole sermon. You get a bit of it. So there is one last little thing in this story that takes up a whole big chunk of the passage, but I can tell you it very briefly. At the end of the chapter we see something of the mighty hand of God, because after rejection comes betrayal.

In other words, David needed his hand strengthened in God because God knows what is coming next, see? And after rejection and isolation there is going to be betrayal because the people of the region of Ziph send a message to Saul and they say, "We know that David is in our territory. We know how to find David. If you come with your men, we will take you directly to where David is and you can have him and you can do to him whatever you want."

Betrayal. And that is what happens. Saul and his men come. The action at the end of the chapter gets very tense. If you had an aerial view you could see this. It all comes down to one mountain which wasn't a big mountain. And you have the army of Saul and you have the army of David which is miniscule in comparison to the army of Saul and the army of David are going around the mountain this way and the army of Saul are going around the mountain this way, hot on the heels of David. From above you could see this action being played out. You could see how close the army of Saul is to the army of David. It is a nail biting moment. As the tension mounts, will Saul catch up with David? Will David and his men be utterly routed and destroyed?

Come back next week and find out.

No. That is all that happened if it was in television, but it is not on television. So I can tell you what happens. What happens is that at the very last minute, the very last moment God sends an intervention that [?] there is a massive Philistine attack up north. And Saul has to call off his men and go and face the Philistine threat.

There is a great story that Ralph Davis tells about Alexander Peden, a Scottish Covenanter who was being pursued by horse and foot soldiers and they have been fleeing for some time and they had stopped momentarily for breath and a brief prayer and Alexander Peden prayed, "Lord, this is the hour and the power of your enemies. They may not be idle, but have you no other work for them to do? Lord, will you send them after those to whom you will give the power to keep fleeing, because our strength is gone? Lord, will you give us something else to do, because we have run out of energy here? Send them after somebody who has still got the energy to keep running."

And, in fact, a mist came down and separated these covenanters from their pursuers. Well, that is what happened here in this story. It is a great story of final deliverance in the nick of time.

Well, you know, the world makes of this is luck, of course, This is just, you know, a random event, luck of the draw, chance encounter. Life has no script. A story has no author. The believer sees it differently. It sees everything in the hands of God. He is the God who has decreed whatsoever comes to pass. He is the God who preserves and governs all his creatures, ordering them and all their actions for his own glory. Here is the God who is our eternal Father, as the Heidelberg Catechism puts it, the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus who of nothing made heaven and earth and all that is in them and who likewise upholds and governs the same by his eternal council and providence. This God is for the sake of Christ his Son my God and my Father on whom I rely so entirely that I have no doubt that he will provide me with all the things necessary for soul and body and, further, that he will make whatever evil he sends upon me in this valley of tears turn out to be my advantage.

Do you believe that? Do you believe in the providence of God who makes whatever evils he sends upon me in this valley of tears turn out to my advantage for he is able to do it since he is almighty God and willing to do it since he is my faithful Father?

David was rescued at the last minute. You may not be. At least your rescue may end with your immediate accession to glory. But you can be sure from David's story that every bit as real as David's life was in the purpose and mind of God, your story is, too. The script has been written. You need not fear. Don't be afraid. You have things to be scared of, but don't be afraid. Go to the Word. It is the rock.

Let's pray.

Father, I pray that you would so galvanize our hearts, so root them and deeply in the Lord Jesus, so encompass us about with your strength that we may find our security in your Word of promise and learn from our beloved forbearers in the faith that you have a script that is written, that we know the end of the story. We can read the end of the book. The end of the book tells us that the Lamb wins. The Lamb wins and the Church wins and we win and have all our enemies under our feet. We pray this in Jesus' strong name. Amen.