

Title: God's Mercies in our Suffering

Scripture: 1 Samuel 23

Series: God, the True King!

1. Introduction:

- a. Beloved, we have spent much time discussing the suffering of God's people both as individuals and as the corporate body of believers.
- b. It is true that during desolate, trying times, God's servants are increasingly needful of His eternal mercies. Today, our passage teaches us that God faithfully and continuously provides that needed mercy to His people.
- c. Our chapter will share five ways God is merciful to us when we are in distress.

2. Verse 1-13: The Mercy of God's Word: Now they told David, "Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are robbing the threshing floors." (2) Therefore 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, "Behold, 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, "Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the Philistines into your hand." (5) And David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines and brought away their livestock and struck

them with a great blow. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah. (6) When Abiathar the son of Ahimelech had fled to David to Keilah, he had come down with an ephod in his hand. (7) Now it was told Saul that David had come to Keilah. And Saul said, “God has given him into my hand, for he has shut himself in by entering a town that has gates and bars.” (8) And Saul summoned all the people to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men. (9) David knew that Saul was plotting harm against him. And he said to Abiathar the priest, “Bring the ephod here.” (10) Then David said, “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. (11) Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? O LORD, the God of Israel, please tell your servant.” And the LORD said, “He will come down.” (12) 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.” (13) Then David and his men, who were about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the expedition.

- a. I would like us to start with verse 6 because it provides the critical truth upon which the entire chapter hinges.
 - i. With David, we find the last remaining priest and the ephod (the outer garment of the priest which represented God’s Glory and upon which the Urim and the Thuman rested).

1. Therefore, despite his terrible suffering, David had access to the mind of God through the Word of God.
- ii. In other words, one of God's greatest mercies to his suffering people is the surety of His Word.
 1. **Psalm 119:105** Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.
 - a. This verse speaks of God's Word as the light that dispels the darkness we encounter in this world.
 - b. Therefore, the Word of God is sufficient. In our suffering, we need no more than to hear God speak his comforting words, and we have peace.
 2. **Romans 15:4** For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.
- iii. Our passage reveals great truth to us. It is better to be a detested David with the Word of God than to be a king Saul devoid of God's Word.
 1. Why? Because the Word of God contains the wellspring of hope, instruction, encouragement, teaching, equipping, and sanctifying work. Consider the Psalmist's plea in **Psalm 119:43** And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for my hope is in your rules.
- iv. In your suffering, I exhort you to turn to the Word of God.

- b. David hears about the trouble in Keilah and immediately does what Saul always failed to do; David consults God. David receives a divine mandate to go, but his men are unconvinced and afraid. After consulting with God a second time, David receives the same answer, and he and his men go and **save** the inhabitants of Keilah from the enemies.
- i. Obedience to the word of God always brings forth God's salvation. Beloved, God delights in the obedience of His saints.
 1. **1 Samuel 15:22** And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.
 2. **Philippians 2:12** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,
 - ii. Notice the crucial difference between David and Saul.
 1. Saul destroys the people of God, but David saves them.
 - a. Here we see the difference between Satan and Christ.
 2. Saul wages war against the Word of God, but David surrenders to it.
- c. Verses 9-13: The mercy of prayer: We find an exciting truth in this section.

- i. We expect grateful people in Keilah. After all, David has just saved them all.
- ii. However, David is uneasy. He knows much about the ungratefulness often found in the hearts of men. He immediately turns to God in prayer and asks two questions. This is the advantage of having God's priest:
 1. Will Saul come?
 2. Will the people turn me over to Saul?
- iii. David received two affirmations to his questions. Saul would come, and the men of Keilah would deliver Him. This they would do out of fear, having heard what Saul did to Nob when he thought the priests were in league with David. Fear is usually a cause of great sin!
- iv. This small portion of Scripture answers the question, "If God is sovereign, why should the people of God pray?"
 1. Beloved, we pray so that we can become aligned with God. David was in danger in Keilah, and he did not know it. God, the Holy Spirit, draws him to prayer. It is through prayer that David receives the Word of God. Having received the Word of God, David flees the city (this was God's decree from the beginning). Saul, therefore, gives up the pursuit, and David not only saves himself and his men, but he saves the city of Keilah once again.
 2. **Philippians 4:6-7** do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and

supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (7) And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

3. Therefore, we are commanded in **1 Thessalonians 5:17** pray without ceasing,

3. Verses 14-18: The Mercy of God's People: And David remained in the strongholds in the wilderness, in the hill country of the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand. (15) David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh. (16) And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God. (17) And he said to him, "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. Saul my father also knows this." (18) And the two of them made a covenant before the LORD. David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home.

a. Although David escaped Saul, he never escapes the hand of God. The Bible tells us in verse 14, ...**And Saul sought him every day, but God did not give him into his hand.**

i. God allows our suffering for His divine purposes, but he does not give us entirely to our enemies.

What wonderful truth.

1. Consider the Old Testament example of Job.

2. Consider the New Testament example of Peter in **Luke 22:31-32** “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, (32) but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”
 - ii. Saul could not find David, but Jonathan could.
- b. God’s people love each other, and in great suffering, they bring the encouragement of the Lord. The Bible reports that **Jonathan rose, went to David, and strengthened his hand in God**. How did he accomplish this:
 - i. **Do not fear**: Place your eyes on God
 - ii. **The hand of Saul shall not find you**: God protects his people
 - iii. **You shall be king over Israel**: Remember the promises of God
 - iv. **My father also knows this**: the enemy knows that he is defeated.
 - v. **Commentary**: We best encourage not by being cuddly with people but by reminding them of the promises of God. Encouragement from God for the people of God comes from the Word of God. Encouragement, amid suffering, comes not from emotional closeness but from God’s Word.
- c. Beloved, look at the enormity of verse 16. When we biblically encourage and strengthen the hurting Christian, we act most like Jesus Christ. This leads us to our fourth mercy.

d. The Mercy of God the Son: Beloved, this would be the last time Jonathan and David would see each other on this side of eternity. There was biblical encouragement and reaffirming of the sacred covenant in their final moments. Let us strive to be such people.

i. The encouragement of Jonathan would not continue forever. He would die, and this relationship would end. We cannot become dependent on any one person. We need Jesus Christ. He is the perfect friend in times of trouble.

1. **2 Timothy 4:16-17** At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! (17) But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.

4. Verses 19-29: The Mercy of God's Providence: Then the Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is south of Jeshimon? (20) Now come down, O king, according to all your heart's desire to come down, and our part shall be to surrender him into the king's hand." (21) And Saul said, "May you be blessed by the LORD, for you have had compassion on me. (22) Go, make yet more sure. Know and see the place where his foot

is, and who has seen him there, for it is told me that he is very cunning. (23) See therefore and take note of all the lurking places where he hides, and come back to me with sure information. Then I will go with you. And if he is in the land, I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah.” (24) And they arose and went to Ziph ahead of Saul. Now David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon. (25) And Saul and his men went to seek him. And David was told, so he went down to the rock and lived in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard that, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon. (26) Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain. And David was hurrying to get away from Saul. As Saul and his men were closing in on David and his men to capture them, (27) a messenger came to Saul, saying, “Hurry and come, for the Philistines have made a raid against the land.” (28) So Saul returned from pursuing after David and went against the Philistines. Therefore that place was called the Rock of Escape. (29) And David went up from there and lived in the strongholds of Engedi.

a. In this last portion, we see the sovereign providence of God as he saves David from terrible betrayal. Some of the people from Ziph go to Gibeah and disclose David’s location. The city of Ziph was located in David’s own tribe of Judah.

i. It is terrible when our suffering comes at the hands of those that should be most loyal. The Ziphites invite Saul to **come down, and our part shall be to surrender him into the king's hand.**

b. Saul and the Ziphites come up with a plan. They were to gather information and report it to Saul. Having received the information, Saul descends upon the location. We read that **Saul pursued David in the wilderness of Maon**. Saul is too close for comfort. According to our passage, **Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men were on the other side of the mountain. And David was hurrying to get away from Saul. As Saul and his men were closing in on David and his men to capture them.**

i. The tension is palpable. It seems that David will be captured, humiliated, and, likely killed.

1. Because of the hatred of this world, Christians oftentimes find themselves in similar situations. A situation in which all seems to be lost. But beloved, do not lose heart. Let us look forward to God.

ii. Suddenly, just when all hope is lost for David, a man comes screaming. We read in verses 27 and 28 that **a messenger came to Saul, saying, “Hurry and come, for the Philistines have made a raid against the land.” So Saul returned from pursuing after David and went against the Philistines. Therefore that place was called the Rock of Escape.**

1. David is not lucky here. This is sovereignty and providence at the highest level. Look at the endless ways in which God delivers his servants. The enemies of God, the

Philistines, become the instrument of God's salvation.

- a. Why did the Philistines choose that particular moment to attack a city in Israel? Why did the messenger arrive at that specific moment?
 - b. **Isaiah 14:27** For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?
 - c. **Isaiah 43:13** Also henceforth I am he; there is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back?"
2. God works to keep His people on their feet.
- a. Beloved, this same sovereign providence in the life of David guides each of you in times of great need.
- iii. David's trials are not over! However, these verses teach us that God gives us His mercies to see us through.

5. Benediction:

- a. **Psalms 54:7** For he has delivered me from every trouble, and my eye has looked in triumph on my enemies.

Public Reading of Scripture: Psalms 54