

Title: The Temporal Cost of Following the Lord
Text: 1 Samuel 23:1-14
Theme: When it doesn't seem to matter if you do good
Series: 1 Samuel
Prop Stmtnt: Following the Lord, does not always make sense in the moment.

When you make sacrifices for people and they throw you under the bus anyway, it is really hard to comprehend that. David heard that his people were in danger. He inquired of the LORD. The LORD directed him to go and at great risk rescue people who had no hope but would not be loyal to him and would betray him. David's dependence on and obedience to God, brought an initial victory, but created an opportunity for disillusionment, disappointment and danger. It looks like a case of where no good deed goes unpunished. The very people you sacrifice for, burn you. What are you supposed think about that?

Read Text:

David is not the perfect leader that we want to imagine him to be. This season of running from Saul puts him and his men under severe strain and that pressure reveals some cracks in their faith as it would all of us. And yet, in spite of the strain, David does not cave in. Saul has already cracked under the pressure. David is sustained by the Word of the Lord. And yet, following the Lord does not always make sense in the moment, as we see. But there is more to life, than the moment. As a man after God's heart, David cares about others. But...

1. **Caring about others will cost you.** (1-14)

The contrast between David and Saul continues. Saul cares only about himself and he doesn't care who dies, even if it is 85 priests. Saul is loyal only to himself. David on the other hand cares about others. David was informed that the Philistines were fighting against Keilah (a fortified city in an agricultural area) and the Philistines were robbing the threshing floors. It's like going to the grain silos and stealing the grain. You were not only stealing food, you were stealing all of the work of the farmers and taking their means of income. He hears that the people of Keilah are in danger. Look at how verse 2 beings. *"Therefore David inquired of the LORD."*

A. **It will cost you prayer.** (2)

Caring about others will affect your prayer life. How much you actually pray for others tells you how much you actually love them. Beloved, we need to take that to heart. The plight of others captured the heart of David and he went to the Lord about it. Didn't David have enough to worry about? Saul wanted to kill him. Why should David be concerned about others when he legitimately could be concerned about himself and his men? Following the Lord and listening to the Lord drives you to prioritize the needs of others ahead of yourself because you really care

about them. You really care about their struggles. Do you pray only for those who reciprocate nicely to you? Jesus told us to even pray for our enemies. We don't pray for people we don't

care about. We are to care about people who don't care about us. There is nothing supernatural about caring for people who already care about you. But caring for others who don't? Who does that? Jesus – and his followers.

B. It will cost you risk. (2-5)

Whose job was it to protect Keilah? It was Saul's! But Saul was chasing an enemy in his own mind which blinded him to the real enemy in his land. David could have said, "Hey, not my problem!" In fact, if David was playing the political game, he could have let this play out since it would reflect poorly on Saul. But David loved his people and their plight captured his attention so much that he inquired of the Lord what he should do. And the Lord said, "*Go and attack the Philistines and save Keilah.*" David tells his men that they are about to launch a military expedition and they are not feeling it. Look, we are afraid in our own country. We've got enough problems with our own people; we don't need to add to our list of enemies. Besides, we don't have the rest of the army to back us up. This is really dangerous. So, David inquires of the Lord again and again the Lord answered him and said, "*Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the Philistines in your hand.*" So, in obedience to what God has revealed, David and his men go to Keilah and they fought with the Philistines. They risked their lives, but they were successful and they rescued the livestock of Keilah and struck the Philistines with a great blow. V.4 concludes by saying, "*So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah.*" David cared. He prayed. He got involved. He took a risk.

C. It will cost you heartache. (7-8; 11-12)

This is not a feel-good story. The joy of victory is short-lived. Word of David's exploits get back to Saul who rewards David's bravery with plans to attack David. David inquires of the Lord if Saul will come and if Saul does will the people of Keilah protect David or throw him under the bus. God says, "*He (Saul) will come down.*" and "*They will surrender you.*" Twice, God told David to go and rescue Keilah knowing that they will not be loyal to David. God sovereignly and wisely directed David to experience disloyalty and being unappreciated. Then, God spoke twice again. He told David that Saul would come down and that Keilah would turn him over to Saul. The heartache is two-fold.

1) Being attacked for doing the right thing. (7-8)

David obeys the Lord and his obedience not only helps the people of Keilah, but it saves Saul's bacon. David helps Saul out and Saul shows his appreciation by ordering "all the people to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men." It's like David now gets attacked for doing the right thing. Did you notice what Saul said? "*God has given him into my hand.*" (7) Saul could not have been more wrong or more misunderstanding of what was really happening. Here he is

claiming favor from God for his plan to kill God's anointed. But, when you are on the receiving end of the attack, words like that hurt. But the heartache is worse.

2) Experiencing the selfishness of others. (11-12)

"They will surrender you." Really? They would actually do that? What kind of appreciation is that? We risked our lives for them. We did not have to do this. This was Saul's responsibility. We were doing what he should have been doing because he was too focused on trying to kill me. I had my own guys warning me that this was a very dangerous operation and yet we came anyway and what do we get for it? This is it! They will surrender me? So, David and his men left. Keilah was a fortified city. It could have been a great place for David and his men to be protected, but instead, no good deed goes unpunished, and they leave trying to figure out where to go. Imagine David's next session with his therapist. "It sounds to me like you have a hero-complex. Do you feel that you have to be the one who always rescues others? Perhaps you need to learn to put up some personal boundaries in your life so you have a safe space where selfish people cannot come in and hurt you or disappoint you." Yea, let me know how that works, right?

The life of a Christian is marked by following Christ. Christ gave his life for selfish people. Christ came and lives with selfish people. Christ loved, sacrificed for and was betrayed by selfish people. But, just like Christ, there is more to the story. There is more to life than the moment.

Some of you feel worn down and worn out by the selfishness of others. In some cases, they don't know it. They only see their own lives. They are demanding because they simply do not take the time to consider others. This was part of the weight that Jesus bore. He, perfectly selfless, lived with those who were selfish. They were loyal if you did what they wanted, like feed them and heal them. But, in reality they were loyal only to themselves. It is a heartache. It is a reality. We should not be surprised by it, but accept this reality as an opportunity to understand the heart of Christ and experience a taste of his life. But there is more to the story than suffering. When you depend on the Lord...

2. God provides you with what you need in the moment. (2b-14)

A. **God provided clear guidance.**

God says that when we lack wisdom that we need to ask him because he will give it to us and will do so freely. That is a request that we could and should ask several times every day. I need wisdom as a husband, as a parent, as a grandparent, as a son, as a son-in-law, as a neighbor, as a pastor, as a citizen, as a fellow believer, as a counselor, as someone who gets counsel, as a student of God's Word, as a teacher of God's Word. It is difficult to think of too many situations where I don't need God's wisdom. I need it all the time. In David's case, God gave very explicit direction. He told David to "go and attack the Philistines." There were clearly times before God's Word was completely revealed when God spoke directly like this, sometimes through prophets, sometimes through visions and dreams. But, now, we have the advantage of God's

Word and it is an advantage. In David's case, God spoke, but the text makes it sound as if, David was the only one who heard, so his band of brothers were not convinced that this was such a good idea. "Are you sure you heard that right?" "Are you remembering correctly?" We don't have that issue because we have the advantage of God's Word. We can go back and read it again. What a good promise for us. God gives us direction and, in this case, he gave assurance.

B. God provided assurance.

It did sound a little crazy (actually a lot of crazy) to attack the Philistines. So, David asked the Lord again and the Lord spoke again. I don't think David was doubting God, but was asking for the sake of his men. What a kindness of God to provide the assurance for David and his soldiers because this was a great way for their faith in God to be bolstered. Obviously, it was because they did what God told them to do. But, why? Why would God do that? Why would God send them to rescue a people who would be so ungrateful and unfaithful? I think one of the reasons was this. God brought David to Keilah so Abiathar could meet him there and be protected from Saul and so that David would now have the presence of a faithful priest who could help with discerning what God's will was. God gave David guidance, and assurance but now...

C. God provided a means for additional guidance.

God used this occasion of disloyalty by Keilah and Saul to join Abiathar to David who would prove to be an exceedingly loyal counselor for David for the rest of his life. Abiathar was the one priest who escaped Doeg's slaughter and Abiathar fled with the ephod, which was one of the means that an OT priest had to inquire of the Lord. When Abiathar fled from Nob, he ran to Keilah. This was a gift to Abiathar and it was a gift to David. Notice that in v.9, David uses Abiathar right away. Abiathar was the means by which...

D. God provided needed insight.

Would Saul come? Yes. Would Keilah turn us over to him? Yes. So, even though God directed David to go to Keilah to rescue these ungrateful and unfaithful people, God also provided for David's protection. God promised David that he would be king and God used this for both his preparation as king and his protection to reign.

E. God provided ongoing protection.

The account concludes with two phrases that summarize this season. David and his men are going "wherever they could go" and "but God did not give them into his hand." Saul wrongfully concluded that God had given David into his hand, when in reality God was protecting David and frustrating Saul. David shows a resilient faith in this midst of this, but it is not a perfect one. The separation from his family, the accusations of being an enemy, the pressure from constantly being on the run wears on him. David, the boy who could do no wrong, who experienced amazing success is now experiencing something else. He is in a season of trial,

deep trial. He is suffering. This is what following the Lord looks like. He does not tell us everything up front. He tells us what we need in the moment and then meets us with grace for that moment. We have to trust him. Literally, have to trust him. But there is more to the story.

3. Suffering helps you love Christ.

Why does the Lord direct David to go to Keilah and rescue the people who will betray him to Saul if given the chance? Why does the Lord direct David to suffer disloyalty and serious discouragement? Yes, Abiathar met him there and brought him the ephod, but there is more to it than that. And this is what I want to help us embrace. Suffering is a gift from God that we cannot refuse, though we want to. It is a gift from God because, properly understood, it helps us love Christ and trust him instead of ourselves.

Every philosophical and religious system has to deal with the issue of evil. Hinduism and Buddhism have popularized the idea of karma, which is really rather hopeless. Karma is defined as the ongoing consequences of your past life. Any bad that you did in your life before this one (that you can't remember) and did not suffer for in your previous life is now going to catch up with you in this one. So, just accept that you must have been a real jerk. Many people think of Karma as "what goes around, comes around." There is truth to this. Jesus taught that you reap what you sow, but the reason we talk so much how to deal with suffering is because suffering is a major part of our life experience. Our ministry staff knows this firsthand because of the prayer requests that you share with us on a weekly basis. We all suffer and we are all deeply troubled by it. But wait. Think about that for a second. Why is that? Why is it that we all suffer (it's universal) and we are all deeply troubled by it? If it is universal, we are we so surprised like it's something strange? It's like being upset that the sun rises and sets every day. This is what happens. The fact that it happens to everyone, so often, should mean that we would be used to it by now – right? But we are not used to it. We expect that we should receive good results for good actions. We expect that the bad actions done by bad people should result in bad consequences for the bad people. When good people suffer and bad people don't, we can get very disillusioned. Why does that bother us so much? Because...

There was a time when there was no suffering. There was a time when everything that God made was very good and it all worked together perfectly, harmoniously, joyfully and peacefully. We were made for that. That perfect creation still calls to us. Then came the rebellion. Adam and Eve cut the umbilical cord of spiritual life that sustained them with the holiness, righteousness, joy and peace of God. They were made to enjoy God but tried to live in a manner that was in rebellion and therefore in conflict with who they are. The entrance of sin into this world rocked the tectonic plates of creation. Adam and Eve meant it for evil. This was a calculated decision. Adam and Eve had known the person and presence of God unlike any other human being in history. Their conversations with God were a daily occurrence. They were taught directly by him. They had a personal relationship with God that was perfect and was therefore, perfectly unhindered by any unbelief or barrier. Adam chose to turn his back on that. It was not a slip of the tongue, mistake in the moment, oops, my bad sort of thing. This was a

high-handed sin. A high-handed sin brings a heavy-handed response. But, why did God permit Adam to sin? In Ephesians 1 Paul speaks of our salvation as *“according to the purpose of his will”* because it is *“to the praise of his glorious grace.”* Adam purposed to sin. God purposed to save. God purposed to save us because it would magnify and display his glorious grace. In order for his glorious grace to be gloriously displayed, we had to be saved. God determined to permit us to sin, so that we could be redeemed so that his glorious grace could be displayed. Sin brings suffering, but our suffering is not without meaning, purpose or hope. Even, what appears to us to be unjust and unfair is not without meaning and purpose in the plan of God.

A. Suffering helps you see your need of Christ.

We love superheroes and we want to be like them, but we really don't relate to them. We would all love to be a David who kills Goliath's, but in reality, we can't relate to that. But, when David is rejected, betrayed, discouraged, running for his life, misunderstood, and is separated from his family, then we respond and say: I understand that! I can relate to that! I can relate to that because I feel the consequences of living in a sin-cursed world. I feel the consequences of others sinning against me, but what is worse, I contribute to the sin. I feel the brokenness of my world and am myself a deeply flawed and broken soul. Suffering helps me feel that and see my need of Christ. I need to be rescued from my own sin. I need to be saved from the very things that cause me to suffer. I need Jesus. Don't waste your suffering. Let it press you into a deep and abiding trust in God. But...

B. Suffering helps you identify with and love Christ.

Our Savior is called the Man of Sorrows. Those sorrows are our sorrows that he bore. Those sorrows are our sorrows that he experienced and understood. Just as God directed David to suffer this trial, the Spirit would lead Christ into the wilderness where after fasting for 40 days, he would be tested by Satan. How did Jesus respond to his trial? He appealed to God's Word. He entrusted himself to the Father. He did perfectly what David did (Psalm 63). Even when he died, Christ appealed to the Word of God. Jesus quoted David when he was on the cross, when he said, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" David pointed us to Christ by suffering in faith, and when we do the same, we point to Christ as well. David could suffer in the wilderness because he knew that one day he would be king. Christ could suffer on the cross because he knew that he would be raised again. We can suffer in faith because we know that one day all things will be made new.