

(1 Samuel) Strengthening Your Hand in God

by David Guzik

David Guzik's sermon emphasizes the importance of God's protection and the role of friendship in strengthening our faith during difficult times.

Duration: 35:13

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:11, 1 Samuel 23:14, 1 Samuel 23:17, Psalm 18:2, Isaiah 1:18, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:31

Topics: "Faith And Hope", "Worship And Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the story of David in 1 Samuel 23 and his response to a difficult situation. David finds himself in a dark and challenging time, but instead of despairing, he chooses to sing a psalm to the Lord. The speaker emphasizes the importance of pouring out our hearts to God in song, as it allows us to express our feelings and find strength in Him. The sermon also highlights the significance of God's promises, using Jonathan's encouragement to David as an example. By trusting in God's promises, even in the midst of difficult circumstances, we can find hope and strength.

Transcript

Let's open our Bibles to the book of 1 Samuel, chapter 23. We're going to begin this morning at verse 14 and make it through to the end of the chapter. 1 Samuel, chapter 24, beginning at verse 14.

We're still in this marvelous extended section that's a very uncomfortable and unpleasant time in the life of David, but it's a necessary time. It's a time when the Lord's building things in him that can really be built no other way. David's on the run from King Saul.

He's treated like a criminal and a fugitive, and he's escaping anywhere he can, finding refuge in the wilderness because Saul wants to get him. Saul's insanely jealous of David, and Saul's convinced himself that David is his enemy. Even if Saul had the eyes to see it, he'd know that David was the best friend he could ever have.

But we see here in verse 14, it says, And David stayed in strongholds in the wilderness and remained in the mountains of the wilderness of Ziph. Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand. So David is both afflicted but blessed at the same time.

You know that place in your own life? Afflicted but blessed at the same time? David's afflicted by the fact that he's out in the wilderness. He's not at home, he's not at his regular job, he's not at the place where

he'd like to be, he's not with his family, he's in the wilderness. And even though it's a place where there's woods and there's a place of refuge, it's still the wilderness.

It's not a comfortable or easy place to be. You know, God was guiding David, God was protecting David, but it wasn't comfortable, it wasn't easy. It was good.

This was an essential time for God's work in David's life. David became a man after God's own heart as a shepherd out in the shepherd's field. You see him out there with the sheep all around, with the harp that he has, playing beautiful songs of worship and praise to God, sweet times of communion, caring for the sheep, loving the sheep.

God used that time to make David a man after his own heart. But God's using the time in the wilderness, He uses the time in the wilderness to make David a king. God has a throne prepared for David, and one day he's going to sit on that throne.

And God's using this time in the wilderness to mold him and to shape him and to build him into the kind of man who can rule and reign over the portion that God's given him righteously. So it's a time of blessing, it's a time of affliction. Look at the affliction here, it says, But God did not deliver him, excuse me, it says first that Saul sought him every day.

Friends, that's pressure. Every day. How often is every day? It's every day.

It's unrelenting. You know, Saul was a determined enemy, unrelenting in his pursuit of David. And Saul's become so obsessed with killing David, he doesn't care about anything else.

He's just focused on getting David. He wakes up in the morning, I've got to get David. He sits down to breakfast, I've got to get David.

Lunch, got to get David. Mid-afternoon snack, I've got to get David. That's what his whole life is filled with.

He's obsessed with this. Now, how would you like to have an enemy like that? Obsessed with getting you. Obsessed with bringing you down.

I've got some bad news for you. You do have an enemy like that. The enemy of our souls.

The Bible says that we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the forces of principalities and powers and spiritual forces in high places. And might I say that as much as we might criticize the devil together, we can give him this due this morning, that he's a hard worker. And that he's determined to try to do everything he can against us.

It could be said of us, just as much as it was said of David, that Saul sought him every day. The devil seeks us every day. Just as much as it can be said of us.

Look at the end of it there in verse 14, isn't it glorious? But God did not deliver him into his hand. Kind of frightening to think. What the devil could do to you, the Lord wasn't protecting you.

Remember one occasion that Jesus told Peter, Peter, Satan has asked for you that he may sift you as wheat. I bet when the Lord said those words to Peter, a chill ran down Peter's spine. Oh, what the devil would do to us if the Lord would only take his protecting hand off of us.

And you might think you're going through a tough time. You don't know all that the Lord has spared you from. You don't know all the ways that the Lord has protected you.

You know, sometimes he gives us a glimpse of it, doesn't he? Sometimes he says, well, I've protected you from this. But friends, I want you to imagine all the stuff you don't even have a clue of, that the Lord has protected you from. Yes, yes, he protects us.

Now, here we go here, it says, And David stayed in the strongholds in the wilderness, remained in the mountains in the wilderness of Zip. Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand. So David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life, and David was in the wilderness of Zip, in a forest.

You sense the isolation, you sense the battle in David, the stress every day of knowing that Saul's out to get him. And you know, God is so good, because when we're in times like this, God knows how to bring us the help that we need. And the Lord brought it to David in the form of a good friend named Jonathan.

Look at verse 16, Then Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God. Isn't that glorious? The devil's out to get you every day. You've got the pressures all around you.

You feel like you're in a wilderness. You don't know how much longer you can last. And then God brings somebody beside you to strengthen your hand in God.

Isn't that great? You know, the Lord puts people around you like that all the time. Sometimes we close our eyes to them. Sometimes in pride, we won't receive the strengthening that God wants to bring us through somebody else.

We think, well, you know, only the Lord can strengthen me. But Jonathan was going to be used of the Lord to strengthen David. David says, oh, thank you, Lord, for bringing this friend of mine, Jonathan.

And Jonathan came and he strengthened David's hand in God. Jonathan couldn't rescue David. Jonathan didn't have a magic wand to wave over the situation, make all the problems go away.

Jonathan couldn't even join David and his band of 600 men who were out there in the wilderness. There was a lot that Jonathan could not do for David. But he could do this.

He could strengthen his hand in God. Now, how do you do that? How do you strengthen someone's hand in God? Might I say, you have to go beyond just cliché platitudes and, well, just praise the Lord, brother, and keep the stiff upper lip, and, you know, tough times don't last, but tough people do, and all that stuff. All that can sound pretty hollow sometimes, right? But, you know, Jonathan had something much better than pious platitudes to give David.

He gave him strength from God's promises. Look at verse 17. And he said to him, this is what Jonathan told David.

He said, do not fear, for the hand of Saul, my father, shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Even my father Saul knows that.

And the two of them made a covenant before the Lord, and David stayed in the woods, and Jonathan went to his own house. Isn't that precious? Jonathan just says, well, don't worry, be happy, David. Come on, look on the sunny side of things.

No. He says, David, you cannot fear, and there's reasons why you can't. I love how the Lord speaks to us that way.

You know, the Lord says to us, just like it says in the book of Isaiah, come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. You know, the Lord wants to reason with us. The Lord says, I'll give you reasons not to fear.

I'll give you reasons to trust me. I'm not going to explain everything to you, the Lord says, but I'll give you reasons to trust me, reasons to love me. And so, what reason did David have? Well, the Lord reminds him through Jonathan, verse 17, The hand of Saul, my father, shall not find you.

You shall be king over Israel. David, do you remember that time? There you were. You were out tending the sheep in the field, and a messenger came to you.

It was one of your brothers, and he said, come quick. We're having a great big dinner with the prophet Samuel, and Samuel's called for you. He wants you to come, and you come, and there's all your family, your brothers and your dad, and they're all dressed up nice for the feast, and you're dressed in the work clothes of a shepherd.

And you smell like sheep, and you come, but they wanted you to come. And when Samuel looks at you, he looks at you and he says, that's the one, you're the one. And Samuel brings you to himself, and he gets out this vase of oil, and he pours it all over your head, and you feel the oil drip down your head.

And Samuel tells you that you're anointed by God, and you're going to be the next king over Israel. David, that wasn't a lie. You weren't just making that up.

That was the promise of God to you, and you can trust in that promise even when things look bad. Friends, we can all trust in God's promise when everything's fine, and the sun is shining, and everything seems sweet. But God's promise isn't given to us so much for those times.

God's promise is given to us when we're in a situation like David, when we feel like we're in the wilderness, when we feel like Saul is out after us every day, we need some encouragement, we need some strengthening in God, and then the promise of God comes to us and says, you can trust this, you can believe it. It's all for real. Trust me.

Trust me now, even when it seems so dark at the present time. David said, I do remember. I can remember what it felt like to have that oil pour over my head.

I couldn't get it out of my hair for a week. I knew I was anointed of God, and I know how God's led me since then. I know the promise is for real, and you know what? That means that Saul's not going to get me.

I mean, if I'm going to be the next king, that means Saul's not going to get me. If Saul gets me, I'm a dead man, and I don't sit on any throne ever. And it means that one day I will be king, and thank you, Lord, for that.

I'm strengthened in you now. You know, you can strengthen the hand of another brother or sister by bringing them the promise of God. There's that brother who they're all discouraged.

They didn't tell you their problems. They don't have to. You can see it all over their face.

You can see it almost in the way that they walk. And they don't have to tell you their problems. Does it really matter? They've got problems.

You've got problems. But we've all got a God in heaven who's greater than it. So you come to them, you say, I've got a promise for you.

It's a promise from God. The Bible says in the book of Romans that if God be for us, who can be against us? And I want to strengthen you with that promise today. And you strengthen that brother.

Why? With some pious platitude? With some clouds with silver lining kind of malarkey? No, with a precious promise from God's word. That's what David did for Jonathan. You know what else I think is fascinating about verse 17? Is that Jonathan was speaking as a messenger from God, but not entirely.

Notice this. Verse 17. And he said to him, Do not fear.

Well, is that a word from the Lord for David? Absolutely. And then he says, For the hand of Saul, my father, shall not find you. Is that a word of the Lord for David? Absolutely.

And then he says, You shall be king over Israel. Is that a word of the Lord for David? Absolutely. And then look at the next line.

And I shall be next to you. Is that a word of the Lord for David? No. Because the tragic truth of it is that Jonathan would never be with David when David became king.

Friends, the tragic truth is that before David ever came to the throne, Jonathan would be slain in battle. You see, all through this, Jonathan was speaking from the Lord until he got to that point. And then he was speaking from his own hopes and his own aspirations, which we can understand perfectly, right? You and I have been there.

You and I have been to the place where we feel like the Lord's speaking to us and then we add something to it from our own hopes and aspirations. And oh, how David and Jonathan must have hoped for this. I mean, there they are out together just doing the work of the Lord, maybe fighting together in the army of Israel against the Philistines.

And there they are late at night around the campfire and there's a million stars in the sky and they're just talking like friends talk about their hopes and dreams for the future. And Jonathan says, David, I know that you're going to be the next king. Now, that was something for Jonathan to say because Jonathan was Saul's son.

Saul was the king. The oldest son of Saul was supposed to be the next king, right? Who has the royal right to the throne? Jonathan does. But Jonathan says, David, I know that the Lord's anointed you.

I know that you're the man. And so I'm going to take off my robe. I'm going to take off my armor.

I'm going to give it to you, David, because you're the one who should be wearing it. And so Jonathan says, David, I know that you're going to be the king. But you know what? When you're king, I want to be there right beside you.

What a precious heart Jonathan had. You know, some of us, if the Lord would have told us, OK, you're the crown prince, but you're not going to be the next king. David's going to be the next king.

Even if we submitted to it, we'd have a bad attitude about it. OK, God, David's going to be king and not me. Fine.

Let him be king. I'll go off and be with the Philistines or something. Go ahead.

That wasn't Jonathan's attitude at all. Jonathan's attitude. Lord, you're going to raise David up to be king? Then let me help him.

Let me be next to him. Let me be beside him. Oh, David and Jonathan, their hopes, their aspirations.

Just talking about this. So when Jonathan said that, he wasn't speaking of the Lord. He was speaking of his own hopes, of his own dreams.

It's easy to do, isn't it? Sometimes we think we hear from the Lord better than we do. And that's why it's so important for us to be humble when we consider what we believe God is saying to us. Now, I believe the Lord speaks to us.

Jesus said, the sheep hear the voice of the shepherd. And I believe God does. But, you know, I don't believe that we can perfectly hear what God says to us.

You know, sometimes we add on to it. Sometimes we close our ears before the Lord's done speaking. And it doesn't mean that we can't believe that God speaks to us.

Of course we can believe that. But we just have to hold it with a lot of humility, right? And we have to test it. We have to test it by God's Word.

Anybody here feels that the Lord's telling them, my child, you can cheat on your taxes this year. I'm here to tell you the Lord hasn't spoken to you of that. It goes against His Word.

So we can test it by His Word. We can test it by the counsel of godly, wise men and women that we know and love. But we can also test it by whether or not it comes to pass, right? If it's of the Lord, it's going to happen.

If it's of the Lord, it will be fulfilled. So we should always hold whatever word we feel that the Lord has spoken to us with a lot of humility. Going on here, verse 18.

The two of them made a covenant. Now, one more thing I need to add. I didn't want to leave verse 17 so quickly.

If you notice the last line of verse 17, that's kind of revealing to me. It says, even my father Saul knows that. David, you're going to be king.

Saul's not going to kill you. I'm going to be next to you, and my father Saul knows it. Now, wait a minute.

If Saul knew it, why was he trying to kill David? I mean, if we know what the will of the Lord is, we're going to submit to it, right? If we know what the will of the Lord is, we're going to get in line with it. If we know what the will of the Lord is, we're not going to oppose it, right? Yeah, right. Isn't it scary to see how much of Saul there can be in us? Oh, I wish I could stand before all of you and say, oh, we're all like David, aren't we? We're all just right there where David is.

And we've got to watch out for them Sauls. Yeah, well, them Sauls are all too often in the mirror. Sometimes I look at myself and say, man, sometimes I know the will of God.

Sometimes I know what He wants to do. And sometimes I find myself even neglecting or opposing God's will. And God, forgive us for that.

Makes me think that that's how Satan is too, isn't he? He knows how the whole thing's going to end. You know, Satan knows the Bible. He knows it backwards and forwards.

Probably looking for loopholes or something. He's not going to find any. I mean, he knows the Bible.

He knows the book of Revelation. He knows how it all ends. But yet he still persists in his futile battle against the Lord.

I don't know why exactly. Maybe he's spiritually insane. Maybe he's self-deceived.

The bottom line is we can know the will of God and still not submit to it. That's where Saul was in his life. So the two of them made a covenant before the Lord.

And it says here, David stayed in the woods and Jonathan went to his own house. And it kind of leaves all matter-of-factly, right? There, David's in the woods. Jonathan went home.

Great! You realize that's the last time David and Jonathan ever saw each other on this earth. Sad, isn't it? They still loved each other. They still hung in there for each other.

And the covenant that they kept lasted. Well, God had such a precious gift to give David through the encouragement of Jonathan. But life isn't all Jonathans, is it? Sometimes there's Zephites to deal with.

You'll see what I mean here, verse 19. Then the Zephites came up to Saul at Gibeath, saying, Is David not hiding with us in strongholds in the woods, in the hills of Hacaliah, which is on the south of Jeshamun? Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of your soul. Come down, and our part shall be to deliver him into the king's hand.

Why, these creeps, the Zephites, they want to curry favor with King Saul and say, Hey, Saul, we know where David is, and we'll deliver him to you. How about that, King Saul? These betrayers. David hasn't done anything wrong.

These men are like Judas, betraying the Lord Jesus Christ. They're betraying David. They have no business doing this.

And look at how they curry favor with Saul. Look at verse 21. It almost turns your stomach.

And Saul said, Blessed are you of the Lord, for you have had compassion on me. Oh, doesn't that just get you? There's Saul. Oh, praise the Lord, brother.

I wonder if the priest to whom Judas betrayed Jesus said the same thing. Praise the Lord. Blessed be you of the Lord, my friends.

You've betrayed this man, Jesus of Nazareth. Well, there's no place for that. Saul was so spiritually warped that he could say to the betrayers of an innocent man, Blessed are you of the Lord.

Then he goes on in verse 22, and he says, Please go and find out for sure, and see the place where his hideout is, and who has seen him there, for I am told that he is very crafty. See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking places where he hides, and come back to me with certainty, and I will go with you. And it shall be, if he is in the land, that I will search for him throughout all the clans of Judah.

Oh, thank you, Zephites. I'm going to get him. You know, he's a very crafty foe.

Saul just can't realize that the reason why David has escaped him isn't because David's so crafty, but it's because God is with him. I'd much rather have God be with me than be crafty. It's better to be blessed than smart.

It's better to be blessed than talented. It's better to have goodness from the Lord than anything else. That's what's been preserving David, not his own craftiness.

David starts trusting in his own craftiness. That's when he gets into trouble. No, the Lord has preserved him.

So here's David. Saul's on the way. The Zephites have betrayed him.

Saul's after him every day. He's caught now. The armies of Saul are on the way.

Who can he trust? Can he trust anybody? Who's going to betray him next? What are you going to do in a situation like this? It looks pretty dark, pretty bad for David. What do you do? You sing a psalm to the Lord. You get it out before God.

That's what David did. Keep your finger here in 1 Samuel 23. Turn in your Bibles to Psalm 54.

At this very time in his life, David expressed his feelings to the Lord in song. Again, this is one of the most precious things that we have about the life of David. We get windows into his soul by seeing him pour out his heart before God in song.

The title to Psalm 54 reads, To the chief musician with stringed instruments, a contemplation of David when the Zephites went and said to Saul, Is David not hiding with us? Well, that gives us the setting. But let's see the heart of David as it begins in verse 1. He says, Save me, O God, by your name, and vindicate me by your strength. Hear my prayer, O God.

Give ears to the words of my mouth. Do you sense the desperation that David's in? Who can save him? Can he trust in his own men to save him? No, they mean the best, but they can't do it. Can he trust in Saul to save him? No.

Can he trust in the Zephites to save him? No. Can he even trust in Jonathan to save him? No. Jonathan went back home.

Who can save David? The Lord. Poor David. You know, the only support, the only help, the only chance he has, is the omnipotent God who sits enthroned in heaven.

That's it. That's all you have to rely on, David. Poor guy.

The God who created the universe with a word. The God who rules all things in his hands. The God of all love, all strength, all compassion.

Sorry, David, you're down to that. Boy, he's in a great place, isn't he? He can trust in the Lord. Actually, now it's all a lot clearer.

He can't trust in anyone or anything else but the Lord. The Lord will be his helper. It's a clarifying place.

It's not an easy place. It's not a comfortable place. None of us would choose to be in that place.

But once you're there, you may as well make the best of it and say, hey, I can trust in the Lord. Save me, oh God, by Your name. At the same time, David doesn't close his eyes to the reality around him.

Look at what he says in verse 3. For strangers have risen up against me and oppressors have sought after my life. They have not said God before them. Oh, I love how David doesn't live in this illusionary land where, oh, everybody's wonderful and everything's great.

Oh, isn't it marvelous? No, David sees the problems. He sees the enemies. He sees the trouble.

But he knows that God is greater than them all. And he goes on in verse 4. He says, behold, God is my helper. The Lord is with those who uphold my life.

He will repay my enemies for their evil. Cut them off in your truth. Friends, this is a great turning point, a decision point in David's heart, in David's life.

He's not looking at his enemies anymore. He's looking at God, who's his helper. The Lord is with those who uphold my life.

He will repay my enemies for their evil. David, what are you going to do about the Ziphites? They've betrayed you. What are you going to do about Saul? He's trying to kill you.

You know what David would say? Say, hey, I've given them to the Lord. I'm going to seek the Lord. You know, it's a funny thing.

You put your eyes on your opponents. You put your eyes on your enemies. You put your eyes on whatever opposition or trial that you have around you.

And somehow that becomes bigger and bigger, doesn't it? You put your eyes on the Lord. He becomes bigger. That's what David said.

Lord, that's your problem. And now look at verses 6 and 7. Now he's full of praise. He says, I will freely sacrifice to You.

I will praise Your name, O Lord, for it is good. For He has delivered me out of all trouble. And my eye has seen its desire upon my enemies.

David can let go of the bitterness and fear and he can praise the Lord instead. What higher ground God has lifted him up to. It's a glorious place.

Is David still in a trial? You betcha! Are things different in his heart and his mind as he lifted it to the Lord and given it to God? And as he found a glorious release in that? You bet he has. I don't know if you've ever experienced this, but I've been on that same high ground that David has been on. Where you're going through a trial, your face is some kind of opposition, and you really give it to the Lord.

And whatever fear or bitterness or anger or trial that's going on, you give it to God. You put your focus on Him. And such a sweet release comes into your life.

And it's high ground. You go, yes, and I've been on that high ground. For a while.

Maybe you've experienced it just like I do. You give it to the Lord. Maybe you walk out of here and your heart's just so full of the Lord and praise.

Yeah, Lord, this is great. Oh, thank you, Lord. I could just give it all.

I'm not bitter against that person. I'm not angry. I'm not resentful towards you.

Thank you, Jesus. And you go and you go home. The afternoon's pretty good.

And the evening, yeah, you're still feeling good. You wake up in the morning and you're angry again. You don't even know why.

And then you think, man, I must be really unspiritual. I mean, if I really loved the Lord, I would just put this away once for all. I'd give it to the Lord and it'd never come back.

Instead, it's like a boomerang. I'd throw it away and it comes back. Man, Lord, I must not be very spiritual.

No, you know what? That's the devil condemning you. If David only had to deal with this once, I think there'd only be one psalm with this kind of theme. Psalms are filled with this theme.

I give it to you, Lord. I give it to you. And that's where I find refuge.

So you give it to the Lord and you have that sense of peace and relief and you feel a freedom from the bitterness and the anger and the stress of the trial. And then it comes back upon you. What do you do? You give it to the Lord again.

And then when it comes back again, what do you do? You give it to the Lord again and again. And don't feel condemned. Don't feel like you're less spiritual.

You're walking right in the will of the Lord. One of the reasons why the Lord has allowed it is because He likes to see you a lot. And He's letting you come back to Him again and again and again about it.

You're saying, how wonderful that you visited me again. Let's spend time over this. You're not unspiritual.

Are you sure you're right where the Lord wants you to be? You say, well, no, you don't understand me. This soul, they keep seeking me. They keep coming after me.

How many times am I supposed to do it? Seventy times seven. Something like that. Again and again and again you give it to the Lord.

That's this glorious high ground that David lived in that was transforming to his life. Alan Redpath says of this passage, Observe how David left the treachery of his supposed friends with the one who is sufficient to deal with them. He's now looking at God.

First he was looking at his enemies and these supposed friends of his. But now he sees them through God. If you begin with God, your enemies grow small.

If you begin with the enemy, you may never reach God. That's what David was doing. Beautiful heart expressed in Psalm 54.

Well, we left it off there in 1 Samuel 23, right? Saul's armies were on the way. The Ziphites had betrayed David. It didn't look good.

Let's see how it finishes here. Verse 24, 1 Samuel chapter 23. So they arose and went to Ziph before Saul.

But David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon on the plain, in the plain, on the south of Jeshimon. When Saul and his men went to seek him, they told David. Therefore, he went down to the rock and stayed in the wilderness of Maon.

And when Saul heard that, he pursued David in the wilderness of Maon. Then Saul went on one side of the mountain and David and his men on the other side of the mountain. So David made a haste to get away from Saul, for Saul and his men were encircling David and his men to take them.

But the situation is desperate, isn't it? Now, when it says mountain, don't think of something like the Rocky Mountains or the Sierra Nevadas or something like this. These would actually be large hills. And can you just picture it in your mind? Here's Saul with maybe a couple thousand troops and there's David with his 600 men.

And Saul and his troops are on one side of the mountain and David and his troops are on the other side. And there's a set of scouts and messengers on the ridge and they're sharing intelligence. And Saul, he hears from his men, well, look, they're going this way, westward over there, and you need to circle around there.

And Saul's directing the battle. And David and his men, pretty soon they're outnumbered and they're going to be surrounded. And they're going back and forth trying to escape and flee.

And David keeps getting reports down from his scouts. Look, they're swinging around our flank over here and here's another group coming. They're about to encircle us.

Our heart is beating faster. It's desperate. Lord, what are you going to do? How are you going to get me out of this one? God, do something now.

Lord, I don't know. Just do something. Lord, I need your help.

It all looks very black, very desperate. And what happens? Verse 27. But a messenger came to Saul saying, Hasten and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land.

Therefore, Saul returned from pursuing David and went against the Philistines. And so they called the place the Rock of Escape. Then David went up from there and dwelt in strongholds at En Gedi.

Now, is there a rock of escape in your life? Some place where the Lord met your need in a totally unexpected way. I think the last thing on David's mind was to pray something like this. Oh Lord, okay now, just send a messenger right now to distract Saul and to send him away.

Yes Lord, that's... I don't think David had a clue. He's just saying, God, help! And the Lord sent the help out of the blue. But it wasn't out of blue.

It was out of heaven. The messenger came just at the right timing. Isn't God's timing marvelous? You know, if that messenger is held up for another half hour or hour on the road, if he stops for a longer lunch break, if he's delayed a little bit longer, David's captured.

The timing, the situation, it's all perfect. And what a surprise to David. Can't you just see him all around the campfire that night? There they are, David and his men, and they're talking about, boy, did the Lord get us out of that one? Can you believe that? Who could have figured that one out? Man, God just blew our minds.

We don't know, how did that happen? What's the Lord going to do to surprise us next? You know, my friends, the Lord loves to surprise us. Not to stress us out. That's not why.

It's because when you love somebody, you like to surprise them. You like to give them good surprises. Here's a gift.

You don't know what's in the box. Here it is. When they open it up, you see the look on their face.

They're surprised. It just shows you love to them. The Lord wants to surprise you too.

Sometimes when we're in a trial, we try to tell God all the ways that He can save us. We go through the list. Lord, here's my suggestions to you for how to get me out of this trial.

You've got plan A. You've got plan B. You've got plan C. Now, Lord, my preference is B, but A or C is fine too, Lord. You run through the details of it with God and just pretty much lay it out to them. The Lord says, I've got plan Z. You've never heard of it.

Here it is. And sometimes I think that the more we try to figure out how God's going to do it, that just kind of forces Him to think of more bizarre ways to come and bring the surprise in our life. And He'll do that if we push Him to it, but how much better just to leave it to Him? And say, Lord, just do Your will.

But I want to know Your love. I want to know Your deliverance. You pick how.

That's Your business, God. But I'll trust You along the way. Well, friends, can you look back in your life and see a rock of escape? Can you thank God for it? Maybe you feel like you're in the place David was.

You're surrounded by a trial. Your heart's beating fast. You don't know how you're going to get out of it.

Don't feel like you have to figure it out. God's deliverance is not based on your figuring it out. It's based on His power.

I think the bottom line of it all is we can trust Him. Even when we can't figure it out, we can trust Him. And the Lord was using all of this to prepare David to sit on a throne.

So let me finish up with that final thought. The Lord's doing the same work in your life. You say, what, me? Sitting on a throne? Absolutely.

The Bible says that each and every believer in Jesus Christ is destined for a heavenly throne that we will rule and reign with Jesus. I don't know all that that means. But it means that your royalty and God's training you for a throne.

So this business about making the heart of a king, that isn't just for David. That's for you. That's for me.

And I want you to get a big picture right now and understand that the work that the Lord is doing in your life, it's much bigger than helping you to survive this next trial. It's training you for a heavenly destiny. That's what God's going to put all the pieces together for.

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