

# 1 Samuel 23

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[0:00] So, please do turn to chapter 23 of the book of 1 Samuel. Our normal Sunday messages are in the book of Matthew.

! But once a month or so we are continuing an excursion through the book of 1 Samuel, which is actually a continuation of our study in Judges, which is actually a continuation of our study in Ruth. So we'll just see how far we get. And today we'll be in 1 Samuel. This is our 15th session. If you've missed any of them, or in fact all of them, then you will find that they're on the Spotify and iTunes podcast, which is accessible from our website.

There's not really a lot else on the website at the moment, but hey, that's what's important, right? So, chapter 23. What have we seen so far?

Well, we've seen David begin his flight from King Saul. King Saul is the currently anointed king, and he's got this murderous jealousy of David, because he knows that God is calling someone better than him to the throne.

[1:12] There's no reason to think that Saul knows for sure that it is David, but I think if he's got a brain on his shoulders, he's probably figured it out. And certainly we will read that explicitly in a couple of chapters that he knows.

We've seen Saul's own son and daughter, Jonathan and Michal, both help David. Michal, of course, is actually David's wife as well. They both thwarted their own father and helped David to escape. Jonathan, in particular, has been a very close friend to David, and we've talked about that. Now, last time, in our last study, we covered chapters 21 and 22.

Tony took us through those, and we read about how David was assisted by a priest by the name of Ahimelech at a place called Nob. And there he ate the showbread.

He was given the sword of Goliath. But there was a spy by the name of Doeg, the Edomite. And he betrayed David to Saul. And then Saul ordered the deaths of all of the priests there.

[2:19] And then Doeg was like, I can go one better than that. And he wiped out the entire town. A great evil, a very, very dark day. But this shows you, I guess, just the extent of how far from God Saul is.

And then we read how one of Ahimelech's sons, named Abiathar, escaped. He was the only one to escape, we believe. And he came to David.

And that is where we left off. So, where are we right now? David is in a place called the Forest of Hereth. Or possibly just the city of Hereth.

Interestingly, the difference between the words for forest and city in Hebrew is just the swapping of two letters. So, it could be either, actually. The Maserati, Texas, forest.

Anyway, whatever. And that's where we saw him last time. Verse 5 of the previous chapter. Today, we're going to cover just the one chapter.

[3:21] And we're going to continue to see David's flight from Saul. And amazingly, he's going to take the time to rescue this town called Kyla.

A very risky move from the natural perspective. Why would you do that? Why would you do that? And what can we learn from it? Actually, a ton. So, we'll see how we go.

Logos Bible tells me my sermon is going to take 44 minutes. We'll see. We'll see about that. So, verse 1.

Then they informed David, saying, Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Kyla and are plundering the threshing floors. So, David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go and attack these Philistines?

And the Lord said to David, Go and attack the Philistines and save Kyla. But David's men said to him, Behold, we are fearful here in Judah. How much more, then, if we go to Kyla against the ranks

of the Philistines?

[ 4 : 24 ] So, David inquired of the Lord once more. And the Lord answered him and said, Arise, go down to Kyla, for I am going to hand the Philistines over to you. Then David and his men went to Kyla and fought the Philistines, and he drove away their livestock and struck them with a great slaughter.

So, David saved the inhabitants of Kyla. Okay, so, in the forest of Hereth, David hears word about Kyla from messengers unknown.

They, in our text. Now, Kyla is a city that's mentioned in Joshua chapter 15, where we read that it is a city in the lowlands of Judah, and it has villages of its own.

So, Joshua 15, if you want to look that up. Today, the location is generally accepted as a place I can't pronounce. It would be Herbet Kyla, I suppose that would say.

And you can visit its ruins today, although I couldn't find any pictures on the internet, which I was most disappointed about. I have got other pictures to show you, so fret not.

[ 5 : 34 ] But I couldn't find one that was definitely of Kyla or Herbet Kyla either. The meaning of Kyla is actually citadel. Easy for you to say.

Citadel. So, it is a strong and a secure place, and we'll see that later, and it is relevant. Now, let's take a little look at the map to orient ourselves.

I have no idea how visible that's going to be. Answer, not very. So, what can we see on the map? We can see Forest of Horef there.

We can see Kyla there. How far is that? It's, I don't know, a few dozen miles, I suppose. But you can see how the terrain is very, very mountainous in that region, and I do have some photos.

We'll see some other places that we're going to see soon, the wilderness of Ziff, the wilderness of Ma'on, and today we will end in En Gedi over there. So, that's sort of the bit that we'll be studying today.

[ 6 : 32 ] Oh, and also you can see Philistia here, which is roughly where Gaza is today. In fact, there is the city of Gaza. And the Philistines are pushing in to Israel, and they've come to Kyla there.

So, perfect. What have I not covered? Oh, the Philistines, we've talked about who they are before. The Philistines, obviously we read about Goliath.

We talked about them at length. Goliath was their strong man from Gath, and David defeated him, and for a time they were subdued. But they have been an ongoing enemy to Israel.

We've seen David, when he was brought into Saul's army, David led a number of campaigns against the Philistines. And so there's just been this battle that's been ongoing between them. Oh, and also, I think the thing to note is that they are, this is the promised land.

This is all Israel. Including that bit there that says Gaza. But what we read in the book of Judges is that they were allowed by God to remain to test Israel.

[ 7 : 45 ] They were to be removed. God had said they should come out. They are a sinful people. The Canaanites, the Philistines, all these different ites that we read about. But because Israel were unfaithful, God allowed some nations to remain as a test for Israel to see whether they would be faithful.

Judges chapter 3, we've talked about it before, so I won't go into detail about that again. So, Kyla, they are plundering the threshing floors. The city itself is secure, but what they're doing is they're raiding the surrounding villages.

They are plundering, if you like, the farming assets, the food supplies. They're being raided. And this would be a very valuable target because it would diminish Kyla's ability to defend itself and their ability to withstand a siege while also bolstering the provisions of the Philistines.

And they would time their attacks to take place after the hard labor of threshing is done. Oh, the lifting and the tossing of the grain up in the air to separate the wheat and chaff. All done.

All the men are tired. And then they get attacked. I think that's a bit mean. And in response to the news that Kyla is under attack, what does David do?

[ 9 : 04 ] He inquired of the Lord. What a wise man he is. David inquired of the Lord. A common word that simply means he asks. He asks of God. How does one do that?

How does one inquire of the Lord? If you survey the Old Testament, then you will find that there are plenty of examples where people will go to someone in order to do it.

Moses was one to whom all of the Israelites of the Exodus would go. And Moses got exhausted. Eleazar the priest, they went to him.

They would go to a prophet or a seer. If you remember back in chapter 9, we read about how Saul and his unnamed companion were looking for these donkeys.

And the companion was like, hey, hey, let's go and see the seer, Samuel. Why would they do that? To inquire of the Lord. The point being, he couldn't just, oh Lord, please tell me where the donkeys are. He needed to go.

[10:01] Interesting, isn't it? And actually later in chapter 28, we're going to read about Saul's frustration because he's trying all these different ways to inquire of God. And God's like, no, I'm not answering you.

Anyway, the point is, if someone wants to inquire of God, generally someone is required to facilitate that inquiry. Usually a priest. Now the priest had a garment called an ephod.

I have a picture coming. There we go. Here it comes. Look, there is the garments that the high priest would wear with many, many things. And I know that Ray recently talked about these.

So I'll just point out to you this beautiful multicolored apron-y type thing, which is the ephod. And the ephod was used as part of this inquiring of the Lord.

The means of how that is done is not recorded in Scripture. If you look for answers, you will find various ideas on that. The urim and the tumim, the breastplate of judgment, all these things could have been used.

[11:15] That's beyond what I want to talk about today. The point is, that was what the ephod was for. Now, we're going to read in verse 6 that when Abiathar came to David, he came with an ephod in his hand.

And David will subsequently use that ephod for inquiries. But that's then. That's verse 6. We're only in verse 2. How does David inquire of the Lord?

Well, actually, we don't know. It doesn't say. Josephus, the historian, he wrote that David consulted the prophet. Who be that then?

Well, we have had a prophet by the name of Gad mentioned, so it's possible. That's in chapter 22, verse 5, if you want to check it out. The point is that we don't know.

And I thought, I'm puzzling over this. But then I thought, that's not the point for the church. The point for us is, praise God, we don't need to worry about any of this stuff because we have access to God.

[12:20] We are able to just inquire of our Lord. We don't need anyone else. Galatians chapter 3 says that we are all one in Christ Jesus.

We don't have ranks. We don't have, we don't need to call anyone rabbi or teacher or father or priest or anything like that. We are all one. And Ray and I will teach the Bible as best as we're able and by the power that the Holy Spirit has given us and by the giftings he's given us.

But you were all able to seek the Lord. You were all able to read the word and you were all able to pray and you can go straight to God. And I think that's such a wonderful blessing.

And it's when we come across passages like this that I'm reminded that's an awesome thing. And I do think that the Old Testament saints would have been like, you get to do what? You can just go to God whenever you want it.

You don't have to come with a sacrifice. You don't have to go to the tabernacle. No. We just pray. Amazing, amazing things. Ephesians 2 verse 16.

[13:24] No, verse 18. For through him, Jesus Christ, we both, Jews and Gentiles, all have access in one spirit to the Father.

Amazing. It is amazing. If you have believed in Jesus Christ, if you have accepted that free gift that Jesus came to bring, the forgiveness of sins that he offers through his shed blood, then we have access.

You have access to the Father. You can pray to him. Now, we do share our prayers, don't we? We do share our prayers together. And I love that we do that. And we pray together for those things.

And I think there's a real blessing in doing that and sharing our burdens.

But we can come, all of us, to God directly. No need for an ephod or priest or anything in particular. Awesome. So, anyway, however he does it, David inquires of God.

He gets the word. And the men are afraid. The men are afraid. Are you sure, David?

[14:27] I mean, are you sure? And David goes back to God and he double-checks, I guess. And I think that this, we should highlight, for me, that highlights the grace of God.

He's not impatient. Bro, I told you once. I've told you once, I've told you a thousand times. God's not like that. God is a God of grace and patience. And he gently repeats the command.

And actually, he reinforces it and says explicitly, I am going to hand the Philistines over to you. And I think God is gracious. We don't need to fear to ask him to confirm things.

I think if we know that God is telling us to do a thing, it's best just to go get it done. But God isn't offended if we ask for him to confirm the word.

So, the word is confirmed and the men trust David enough to go with him. And off they go to Kyla.

Verse 6. Now, it came about when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David at Kyla that he came down with an ephod in his hand.

[15:38] And when it was reported to Saul that David had come to Kyla, Saul said, God has handed him over to me for he has shut himself in by entering a city with double gates and bars. So Saul summoned all the people for war to go down to Kyla to besiege David and his men.

So, here we go. And I've touched on that already. Abiathar coming down with the ephod. So Saul has his spies. Doesn't he? We don't know who it was this time. If you recall in the previous chapter we had Saul whinging that nobody would tell me what's going on.

Nobody would tell me when the son of Jesse... And I don't know if that sort of... I don't know.

Blackmailed a few people into actually going out. I don't know. Saul has his spies and he needs to whinge no more about that.

David entered a city with double gates and bars. Actually, it's a singular bar but I think if it said double gates and the bar we might misread that as a drinking establishment. Double gates and bars.

What does that mean? Well, it means, as I said, that Kyla is a citadel. It is a... I can't say that word. Citadel. It's a secure place and most likely those gates and bars will be locked at night which means that if Saul were to come and besiege the city at night David cannot get out.

[17:00] Secure. And Saul rubs his hands in glee and he interprets this turn of events as God showing him favour. In his mind he's thinking God caused the Philistines to attack Kyla to lure David there so that I can trap him.

Really, Saul? I think this is just another evidence of how deceived Saul is because the reality is David is the one who's acting like a king here going to save the people of Israel from the enemies of God.

The Philistines. David is acting like a king and Saul is just acting exclusively for his own interests his own sinful interests.

Anyway, he musters his men and off they go. Verse 9 But David knew that Saul was plotting evil against him so he said to Abiathar the priest bring the ephod here.

Then David said Lord God of Israel your servant has heard for certain that Saul is seeking to come to Kyla to destroy the city on my account. Will the citizens of Kyla hand me over to him?

[18:11] Will Saul come down just as your servant has heard? Lord God of Israel please tell your servant. And the Lord said he will come down.

And then David said will the citizens of Kyla hand me over hand me and my men over to Saul? And the Lord said they will hand you over. Then David and his men about 600 rose up and departed from Kyla and they went wherever they could go.

And when it was reported to Saul that David had escaped from Kyla he gave up the pursuit. Now this whole thing here I find absolutely fascinating almost certainly I find it more fascinating than a normal person would.

So I hope that the following 5-10 minutes or so will be interesting and illuminating for you. David's military intelligence is as good as Saul's.

He learns somehow that Saul is on his way. Israeli intelligence. So he seeks the Lord again this time explicitly with Abiathar's priestly assistance.

[19:23] Will Saul come down? Yes. Will the people of Kyla hand me over? Yes. But actually that never happens. Saul doesn't come down in the end he's like oh he's gone.

And the people of Kyla never hand David over. And what we encounter here is an example of what is known as middle knowledge. Now as I said it is a domain of philosophy which I find fascinating.

I have to go through a couple of bits and then I want to apply it and show you why it is something that we can rejoice in. So we know and we believe that God is omniscient.

Omniscient meaning everything. Science just means knowledge. He has all knowledge. He knows everything. Omniscience. Cool. What does that really mean though?

What does it really mean to say God knows everything? Well there are three categories of knowledge. The first one is natural knowledge which is the laws of nature. It is the things that are true.

[ 20 : 30 ] The things that are true within creation because God has set it that way. So it's maths. It's the things of science. He knows it all because God made it all of course.

Then there is a thing called free knowledge and that means that God knows everything that happens in time. Past, present, future, everything that happens God knows it.

All choices that will be made, everything that will be done, God knows it all. And then the third thing, middle knowledge. And that means God knows everything that would happen in various circumstances.

If things were different, what would happen? God knows. Middle knowledge. Technically, these are known as counterfactuals. That is to say, situations or circumstances that are contrary to fact.

Example, if it had rained this morning, I would have brought an umbrella. It didn't rain. It kind of did rain this morning. Poor example. But the point, how about this?

[ 21 : 33 ] If it had been sunny, I would have worn my sunglasses. There you go. It wasn't sunny. Counterfactual. Anyway, moving swiftly through the theory. Why do we care about this?

Why do we care that God knows what would happen? And I hope you agree we've seen it, right? God knew that if Saul came down, the people of Kyla would hand over David to them.

And therefore, because God knew it, because he revealed it to David, David was able to hightail it out of there. Why do we care? Well, because it helps to answer one of the most challenging questions of theology.

if God has a perfect knowledge of the future, knowing precisely what is going to happen, how is it then that people can really meaningfully have the ability to make free decisions?

How can I exercise my will in any meaningful way if the future is fixed and set and God knows it all?

If it is predestined, if it is fate, how can I really make a free choice?

[ 22 : 43 ] As an example, Judas Iscariot, did he exercise his free will when he betrayed Jesus Christ? If he did, then how on earth could it be prophesied in advance?

How can Peter say in 1 Peter 20 that Jesus Christ's precious blood was foreknown before the foundation of the world? But if Judas made a choice in time, but then if we say it was foreordained, then surely Judas had to betray Christ, and then how could he have a choice?

And if he had no choice, how could he be found guilty? It's a conundrum. It is a conundrum. And just to show you a verse, Judas was definitely guilty. Matthew 26, 24 says, the Son of man, this is Jesus speaking, is going away just as it is written about him.

Indeed, it was prophesied. But woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been good for that man if he had not been born. So it is foreordained, it is pre-written, it is prophesied, of course we know this, and Judas is guilty.

How do we understand this? Well, again, I want to give you just a few notes for you to take away, because I want to stop with the theory and get to some practical application.

[ 24 : 07 ] Middle knowledge is also known as Molinism, M-O-L-I-N-I-S-M, and it's named after a guy called Luis de Molina. He developed it, and he found that it provided a satisfactory solution that does not diminish God's sovereignty, and it does not impinge on man's ability to freely choose.

So if we take the example of Judah, Judah, Judas, then we know that God knew how Judas would act in all possible circumstances.

He knew that if Judas was there at that time, at that place, he would choose freely to betray Jesus Christ. middle knowledge.

A modern philosopher and theologian William Lane Craig said of Molinism, this theory, that it is one of the most fruitful theological ideas ever conceived, for it would serve to explain not only God's knowledge of the future, but divine providence and predestination as well.

So I share that for your own research if you're interested, if you're as geeky as I am about these things, Dr. William Lane Craig, he writes and publishes extensively in the area of apologetics.

[ 25 : 25 ] His website is reasonablefaith.org. I actually really appreciate a lot of his teaching, however, there are some things that we would differ greatly on. He doesn't hold to biblical six-day creation, for example, his eschatology is different.

So again, it's one of those cases where listen with understanding, test all things, hold fast to what is true. Right, enough of the theory.

Why on earth do we care about this? Why do we care? Well, let me tell you this, David certainly cared, because it meant he could get out of there. God's middle knowledge saved his life, but I think this is the key thing for us.

God is never caught off guard. God is never surprised, because God knows what is going to happen, and he knows what would happen if different things were true.

in different circumstances, how would it go? God knows perfectly. And if you just take a moment to think of a hardship or a difficult situation that you're facing right now, and maybe you're thinking, man, if only things were different then I would feel much better, or whatever it is.

[ 26 : 38 ] You're claiming middle knowledge in this case. I would know. Only God, I think, has this depth of knowledge. Let me give you a trivial example. True story.

I finish a hard day of work at the office. I'm so tired. I come down to my bike under the office, and it has a flat tire. Pain.

It's three miles, and now I've got to push my bike up the hill. Turns out it's uphill both ways to my office. And I could think, oh, man, how frustrating it is.

But what would have happened if I had cycled home that day? What drivers would I have met on the road? What hazards or risks would I have encountered?

I don't know. So I can make a choice to whinge and whine and grumble, or I can say, Lord, I know that you know what would have happened had this tire been inflated. And I'm going to trust you that this is the best thing for me.

[ 27 : 40 ] and push my bike up that hill. I'm going to be late. And this is a faith response, right?

But what I hope this has done is help you to have a foundation for that faith response. God knows what would have happened. He knows what would have happened if you had got that job or if you had married that person or if you had not been sick or if that trauma hadn't have happened.

God knows all the would haves and the could haves. We don't know really. God does know. All of us I think are familiar with this verse Romans 8 28.

We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose. And I believe that this understanding the depth of God's knowledge, that he knows not only what is, but what would be, really illuminates this.

gives me a new understanding, the breadth of God's knowledge, and the things that God allows into our lives, the things that God prevents, some of which we will never understand, the things that God has prevented.

[ 28 : 53 ] He works all through all of this with his knowledge of how it would be to bring about good. He works all things together for good. Awesome.

Anyway, I hope that was useful. Verse 14. Verse 14. Oh, sorry, one other thing, just briefly.

Just a quick note. We did read just there in verse 13 that David has now got 600 men. David and his 600 men rose up and departed from Kyla.

Back in the previous chapter, verse 2, we read that he had 400 men. So we're seeing an accrual of new sympathizers to David's cause. We're seeing growth.

All right, verse 14. David stayed in the wilderness in the strongholds and remained in the hill country in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul searched for him every day, but God did not hand him over to him.

[ 29 : 53 ] So this verse is serving to introduce for us the rest of the chapter. We're going to read of two strongholds in particular as we go. There's a stronghold of Horesh and the stronghold of En Gedi.

Stronghold here means a place of natural protection due to it being difficult to access. So think the crags on top of a mountain. Actually, I've got some, I told you I had some pictures, didn't I?

Here is a natural stronghold in the Judean desert. And you can see how difficult that would be to access. Just for scale, you can see that little footpath that goes, winding up there. It's huge.

And that is an example of a stronghold. Which one is that? I've got no idea. Sorry. I pulled that from bibleplaces.org I think. Now, what is the rest of the terrain like?

A couple of pictures. This here is a place today known as Tel Zif. It's modern Zif. So that's an idea of the topology. Lots of mountains, as you can see, lots of hills.

[ 30 : 59 ] Here's another picture. This is a place called Nahal Mishmar, which is just a few miles, I think it's about 12 miles east of Maon, which we've read about. And this really shows you the difficulty of the terrain.

Try traversing across that. But this is the kind of terrain that we're talking about in the hill country of Judah. And Saul is searching every day, and God does not hand David over. and I think what this verse is doing is rightly emphasizing that God's hand is in this protection that David is enjoying.

God is frustrating the plans of Saul. Saul has all of the army of Israel at his disposal, as well as evidently spies who are faithful to him and are willing to betray David.

And so the emphasis falls on God being the protector. we know that David is a very militarily savvy man, very, very confident and competent with both strategy and tactics, I am sure, but ultimately it is God keeping him safe.

[ 32 : 11 ] And verse 15 then. Now, David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life while David was in the wilderness of Zeph at Horesh. And Jonathan Saul's son set out and went to David at Horesh and encouraged him in God.

He said to him, do not be afraid because the hand of Saul, my father, will not find you and you will be king over Israel and I will be second in command to you.

And Saul, my father, knows that as well. Not really. So the two of them made a covenant before the Lord and David stayed at Horesh while Jonathan went to his house.

And this is the last recorded time that David and Jonathan meet. And the first thing that Jonathan says to him is, do not be afraid.

I've mentioned before that the author of this book never explicitly says that David was afraid. This is probably for political reasons.

[ 33 : 13 ] David is never noted as explicitly being afraid. Actually, the only time in the Bible I can find where it says that David was afraid is of God. And that is when he tries to move the ark.

If you know the story, you know what happens. But David is never noted as being afraid of Saul. But realistically, I am sure he was exhausted and tired and afraid.

I don't know how long this game of cat and mouse has been going on. The scriptures don't tell us. But I suspect we're talking a couple of years.

I think it's a long period that we are following. And at this moment, Jonathan comes and he brings encouragement.

Saul's hand won't find you. Well, you know, I wasn't sure what to make of this encouragement, if I'm honest. Because Saul very certainly does find David.

[ 34 : 13 ] Multiple times, actually. But I guess we could argue that his hand won't in the sense of grasping and getting power over him. So that won't happen. You will be king.

Yes, of course, that is true. I will be second in command to you. Sadly, this will not come to pass. Spoiler alert. Unfortunately, it is not until the death of Saul and his sons that David is finally established on the throne.

But we do see that comment there, and Saul knows this. Saul knows this as well. Saul, we are told, knows that David will be king.

How does he know? When did he come to this conclusion? It's never explicitly said that this is when he was told. I can only assume, I can only infer that he's inferred it.

Anyway, and they cut a covenant together there. They've made covenants before, and we've talked about the meaning of that in a previous study. So we can head right on to verse 19.

[ 35 : 17 ] Then Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeath, saying, Is David not keeping himself hidden with us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is south of Yeshimon?

Easy for you to say once again. Now then, O king, come down, since you fully desire to do so, and our part shall be to hand him over to the king. Saul said, May you be blessed of the Lord, since you have had compassion on me.

Go now, be more persistent, and investigate and see his place where he is hiding, and who has seen him there, for I am told that he is very cunning. So look and learn about all the hiding places where he keeps himself hidden, and return to me with certainty, and I will go with you, and if he is in the land, I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah.

Wow. So, David is being encouraged by his faithful friend and companion, Jonathan. The locals decide to betray David to Saul, and they go all the way to Gibeah.

That is Saul's hometown, from which he is reigning. They go all the way to Gibeah. And again, note, we've given some very, very specific names and places, a specific hill south of Yeshimon.

[ 36 : 36 ] Yeshimon means desert, so it might actually just simply say the desert. Anyway, now we could argue that the people of Ziph here are being faithful servants of the anointed king.

But we won't. We could argue that they are acting in fear of a tyrant. I'm sure they heard of what happened in Nove. Don't want that. We like our village and are humans.

we don't really want that. But if you look at the, I don't know, to me as I read this, oh king, come down. I thought, this feels like more of a cordial collaboration.

Oh, come down and do your desire. We will do our part. And Saul notes that this is out of compassion rather than of fear of him. As a bit of background reading, you might jot down Psalm 54.

Psalm 54, according to the title, is written by David and it's about this whole period when the Ziphites betrayed him. And in that psalm, Psalm 54, it's a prayer for help from strangers.

[ 37 : 51 ] I thought, that's an interesting turn of phrase, given that these are Judahites. And David, of course, is also from Judah. Strangers. And yes, they are strangers, not in the sense of familial, but stranger in the sense of to the covenant.

Strangers and violent men. But they have become strangers because they betrayed him. And then Saul's comment, may you be blessed of the Lord.

Oh, man, I have a problem with that. Saul is outside the will of God. Saul knows that he's been rejected as king. He knows that God has said to him directly, you're out.

I'm seeking someone better than you. And yet he talks as though he's within fellowship. Oh, may you be blessed of the Lord. No, you're not within the will of God.

And then secondly, his comment about compassion. This is badly misplaced. Is Saul deserving of compassion or mercy, as the word could equally be translated?

[ 38 : 56 ] A word that someone might ask for mercy if they are being persecuted or attacked or whatever it is. You looked upon poor me and had compassion.

Me with my huge army. And David's got 600 men. Saul's top priority remains himself and it certainly isn't the things of the Lord.

And I think his language again here just shows how deceived he is. So anyway, he commands us to go and gather further intelligence. Remember we read that Saul was searching every day?

Every day. Where is this guy? And now he's gone back to Gibeah. So I think Saul is probably quite a costly campaign. And he's like, well I'll come.

I want to catch this guy still, but I want the best intelligence that you can give me regarding where he is. I want to know all his hiding places.

[ 39 : 57 ] Anyway, verse 24. So they set out and went to Zeph ahead of Saul. Now David and his men were in the wilderness of Ma'on in the Arabah to the south of Yeshamon.

When Saul and his men went to seek him, they informed David, and he came down to the rock and stayed in the wilderness of Ma'on. And when Saul heard about it, he pursued David in the wilderness of Ma'on.

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, while Saul and his men were surrounding David and his men to apprehend them.

It's getting tense now. It's getting tense. The wilderness of Ma'on, the Arabah, to the south of Yeshamon. I can't tell you exactly where these places are.

There is a town as well in the scriptures by the name of Ma'on. We're going to meet a character by the name of Nabal soon. Chapter 25. The name means fool.

[ 41 : 02 ] If you know the story, you know. We'll get there. Arabah means desert plain. Yeshamon, again, means the desert. It's not sounding the nicest place to hang out, to be honest.

Whether these are place names or descriptive, I'm not sure, but you get a picture, and we've seen a picture of the landscape. It's barren. It's rocky. It's mountainous. Again, Bibleplaces.com if you want to see some more pictures.

But the tension that we read here, David and his men are in this hostile terrain. The inhabitants of the land have betrayed him. If he sees strangers, then most likely they're going to say, there he is,

there he is.

It's tense. What does he do? Verse 25, he came down to the rock. Oh, man, I don't think that the vocabulary here is accidental.

He came down to the rock. Listen to David's prayer here in 2 Samuel 22 verses 1 through 4. It says this, Now David spoke the words of this song to the Lord on the day that the Lord had saved him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.

[ 42 : 19 ] So this is David's prayer. He says, The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer. My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my saviour, you save me from violence.

I will call upon the Lord who is worthy to be saved and I am saved from my enemies. Hint towards one of our closing songs.

Couldn't resist. God is the rock and just another one from Psalm 71 verse 3. David says, I think this is the Psalm of David, I forgot to write it down.

be to me a rock of dwelling to which I may continually come. You have given the commandment to save me for you are my rock and my fortress or stronghold if you prefer.

And so David frequently talks and uses language that describes God as his rock, his place of sanctuary, his place of security, the rock that is fixed, that is unchanging and that is our God.

[ 43 : 40 ] And I hope that is something that you can amen as well, that God is that for you, a place, a God to whom you can go and know that you're received and loved and it is a place of peace and safety and sanctuary.

David and his men are surrounded and I think maybe both spiritually and physically he came down to the rock. So they are hurrying to get away though, they are surrounded, things are getting very, very tense.

Actually, the word hurry, I found out in verse 27, is used in other cases to mean flee with terror. So again, not explicitly saying that David is afraid, but heavily implying David is very, very, it's a tense time.

How will they escape? How indeed. Verse 27, But a messenger came to Saul saying, hurry and come for the Philistines have launched an attack against the land.

And so Saul returned from pursuing David and went to confront the Philistines. Therefore, they called that place the rock of division. And David went up from there and stayed in the strongholds of En Gedi.

[ 44 : 55 ] Well, God, the rock, he did intervene, didn't he? Because it just so happens that the Philistines would choose to pick that moment to launch an attack.

Imagine that. It's as if God knew. Defeated at Kyla, they've regrouped for another attack. Isn't it interesting? And I did ponder on this because I thought, why is it that Saul didn't go to Kyla and yet this time he does go?

I've no idea. I've no idea. Interesting, isn't it, the way that Saul would act. But God knows how people would act. All the parties are making their free decisions.

The Philistines are freely choosing to attack. Saul is freely making a decision, I should go and stop them. And God uses it to work this incredible deliverance. This is our God.

And they call this place the rock of division. And your Bible footnote will point out that the Hebrew could be translated, I think it says this, it could just as easily be translated as slippery rock.

[ 46 : 05 ] As in David was able to slip away. The word carries both meanings, division or slippery. Septuagint, the translators of the Septuagint, those ancient Hebrew scholars, much wiser than me, translated it as the divided rock.

We'll go with that. And then David ends up in a place called En Gedi. I couldn't resist a little cute goat picture.

Ein means spring, Gedi means a young goat. Ein Gedi, it is the spring of the young goats. And in the next chapter we're going to read of the rocks of the mountain goats or the ibex.

And yes, indeed there are goats there to this very day, as this picture shows us. Something of an oasis, I don't know if you remember from the map, but this En Gedi is right on the coast of the Dead Sea, which is the most salty place, the most salty water on earth.

And this is one here of one of I think only two freshwater springs in the region. So you have something of an oasis there. Anyway, we've come to the end of our text.

[ 47 : 19 ] Let's wrap it up. I've got five things if I haven't lost you. Things to take away. Number one.

I even made little slides for them. Number one. Points to take away. Number one is look to do good even in bad situations. We saw David lead his men to save Kyla when their own situation was, let's say, less than ideal.

David is acting like a king. Saul is only pursuing self-interests. And you and I shouldn't think that we are excused from doing what is right because of our situation makes it inconvenient or even difficult. They did the right thing. Now, David very wisely inquired of the Lord. There was an opportunity to do good, Lord. Should I do it? And God says, yes. And bearing in mind God knows all things. And what would happen if we did and what would happen if we didn't? We can confidently obey God. So the question is, is there anything that God is telling you to do that you are putting off? [ 48 : 30 ] Secondly, there is an encouragement in our text today to come freely and regularly before the Lord. And we noted and we spent some time, didn't we, on the great blessing that we have. To come unhindered to God.

No need to bring the right offering. Which one was it again in the book that I've got to? We can just come. We don't need a priest to tell us the will of God because the offering of Jesus Christ's blood has been given once for all and we have free access.

That veil is torn and we can go. It's an incredible blessing that would have blown the mind of Old Testament saints. We can go talk to God.

So, come freely. Come regularly. Listen for his voice as we read the scriptures because primarily that is how he will respond to us. Right.

Thirdly, God's way is not easy. I want you to note something and I didn't point this out as we went through.

[ 49 : 32 ] God said to David and the men, yes, go to Kyla. God's way is not going to go to the city and then they were in real trouble.

God's way isn't always easy, is it? Because we're following God's way, that doesn't mean it's going to be the easiest way. David wrote in Psalm 34 19 that the afflictions of the righteous are many, but the Lord rescues him from them all.

So, God's way is not always easy. Following God and doing right is no guarantee of avoiding affliction. Fourth, God's knowledge and wisdom is superior, capital letters, because it just blows my mind.

And I don't know if it's blown your mind, maybe, who knows, but I just think an understanding of the depth and the breadth of God's knowledge is just amazing. What would have happened?

What would have happened if David didn't go to Kyla? Maybe Saul would have found him anyway. Maybe a different spy would have found him and betrayed him. We don't know, and we don't need to worry about it, because God knows all the woods.

[ 50 : 45 ] God knows all the possible outcomes, and so we can be supremely confident in God's will. If he's saying to do something, you can rest assured that God knows every possible outcome.

He knows all the woods, and could's and should's. You don't know what's going to happen next. You don't know what happens if you don't do it. God knows it all, short-term, long-term. He knows everything.

I find this stuff fascinating. I've probably already spent too long on this. I'm sorry. Isaiah 57 verse 15 says of God that he dwells in eternity.

He dwells in eternity. God sits outside of this thing that we call time, and he sees the beginning, the middle, and the end all at once, and he knows every possible outcome.

God is and will never, ever be caught out by something. He will never be surprised. God knows it all. Maybe I've overstated it. I don't know.

[ 51 : 48 ] I don't think I can. But, you know, the reason that hard times come and the reason that things don't go away isn't because God missed something. And it may be sometimes things go bad because we didn't follow God's will.

Sometimes things go bad when we do follow God's will, like David, Kyla. But God knows it all. Moving on, Joe, come on. Verse 5. No, point five.

Point five. Oh, dear. Fifthly and finally, God encourages us through our brothers and sisters. We saw that just at the right time Jonathan arrived, didn't he, for David.

David was being sought after every day. It was hard. And Jonathan arrived just at the right time. Did Jonathan know that David needed encouragement at that time?

Did the Lord speak to Jonathan? We don't know. What we see is simply that Jonathan was obedient, let's say, to God's prompting, and he went. Was it a risk for Jonathan to go to David? [ 52 : 49 ] Almost certainly yes. Do you think that the prince can just freely go wherever he pleases? But he went anyway at risk. So the question then for us is, whom can you encourage today?

We are called to comfort one another, encourage one another. I think we do this wonderfully as a church. It blesses the socks off of me. But we are reminded once again in our study today. Thank you, Lord, for this glorious chapter. Lord, thank you for these things. I pray, Father God, that what we've talked about today has been useful. I pray that it's brought you honor and glory. I pray, Lord, that these points, Lord, that you would impress them on our hearts and that they would transform our walks.

Lord, may your spirit be with us and help us to live in a way that is aligned to the reality of such a wonderful, incredible God who knows all things.

May we walk boldly with confidence before our God who is just so awesome. In the name of Jesus, amen. Amen. Amen.