

1. This section of scripture deals with “God’s will” and “power”.
  - a) Every now and then I get into a discussion of “how to discern God’s will”. It’s been a few lessons since I’ve done this and we’re overdue. ☺
  - b) Throughout these two chapters we’re going to read of David seeking God’s will.
    - i) What I want you to notice is that David uses different methods at different locations. There is no specific pattern of seeking God’s will.
    - ii) Further, we will read of King Saul “assuming” God’s will is done because he is given a great opportunity. What is to be learned from that lesson is that not every opportunity is meant to be God’s will.
  - c) If you are a Christian, that means you desire to live your life that is pleasing to God. You want to be Christ-like in all you do. Therefore, if that is your goal, seeking God’s will is essential and important.
    - i) What I hope to convey in this lesson is some ideas on just how to seek God’s will. The first thing to learn is that there is no specific set of instructions. There is no “follow these easy 3-steps and you will know God’s will for your life”.
      - ii) How do we seek God’s will?
        - a) First of all, One of God’s gift to us is a brain and expects us to use it. It is not necessary to lay in bed every morning and pray if it is “God’ will” to get up and go to the bathroom! ☺
        - b) That does not mean one ignores God and just goes about their life. Seeking God’s will requires a prayerful effort. God intends us to pray regularly to seek His will. That is why part of the Lord’s Prayer is “Your will be done”.
        - c) I’m also a big believer in regular, habitual bible reading. One should develop a pattern of reading it on a systematic, regular basis through the entire book. The bible is God’s set of instructions for our lives.
        - d) When Satan was tempting Jesus, one of Jesus’ responses was that “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4 NIV). My point is that if Jesus says we (man) are to live on every word, that means to study every word!
        - e) Through God’s word we learn God’s will for our lives. Those commands, instructions and word-pictures become “part of our make up”, and thus as we go through life, we are doing God’s will.
      - iii) OK John, I know all of that. What about those big decisions and times in our lives where we don’t know where to turn? That is what we’ discuss in these chapters.
        - a) David goes from one crisis to another, seeking God’s will.
        - b) David knows that he will be king one day, but in the meantime, he is running for his life. What I want you to notice in these two chapters are the decisions that David makes and how he makes them.
2. Getting back to my opening statement, I also stated that this chapter has to do with God’s will and the topic of “power”. Specifically, it has to do with power and control of that power.
  - a) Whenever you study a section of the bible, and a word is repeated over and over again, that is usually God trying to hit you on the head and notice something! ☺
  - b) In this case, it is the Hebrew word “yad”, which is usually translated “hand”.
    - i) That word is used 18 times in these two chapters! The King James translates that word “hand” all 18 times The New International Version (NIV) paraphrases the text much more and only uses the word “hand” 8 times in these two chapters.

- ii) The word “hand” here is meant to be a description of power and control.
  - a) Of all the body parts, the hand is used the most for us to control something. The word-picture of “hand” refers to control.
  - b) For example, “I’ve trapped my enemy. I’ve got him right in my hand!”
  - c) In this case, is not to be taken literally. It is a figure of speech.
  - d) That cliché is commonly used as this text. The expression, “my hand” or “the king’s hand” or “the Lord’s hand” throughout this chapter.
- c) OK, John, and your point is? ☺ (We’ll, give me a minute and I’ll explain further!)
- d) First, I want to think about something Jesus said:
  - i) “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8 NIV)
  - ii) As a believer, we have the Spirit of God living within us. That Spirit gives us all sorts of “power”. That is similar to the idea of the Hebrew word “yad”. It represents “the power at your hand”. Just like the fact that our hands are the body part used most often for power and control, so the word picture “hand” is a representation of “God’s power” working within us.
  - iii) This goes back to the idea of “God’s will”.
    - a) God’s will is best seen in hindsight. God has tremendous power and gives us tremendous power. We are given tremendous power as believers. A lot more than we realize.
    - b) One of the great challenges of life (and fun!) is watching God work in our life. Of all the “thrills” that life has to offer, I can’t think of a greater one than to be personally or corporately used by God. It is an incredible feeling to know and watch God’s power be used in our lives.
    - c) By seeking God, by living by the instructions and patterns of God’s word, and further, by submitting our will to God, God then works through us with all sorts of power.
  - iv) What is to be read in these chapters is David going from place to place, mostly running for his life from Saul. While he’s doing that, David is conscious of the fact it is “God’s will” for him to be king one day. David doesn’t just stand there and be passive about it. He still is running for his life. What David does during that time is seek God’s will for his survival and (here comes the important part): “Let God worry about the results and work on God’s timing and not David’s timing.
- e) In summary, this is about “power” and control of that power.
  - i) To seek God’s will is to tell God, “OK Lord, everything I own, everything I do and everything I live for is designed to please you. God then says, “OK, now that I’m in charge, watch what I am going to do through You!”
  - ii) God gives us tremendous power at our disposal. The “trick” is to learn to use it to do His will and on His timing! That is what these two chapters are all about!
  - iii) God uses his “power” behind the scenes to keep David alive despite the fact that Saul and his army is trying to hunt him down.
  - iv) David, when secretly confronting Saul, restrains his power as he believes it was not God’s will to kill him. David then publicly confronts Saul on this issue and for the moment, Saul is swayed not to kill him.
  - v) My point is this chapter is that it is all about God’s will getting accomplished. There are examples of control of “giving up” control to God in order for God’s will to get done. We’ll tackle this as we go through the chapter.
  - vi) Ok, I’ve been rambling for two pages and I’ve yet to even touch the first verse. ☺

3. Chapter 23, Verse 1: When David was told, "Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are looting the threshing floors," <sup>2</sup> he inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" The LORD answered him, "Go, attack the Philistines and save Keilah."
- a) Let's recap where we last read of David. This was in the early parts of Chapter 22.
    - i) David's relatives were in danger as he was afraid Saul would use them as ransom. Therefore, he led all of them to the neighboring area of Moab. David's great grandmother Ruth was a Moabite and figured the "kin" would help them.
    - ii) A prophet Gath then told David in Verse 5 to get out of Moab with his "army" of about 400 men and go to Judah. This alone was an act of faith on David's part as now he was out in the open where he could be spotted by Saul's army.
    - iii) The rest of Chapter 22 was all about Saul. He went to the high priest who helped David. In Saul's jealousy, he had the high priest killed along with all his relatives. Only one man escaped and that person fled to David as we'll read in a few verses.
  - b) Now here is David who "just happened" to be in the section of Israel near of town of Keilah. David heard that the Philistines were attacking Keilah.
    - i) The Philistines were looting the threshing floors. When the wheat was harvested, it was collected at one spot and the useless chaff part was separated from the edible wheat. That location was called a threshing floor.
    - ii) The Philistines used this opportunity to raid them. To use an old cliché, "the best time to rob a bank is when the payroll is being delivered as there is more cash on hand". That is what the Philistines were doing here.
  - c) Now we get back to the topic of "God's will":
    - i) Notice the first thing David does not do is go help these townsfolk.
    - ii) The first thing David does when he hears of this attack is pray to God.
    - iii) There is nothing wrong with David helping, but one of the points I'm going to make over and over again, is "not every opportunity is necessarily God's will". Just because something seems like an obvious situation where someone needs help is not necessarily God's will to go help.
    - iv) Don't get me wrong. When someone's in trouble, the natural instinct is to go help and 99.99% of the time, it is the right thing to do. The point here is that David (like us) sought God before "anything and everything".
    - v) Again, it doesn't mean that every time we have to go to the bathroom, we check if it is God's will first. ☺ It means that we regularly seek God's will as part of our prayer routine (to keep God in the forefront of our minds!)
    - vi) In crisis situation to especially stop and seek God's will.
      - a) David's life was in danger by helping these people. David knew that word would get to Saul if he helped them. In times of fear, it is again best to stop, pray and seek God's will before taking action.
  - d) One of the things we don't know is specifically how God answered David.
    - i) Was it an audible voice? Was it written in the sky? Did a prophet speak up and say, "This is how God answers your prayer?"
    - ii) One of the reasons the text specifically does not tell us how the prayer is answered is God wants you to focus on Him and not methodology!
    - iii) Trust me, if God wants to give you a message, He is more than capable of delivering it to you! I don't believe one has to "strain" to hear the voice of God, as if God is not capable of speaking in any volume louder than a whisper. ☺
    - iv) Further, I am leery of those who have a "message of God for me" as if God has lost my phone number. ☺ God can use others to speak to you, but one must test prophecy and simply watch to see if it comes true. (See 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:1).

4. Verse 3: But David's men said to him, "Here in Judah we are afraid. How much more, then, if we go to Keilah against the Philistine forces!" <sup>4</sup> Once again David inquired of the LORD, and the LORD answered him, "Go down to Keilah, for I am going to give the Philistines into your hand." <sup>5</sup> So David and his men went to Keilah, fought the Philistines and carried off their livestock. He inflicted heavy losses on the Philistines and saved the people of Keilah.
- a) Apparently, when David inquired of God to go attack the Philistines, that message only told to David and not his men.
    - i) If you remember in Chapter 22, Verse 2, David had about 400 men with him.
    - ii) These 400 men were in fear.
  - b) Notice what David did not say after Verse 3:
    - i) "Look, you idiots, God said for us to go, now let's get moving!" ☺
    - ii) Instead, we read in Verse 4 that once again David inquired of God.
    - iii) David understood that the men were in fear. I suspect David was still in fear despite getting a direct command from God.
  - c) Again, we are not given the details of the methodology:
    - i) We don't know how the second prayer persuaded the 400 men to go with David.
    - ii) All we know is that prayer works! However it happens, God wanted us to know in this text that David sought God in prayer, God answered that prayer, and by faith David acted on God's commands despite the danger. That prayer also persuaded David's army to go with him.
  - d) I stated in the introduction of the power of God:
    - i) That power persuaded David to turn from his fears and go fight.
    - ii) That power persuaded David's army to go fight with him.
    - iii) That power gave David a mighty victory over the Philistines.
    - iv) Notice God says to David, "I am going to give the Philistines into your hand". (There's that word again! ☺) It is about God's power working through us!
  - e) By the way, notice in David's victory, he not only saves the wheat (implied), and not only defeats the Philistines, but he also has nice steak dinners for him and his men. ☺ The text says David and his men "carried off their livestock".
    - i) The point is when we are obedient to God, He rewards in ways far greater than we expect. Remember it took courage for David to go fight the Philistines.
      - a) The Philistines were better armed and were prepared for war. David was with a bunch of guys who were fugitives.
      - b) There was also the danger of being exposed so Saul could find him.
      - c) All David wanted to do is protect the wheat. David got that, inflicted heavy losses on the Philistines and the livestock as a bonus gift.
      - d) When we give to God (in this case, by our time and trust in Him), God gives back far more than we ever give to him. You cannot out give God!
5. Verse 6: (Now Abiathar son of Ahimelech had brought the ephod down with him when he fled to David at Keilah.)
- a) The "parenthesis" is in the NIV text and I think it is appropriate here.
  - b) If you remember from the last chapter, Abithar was the only survivor when Saul ordered the massacre of all the priests, their children and even their livestock.
    - i) Imagine, losing everything and everyone that is close to you. Imagine being the only survivor of a family massacre! How do you continue to live and move on?
    - ii) What kept Abiathar going was saying in effect, "Well, Lord, I'm the only one left of the High Priest family, and I'm going to keep going until you say otherwise. You kept me alive and I'm going to keep living to serve you!"
    - iii) Abiathar fled to David. At this point he wasn't too crazy about Saul. ☺

- iv) In this one verse, we can learn a lot about “living” and doing God’s will despite the horrible circumstances that go on around you. It doesn’t mean one does not deal with grief. It means that if we live for God, then we must continue to live for God as long as we keep living.
- c) The verse also mentions that Abiathar brought an “ephod” with him.
  - i) An ephod is a vest that is part of the High Priest garment.
  - ii) What is implied but not stated, is this is the “official” ephod of the High Priest.
  - iii) When we get to Verse 9 this is important.
    - a) There is a pocket in this vest. In this pocket was to be kept the “Urim and the Thummin” (Exodus 28:30). These are untranslated Hebrew words. Most likely they were some sort of “dice” used to discern God’s will. Whatever it was, it was kept in the vest to discern answers to prayer.
    - b) In Verse 9, David used this “method” to seek God’s will.
- 6. Verse 7: Saul was told that David had gone to Keilah, and he said, "God has handed him over to me, for David has imprisoned himself by entering a town with gates and bars." <sup>8</sup> And Saul called up all his forces for battle, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men.
  - a) Meanwhile, we’re back to Saul again. The last we read of Saul was that he ordered the slaughter of all the High Priest and his family.
  - b) In Verse 7, Saul discovers that David had gone to Keilah, the town that the Philistines had raided to get their wheat.
  - c) The interesting thing is Saul said, “God has handed him (David) over to me”.
    - i) Yes, there is that word “hand” again! Saul thinks that “God’s will” is done because his enemy David is in Keilah.
  - d) Further, Keilah apparently is a walled city with “gates and bars”. Therefore, it would be relatively easy to catch David by watching the gates and walls. We learn in Chapter 24 that Saul had 3,000 men with him.
  - e) Verse 8 mentions Saul taking his forces to go attack David.
    - i) One has to wonder if Saul also heard about the Philistines attacking the wheat harvest and thinking, “Whatever, I’m too busy hunting down David!”
  - f) What is to be learned here is “Opportunity is not necessarily God’s will!”
    - i) Obviously, God intended for David to be the next king and it was not God’s will for Saul to kill David. We’ll read of David’s escape coming up.
    - ii) What God wants us to learn is that not every opportunity “thrown in our face” is designed to be God’s will.
    - iii) If an “opportunity” violates the principals of Scripture, it is not “God’s will” no matter how wonderful the appeal.
    - iv) Sometimes God communicates to us in other ways as well. Sometimes it may be a “felling” and sometimes it may be in other ways.
    - v) My point here is to be cautious of things that seem like obvious opportunities. Simply stop and pray first and ask for God’s guidance.
- 7. Verse 9: When David learned that Saul was plotting against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod." <sup>10</sup> David said, "O LORD, God of Israel, your servant has heard definitely that Saul plans to come to Keilah and destroy the town on account of me. <sup>11</sup> Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me to him? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? O LORD, God of Israel, tell your servant." And the LORD said, "He will."
  - a) Now the story goes back to David, his men and Abiathar the priest. In Verse 6, Abiathar brought the ephod (vest) to David and was now probably using the Urim and the Thummim (again, probably dice), they were trying to discern God’s will.

- b) David's concern is not only for his life, and the life of his men, but also for the lives of the men of the town of Keilah. David knew that Saul killed dozens of priests and their family members, so therefore, David understood he would kill other innocent people as well.
  - c) Therefore, the prayer wasn't just "what about me?" The prayer was, "What about all the innocent people here?" Then and only then does David get around to asking whether or not Saul will come to this town.
  - d) Back to "God's will" and "methodology". Does this mean if we say the right words and then shoot a couple of dice, that is how God is to answer us? In one word, no. ☺
    - i) First of all, David is scared for his life, the life of his men and the lives of innocent people. Next David used "what was at hand" to communicate with God.
    - ii) The text mentions the last remaining priest of the descendants of Eli "happened" to be there and "happened" to have the Ephod at hand.
    - iii) Remember back in Verse 1 when David prayed for discernment, David did not then say, "I can't pray to God, I don't have an ephod in my hand".
  - e) Unto the questions themselves: David first asked, "Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me to him?" The second question is whether or not Saul will come down to Keilah.
    - i) David was concerned that the Keilah townsfolk would turn David over to Saul. That would be ingratitude, but David understands that when you're life is threatened, as Saul would do, people will do anything, including betray David.
    - ii) Notice in Verse 11 that the only answer to David's two questions was: "He will".
      - a) God does not specifically respond to David's first question of whether or not the townsfolk will betray David, just the second question of whether or not Saul is on his way to find him.
      - b) Therefore, the first question gets repeated in Verse 12.
8. Verse 12: Again David asked, "Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me and my men to Saul?" And the LORD said, "They will."
- a) The interesting discussion is "Why did David have to ask this question a second time?
    - i) After all, God is more than capable of answering both questions first.
  - b) I bring this up as it is important to understand the nature of God and answering prayer.
    - i) First of all, it is up to God to answer prayer. We "work for Him" and not vice-versa. He is under no obligation to answer any prayer on our timing.
    - ii) I take the view that all prayer requests are answered. Sometimes "silence" means the answer is no or not yet.
    - iii) God often gives us information based on what we can handle at that moment. A possibility here is that God first wanted David to contemplate that Saul is on the way so he could make a run for it before contemplating whether or not the people of Keilah would betray David.
    - iv) In the next verse, we read that Saul never goes to Keilah after Saul discovers David left that location. Perhaps that is why God "waited" to answer David's second question of "Will the residents of Keilah betray me" as it is less of an issue.
  - c) All of this is relevant to the topic of "discerning God's will".
    - i) Sometimes God gives us some information and expects us to act on it. Then we say, "Yeah, yeah, I know that, but about my other question." ☺ That is what David did here. The main thing God wanted to convey is Saul is on the way and it was time for David to move again.
    - ii) Remember all of this running by David is part of "God's will". Let's face it, God could "zap" Saul at any time and make David the king. All of this was part of David's "education" for his future reign as king. God works the same way in our lives as well. What is often a "peril" is God educating us for some future event.

9. Verse 13: So David and his men, about six hundred in number, left Keilah and kept moving from place to place. When Saul was told that David had escaped from Keilah, he did not go there. <sup>14</sup> David stayed in the desert strongholds and in the hills of the Desert of Ziph. Day after day Saul searched for him, but God did not give David into his hands.
- a) Now David was on the run again. David ran into a hillside, desert area called “Ziph”.
    - i) Looking at a geography map, this area was not that far from where David grew up. I’m guessing that when David was younger and tending the sheep, he knew this territory and all the caves that exist there.
    - ii) Again, when David was young, he had no idea that “geography education” would benefit his life later. It is another example of how God uses our early education to inevitably fulfill His glory.
  - b) The best line here is the last sentence of Verse 14. To summarize, David kept alluding Saul not because David outsmarted Saul, but because God was “behind the scenes” keeping David from Saul’s hand (there’s that word again! ☺)
    - i) It’s hard to imagine being a fugitive and on the run and knowing it was “God’s will”. I’m sure it wasn’t until hindsight that David realized that God was guiding him and saving him during this time period.
    - ii) This is why during the scariest moments of our lives is when we have to realize that God is in control and is working “behind the scenes” of our lives. That won’t take away the pain, but it gives us some comfort during those times.
10. Verse 15: While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. <sup>16</sup> And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God. <sup>17</sup> "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." <sup>18</sup> The two of them made a covenant before the LORD. Then Jonathan went home, but David remained at Horesh.
- a) Now, all of a sudden, Jonathan, Saul’s son and David’s friend appears on the scene again.
  - b) We don’t know how Jonathan finds David while his father is eluding him, but “God works it out” so Jonathan could be with him.
  - c) A few lessons back I contemplated why God choose David to be the next king and not Jonathan. After all, Jonathan’s not a bad guy and would have made a good king.
    - i) Part of the answer is God’s sovereign will to pick David.
    - ii) I heard another answer to contemplate: Jonathan never took up arms and joined David, but just supported him behind the scenes. Maybe God saw that “character flaw” of a lack of boldness to pick David over Jonathan.
    - iii) Who knows, its just interesting speculation. ☺
  - d) Onto the text itself. Here are some key points:
    - i) Jonathan’s purpose was to “help David find strength in God” (Verse 16).
      - a) Never discount the importance of encouraging friends in times of trouble. Sometimes just “being there” is as important as what they say. I know that during my difficult moments, I mainly recall who was there. That meant more to me than any words they told me.
      - ii) Second, Jonathan reminded David that he would be king one day.
        - a) This is Jonathan “prophesying” a biblical based prediction that hasn’t happened yet. To encourage Christians, don’t underestimate the importance of prophesying to one another. That is simply to take biblical written promises and encourage each other with those words.
        - b) “But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort” (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:3 NIV).

11. Verse 19: The Ziphites went up to Saul at Gibeah and said, "Is not David hiding among us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hakilah, south of Jeshimon?"<sup>20</sup> Now, O king, come down whenever it pleases you to do so, and we will be responsible for handing him over to the king."
- a) In Verse 19 we get introduced to some group called the "Ziphites". There are several mentions in the bible of an Israelite town called "Ziph" and these are their residents. For some reason, they disclose to Saul where was David's specific whereabouts.
  - b) There is no further mention of the Ziphites as to this incident, nor does David seek revenge upon them after he becomes king.
  - c) What is interesting is David wrote Psalm 54 based on this incident. The title of the Psalm states, "When the Ziphites had gone to Saul and said, "Is not David hiding among us?"
    - i) Psalm 54 is only 7 lines long. The Psalm deals with David's anger at the Ziphites for disclosing his whereabouts.
    - ii) Note the last line of Psalm 54. It says, "For he has delivered me from all my troubles, and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes." We'll read in a few verses how David escaped before Saul could catch him. Most likely David wrote this Psalm after he was rescued as a prayer of thanks to God.
12. Verse 21: Saul replied, "The LORD bless you for your concern for me."<sup>22</sup> Go and make further preparation. Find out where David usually goes and who has seen him there. They tell me he is very crafty.<sup>23</sup> Find out about all the hiding places he uses and come back to me with definite information. Then I will go with you; if he is in the area, I will track him down among all the clans of Judah."
- a) In Verse 21 Saul invokes God's name and blesses the Ziphites for helping him.
    - i) In Psalm 54, David says of the same group, "Let evil recoil on those who slander me; in your faithfulness destroy them." (Psalm 54:5 NIV)
    - ii) Even though the bible doesn't record whether these people are blessed or cursed, we can logically guess which "prayer" God answers. ☺
  - b) My point to all of this goes back to the top of "God's will." Just because one says "May God bless you for helping me" does not mean it is "God will".
    - i) I can't tell you the number of times in my life where I've heard the most "ungodly" people say, "May God bless you" because that person has helped them in some situation. That expression has become a cliché for "Thank You".
    - ii) Saul's statement may be a violation of the commandment to not take God's name in vain" (Exodus 20:7). We tend to think of that commandment in terms of saying God's name in connection with slander. What that commandment also means is to invoke God's name in situations where God doesn't want His name invoked.
      - a) For example, if somebody does something illegal to help you, and you respond with "God bless you for your help", that is taking God's name in vain as you are invoking it in a situation that is not God's will.
  - c) The rest of the text here is simply historical details. To paraphrase Saul, "Go find out David's specific hideout. If you can find it, come back and tell me."
13. Verse 24: So they (men of Ziph) set out and went to (town of) Ziph ahead of Saul. Now David and his men were in the Desert of Maon, in the Arabah south of Jeshimon.<sup>25</sup> Saul and his men began the search, and when David was told about it, he went down to the rock and stayed in the Desert of Maon. When Saul heard this, he went into the Desert of Maon in pursuit of David.
- a) Here we are reading more travel details of David on the run from Saul.
    - i) This text is stated to "set us up for the big scene". Beginning in Chapter 25, we are going to read of the next great direct confrontation between David and Saul.
  - b) Personally, I think David described all of these details while he was on the run. It shows how God has continued to rescue David out of Saul's hand during this time.

14. Verse 26: Saul was going along one side of the mountain, and David and his men were on the other side, hurrying to get away from Saul. As Saul and his forces were closing in on David and his men to capture them, <sup>27</sup> a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Come quickly! The Philistines are raiding the land." <sup>28</sup> Then Saul broke off his pursuit of David and went to meet the Philistines. That is why they call this place Sela Hammahlekoth. <sup>29</sup> And David went up from there and lived in the strongholds of En Gedi.
- a) When one reads verses 24 through 26, one has to see this as building up to a climax.
    - i) Picture a movie where they show David and his 400 men on the run.
      - a) Then the scene switches back to Saul chasing him. Then the scene goes back to David, and then to Saul. The anticipation is building.
    - ii) By Verse 26, we read of Saul being on one side of mountain (technically, a big hill, but whatever! ☺) and David on the other, running for his life.
  - b) By Verse 27, Saul was about to close in for the kill, when "all of a sudden", Saul gets a message from "headquarters" that the Philistines are attacking. I can just see Saul pausing at this point and saying, "Sigh, damn, oh well, duty calls. I'll finish off David another day!"
    - i) Does this mean God timed the Philistines invasion to save David? Yes!
    - ii) Stop and think about that. God "planted" the thought into the Philistine generals the exact moment to attack and the exact moment when King Saul would be informed of this event!
    - iii) It shows how God works behind the scenes of our lives and on His timing!
  - c) David names this location "Sela Hammahlekoth".
    - i) That is a transliteration of the Hebrew. It is translated "rock of escape" (NKJV) and "rock of parting" (NIV).
  - d) In Verse 29, David moves to En Gedi.
    - i) If you ever take a trip to Israel, a popular spot to stop is En Gedi. In the middle of desolate desert area is a lush valley. There is a water spring at the top of the valley leading to waterfalls. The valley is also full of caves for hiding. It is an ideal spot for David and his men as it had places to hide, water, vegetation, animals (wild goats lived here) and one could easily keep watch for enemies.
      - a) En Gedi is also full of caves where David and his men could hide.
    - ii) God gave David "a break". Yes Saul will still pursue him, but here is some temporary relief. I find that God works that way in our life. During those long stretches of life where we go through rough times, there is often an "En Gedi" that we get for some temporary comfort. This isn't the final solution, but a place of rest so David can regroup and get ready for the next phase.
15. Chapter 24, Verse 1: After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, "David is in the Desert of En Gedi." <sup>2</sup> So Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the Crags of the Wild Goats.
- a) Now we are back to the chase. We don't know the time gap between the end of Chapter 23 and the start of Chapter 24, but you figure Saul had to go fight some battles.
  - b) Now Saul hears of David's location and goes to attack him with 3,000 armed men.
  - c) As I mentioned, En Gedi was a location where one could have "look outs" and see if anyone is approaching. I'm guessing one of David's 400 men spotted Saul and his army of 3,000 coming to get him! Imagine the fear going through David's men at this time!
16. Verse 3: He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself. David and his men were far back in the cave.

- a) Let me try to set the scene:
    - i) Here's Saul leading the army through this valley. The army is probably looking cave-by-cave trying to find any of David's men.
    - ii) Saul had to go to the bathroom. Saul's men probably let him go by himself for privacy. Saul is now temporarily blinded as his eyes were adjusting to the dark of the cave. Apparently this was a big cave. David and some of his men were there.
    - iii) While Saul was "sitting there", David cut off a corner of his robe.
    - iv) Let me add the next set of verses and then I'll tie the whole scene together.
17. Verse 4: The men said, "This is the day the LORD spoke of when he said to you, 'I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.'" Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul's robe. <sup>5</sup>Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe. <sup>6</sup> He said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the LORD." <sup>7</sup> With these words David rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way.
- a) There is a Jewish tradition that David's intent was to kill Saul, and as David got close, he was conscience-stricken and "only" cut off a corner of a his robe. It may be true, and it wouldn't surprise me if it were true. After all, David had been on the run for a long time. It must have been catching up with him. David also knew he would be king one day. Here was a chance to "bring it all" to an end. We'll discuss the "why" in a moment.
  - b) Verse 4 mentions some prophecy of God that states, "I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish."
    - i) It is not known when David was given this prophecy. We'll assume it's true.
    - ii) That prophecy did come to pass after David became king. It was not meant for this moment.
  - c) Onto the big question: Why did David spare Saul's life and only cut off part of his robe?
    - i) The only clue we get in the text is David saying, "He is the anointed of the LORD".
    - ii) The answer goes back to our discussion of God's will and God's timing.
      - a) David somehow understood that this was not God's timing for him to be king at this moment.
    - iii) What we (yes we!) have to understand is that God puts "Saul's" in our lives for a purpose. It is often to test us and mature us in our faith in God. Sometimes the "Saul's" of our own lives is our old human nature that we constantly have to fight in order for us to live God's will.
    - iv) I think David "got it". David understood that living God's will means waiting on God's timing and not to act on David' timing.
      - a) OK, so how do you know this was God's timing? It seemed like the logical opportunity as God "put" Saul right into his hands.
      - b) Here's something to consider: If David killed Saul, the Israelites would think that David was not anointed king, but just became king because he rebelled against Saul and killed him. Remember that in order to be a king, one has to be accepted as king. I believe that thought made David realize that this was not "God's timing" here.
      - c) The point for you and I is that sometimes in order to realize what is God's will, the answer is to "think it out". Like David, you may have this guilty conscience saying, "something's not right, this is not God's will", or it may be time just to stop and "think it out".

- d) Imagine how tough this moment must have been for David's men. They've been on the run too. I can hear them saying, "You didn't kill Saul? What do you mean you didn't kill Saul? How could you not kill him after all we've been through!"
    - i) Give David credit for leadership skills for not allowing his men to attack Saul.
    - ii) Further, give God credit for David's men to trust in David and restrain themselves from taking matters into their own hands.
  - e) One more issue and then we'll move on. David didn't kill Saul, but he just cut off the corner of his robe.
    - i) When you see an American army general, you know his rank by how many stars are on his soldiers. The Jewish wardrobe had a similar concept. They wear their "rank" on the hem of their robe. Even today, many religious Jews decorate the fringes of their robes with family history or bible references. The point is David's cutting of Saul's robe was symbolic of David "cutting off" Saul's power.
18. Verse 8: Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, "My lord the king!" When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground.
- a) Now David took a very bold move. He went out of the cave and presented himself to Saul. Maybe David was "moved" by the fact he didn't kill Saul. Maybe David figured, "I'm tired of being a fugitive. If I tell Saul how I spared his life, maybe he'll spare me."
  - b) What I want you to consider is the fact that David was doing "God's will" by not killing Saul and David was now willing to take a leap of faith for God. Often we are most emboldened with power from God when we are doing God's will.
19. Verse 9: He said to Saul, "Why do you listen when men say, 'David is bent on harming you'?"
- a) From Verse 9 to Verse 14 is all one speech by David, pleading for his life.
  - b) Notice in Verse 9 David says, "Why do you listen when men..."
    - i) What David is doing is giving Saul a "get out of jail free card". ☺
    - ii) David knows it was Saul's idea to kill David. By David saying, "It is your advisor's fault and not your fault for wanting to kill me", David is giving a potential excuse so Saul could "save face" in front of his men.
  - c) You have to wonder if David thought of this speech right at the moment, or was it planned. This whole speech is brilliant.
    - i) What I personally suspect is that David had a lot of time to think in those caves. I suspect that David planned out what he would like to say to Saul if David ever got the chance. Here God gave David the chance, and the speech blurted out.
20. Verse 10: This day you have seen with your own eyes how the LORD delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, 'I will not lift my hand against my master, because he is the LORD's anointed.'
- a) David is telling Saul publicly how he could have killed Saul and some of David's men have urged him to do so.
  - b) David also reminded Saul that he (Saul) is "God's anointed".
  - c) Notice the combination of "I spared your life" and "You are God's anointed".
  - d) All of this makes a great persuasive speech to keep David alive.
21. Verse 11: See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you. Now understand and recognize that I am not guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life. <sup>12</sup> May the LORD judge between you and me. And may the LORD avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you. <sup>13</sup> As the old saying goes, 'From evildoers come evil deeds,' so my hand will not touch you. <sup>14</sup> "Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea? <sup>15</sup> May the LORD be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand."

- a) David is arguing publicly how he is not guilty of rebellion. Saul's soldiers were probably told that David is guilty of treason. Here is David showing how he spared Saul's life.
- b) Here David invokes the name of God and says in effect, "Look, if I have committed a sin, let God judge me." A minor point here is that it is not wrong to invoke God's name, it is only wrong to invoke it in vain, as Saul did when he "blesses" the Ziphites.
- c) Some New Testament verses came to mind here:
  - i) Paul said, "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:19-21, NIV)
  - ii) I believe David is applying the principal of "overcoming evil with good" here.
  - iii) Let's face it, David could have killed Saul and have been done with it. Instead he "does what is good" and has his life spared, as we'll read in a few verses.
  - iv) This leads us back to the picture of Saul as a "type of our old human nature". You can't defeat that nature with sin. You have to overcome it with the goodness of God.
    - a) Let me give an example: When someone you know hurts you or just insults you. The natural reaction is to hurt them back. This usually elevates the argument. Our "ego's" want to win. God is teaching the opposite. He is teaching, "Overcome evil with good".
    - b) If we can learn to compliment when others are insulting us, not only doesn't defuse the situation, the other person thinks, "Hey, if that were me, I would insult them back. How do they have joy in moments like that? Can you teach me to have that type of joy?" That is a good witness for Christ!
    - c) OK, how do we do that practically? Go back to Romans 12. It states "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay" (a quote from Deuteronomy 32:35). The point is we rely on God to remedy the situation, not us. That way, God gets the glory for the healing. I believe David understood that principal and that gave him the boldness to go stand "toe to toe" with Saul.

22. Verse 16: When David finished saying this, Saul asked, "Is that your voice, David my son?" And he wept aloud.<sup>17</sup> "You are more righteous than I," he said. "You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly."<sup>18</sup> You have just now told me of the good you did to me; the LORD delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me.<sup>19</sup> When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed? May the LORD reward you well for the way you treated me today.

- a) In summary, Saul got convicted. The fact that David spared his life was enough to change Saul's mind, at least for the moment.
- b) Remember that Saul was David's father in law.
  - i) When David started this speech in Verse 11, David called Saul "my father".
  - ii) In Verse 16, Saul answered that and called David his son.
  - iii) In the past few chapters when Saul thought of David as a nobody, he referred to David as "the Son of Jessie" meaning "the son of a nobody".
- c) These verses are an "epilogue" to the point I was making prior to verses:
  - i) The way to overcome evil is with "good". The only way to quench the desires of the flesh (be it from yourself or from others) is to "kill them with kindness". That is the big word-picture we see from this section of the text.

- ii) I will be the first to admit this is difficult. The natural reaction is to want to take revenge. This methodology is only possible by letting the Spirit of God work through us. One should not try this based on one's own strength.
  - iii) Let me give you a prayer. "Lord, I am really hurt by what that person did to me. I give you that pain. Now fill me with your love so that you may be glorified in this situation". Another example might be to try praying for that person there on the spot. The point is we need to let God's love conquer our enemies.
23. Verse 20: I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands. <sup>21</sup> Now swear to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants or wipe out my name from my father's family." <sup>22</sup> So David gave his oath to Saul. Then Saul returned home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.
- a) Verse 20 is interesting. It states that Saul knew that David would be king one day.
    - i) If Saul knew in the back of his mind that David was going to be king, why was Saul hunting him down? This is why Saul is a word-picture of one who is deliberately fighting God's will. Our "human nature" is saying, "Yes I know God wants us to do it this way, but I want to do it that way". In a single word: sin.
  - b) Verse 21 is Saul asking David for an oath that when he becomes king, he would not wipe out Saul's descendants. David agrees in Verse 22.
    - i) This is similar to an oath between Jonathan and Saul that took place back in Chapter 20. It was common practice when a new king comes on the throne to kill the family members of the old king so he won't seek revenge. Saul is asking that here on the spot.
    - ii) In 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel, Chapters 21:7-9, we'll read of David killing some of the children of Saul, but sparing the remaining son of Jonathan. This is not a contradiction to the vow here in Verse 22. It was "God's will" to kill those specific sons who rebelled against David the king. Here is an example where God's will has greater authority than any oath we can make. More in that we get to 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel.
  - c) Verse 22 is the interesting closer: "David and his men went up to the stronghold."
    - i) To paraphrase David's thoughts: "Gee Saul, thanks for sparing our lives. By the way, we don't trust you and we're staying here in En Gedi just to make sure". ☺
    - ii) A key word for Christian salvation is "repentance". That means to change one's way of living. It is one thing to make a vow that Jesus is your Lord, it is another to live like it. When people commit their lives to God, the moment of salvation begins when they start to act on that belief. Yes it means we fail terribly as we try, but the point is where acting on it and not giving "lip service".
    - iii) Was Saul sincere in his vow to not kill David? At the moment, yes he was. By Chapter 26, Saul is trying to kill him again.
      - a) David has learned from watching Saul's past. Several times when David lived in the palace, Saul tried to kill him. David knew of Saul's previous vows to spare David's life and how those vows were temporary.
  - d) The final word-picture of the day has to do with "trusting the flesh".
    - i) Saul was using "self-disciple" to change his life. It never works. Saul, as a model of our old human nature cannot change on its own.
    - ii) One of the interesting bible word-pictures is that God speaks of giving us a "new heart" when we become saved (Ezekiel 18:31, 36:26) as opposed to trying to repair the old one (Jeremiah 17:9). The point is our old human nature is "beyond repair" and the only way we can live the life pleasing to God is by letting God work through us. For more details, read the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), which are all examples of letting God work through our lives for His Glory.

- e) Time to summarize. This lesson focuses on God's will. The secret of living God's will and having God's power "in our hands" is all about living a life for God, learning to live on God's timing and letting the Spirit of God work through us. The rest is details. ☺
24. Let's pray: Heavenly Father, we desire that Your will be done in our lives. Help us to remember that we are embodied with Your power. Show us areas of our lives that we control and need to be turned over to You. Help us to have the patience to work on Your timing so that in all of our lives You get the glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.