

Preaching Through The Bible

Michael Eaton

1 Samuel

Part 25

Learning From Experience (23:1-18)

- Five more aspects of David's training

1. David was given the work of a king before he was given the title of a king

- What counts our not the title but the work we do

2. His faith has to steadily increase

- Confirmation from God

3. He has to be ready to act on principles rather than upon circumstances

- A good illustration of the dangers of misinterpreting God's providence

At this point of David's story, he is being brought into new levels of training and preparation for the kingship. He is getting close - although he does not know it - to the days when he will be the king. Five more aspects of his training stand out.

1. David was given the work of a king before he was given the title of a king. The major task of the king of Israel at that time was to rid the land of the Philistines. Saul was neglecting that work, but David was given it. He is beginning to function like a king. It is David, not Saul who is told that the Philistines are robbing the village of Keilah^{¶1}. At such a time it is the work of a king to come to the rescue of his people and defeat their enemies. In the work of God, what counts is not the title we have but the work we are doing. Some have the title but do not do the work. At this point David has the work of a king but does not have the title.

¶1 23:1

2. His faith has to steadily increase. Now David takes on the responsibility for assisting Israel in its conflict with the Philistines. He consults God^{¶1} and gets an answer which encourages him to go forward. It requires greater faith than ever, as the comment of his men suggests^{¶2}. As a good leader he wants to encourage faith in his men also, so when they are doubtful he consults God again. He wants it to be doubly clear that God is with them. God gives confirmation that the plan has his approval^{¶3}, and the village is saved^{¶4}.

¶1 23:2

¶2 23:3

¶3 23:4

¶4 23:5

3. He has to be ready to act on principles rather than upon circumstances. His exploit of rescuing Keilah did not immediately bring anything beneficial to him. He knew what he had done was right. He had consulted with God and had got a clear answer. Abiathar the priest had the 'ephod'^{¶1}, a lightweight coat of some kind that had stones in it that could be thrown like dice. The way they landed could reveal the will of God. They could say 'yes', 'no' or give no answer. David knew what he did was right yet the results of what happened at Keilah did not seem very useful. It would soon become obvious that the people of Keilah were not eager to have David stay with them; it would bring them into danger.

¶1 23:6

Here is a good illustration of the dangers of misinterpreting God's providence. God might seem to be acting against David, for his energetic rescue of Keilah brought trouble upon him. God's providence seemed at this time to be working for Saul. Certainly Saul took it that way. He said 'God has delivered him into my hand'^{¶1}, and confidently made plans to capture David^{¶2}. He had not mobilised his army to rescue Keilah, but he was willing to mobilise his army to get David! He feels sure David has walked into a town that could be easily besieged, a place where David could easily be trapped. But the acts of God are easily misinterpreted by someone like Saul who is totally unrepentant. What David has done is right in and of itself. To decide whether it is right by 'interpreting providence' would be a mistake. God's approval or disapproval does not get discovered by our interpreting events without God's word.

¶1 23:7

¶2 23:8

4. David is learning to live by the guidance of God

- A good leader incorporates the wisdom learned from experience into his thinking

4. **David is learning to live by the guidance of God.** He had a resource Saul did not have. He knew God and could talk to God. God was not talking to Saul. David consults the ephod, and God is willing to answer^{¶1}. So David escapes and Saul gives up^{¶2}. However, Saul learns no lesson from this. He will not 'learn God's ways'^{¶3}.

¶¹ 23:9-12
¶² 23:13
¶³ Hebrews 3:10

For David these were days of learning how to live on God, and learn from experience. One can see how he had profited from the incident at Nob. Once before a city had been destroyed because of its identification with David. Now David's concern was that the same thing should not happen again. His question was, will Saul 'destroy the city because of me?' ^{¶1}. A good leader incorporates the wisdom learned from experience into his thinking.

¶¹ 23:10

5. David is learning to rise above ingratitude and live on the provisions of God

- No leader should ever live for the approval of people
- God knows how much we can bear and knows when to send help
- In all of this we are reminded of the 'Son of David' our Lord Jesus Christ
- A sympathetic King

5. **David is learning to rise above ingratitude and live on the provisions of God.** No leader should ever live for the approval of people, because they can cry 'Hosanna' one moment and 'Crucify him' the next. David cannot depend on people's gratitude. The people of Keilah gave him no recognition for what he did for them, and are willing to hand him over to Saul.

Yet life is not all betrayal, and God knows how to give us help when we need it. David was being daily hounded^{¶1}, and must have been asking 'Will this life of being daily hunted by Saul ever come to an end? Will I never see the fulfilment of God's promise that I will be the king?' On one occasion Saul is near^{¶2} but the one who arrives is not Saul but Jonathan^{¶3}! Who better to assure David that he will one day be the king, than Jonathan? God knows how much we can bear and knows when to send help '*in the time of need*'^{¶4}.

¶¹ 23:14

¶² 23:15

¶³ 23:16-18

¶⁴ Hebrews 4:16

In all of this we are reminded of the 'Son of David' our Lord Jesus Christ. He too 'learned obedience through the things he suffered,' and had enemies that watched his every move and wanted nothing other than to see him crucified. He too knew what it was to live on the daily rescuings of his heavenly Father. He too lived above the distractions of ingratitude and betrayal. It was the experience of David that would make him a sympathetic king. And it was the human experience of our Lord Jesus that makes him still a sympathetic King ever living to make intercession for us and send us help from the heavenly throne.



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Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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