

1 Samuel 23:1-29 | “The Sustainer of My Soul”  
*Preached on March 27, 2022 by Pastor Matt Brown*

Turn in your Bibles this morning to 1 Samuel 23.

It's great to be back in the Word this morning, learning from God. *[pauseeee]*

What sustains you in life?

What helps you, strengthens you, and keeps you going?

When it comes to our physical bodies, some of the things that keep us going are food, water, and sleep.

Go days on end without food, water, or sleep and it's not going to be a pretty picture.

Those things sustain us. *[pause]*

What sustains you in your job to keep going?

For some people, it's just the knowledge of understanding that if I don't keep going, I'm not going to have enough money to pay the bills. *[pause]*

What sustains you in your marriage? *[pause]*

You see, as we go through life, we need to be sustained.

We need strengthened and encouraged to help us continue on in life. *[pause]*

But what about our walk with the Lord?

What sustains and encourages us as we continue in faith?

Is it just mustering up the strength in ourselves, is it just thinking positive thoughts, or things like that? *[pause]*

In our story this morning, we will see some things that sustained David as he lived in the wilderness.

And through this story, we will be encouraged by learning about what sustains us in the journey of faith. *[pauseeee]*

In regards to the context of this chapter, David has been a man on the run from Saul, who is determined to kill him.

Saul is so determined to kill David that he has the priestly city of Nob massacred because he believed they conspired against him to help David.

That's where we left off last Sunday, and now let's pick up **READING**, starting in verse 1 of chapter 23...[\[verses 1-14\]](#)

In the previous chapter, Saul had killed a whole Israelite town, and now in this chapter, David goes out of his way to save an Israelite town. *[pause]*

As you begin the story, you hear that the town of Keilah is in trouble, for the Philistines were against them.

So David asks the Lord if he should go attack the Philistines, and the Lord tells him to go. *[pause]*

Isn't it crazy how David was facing a lot, as he was being chased down by Saul, yet here he's willing to risk his life for others.

So often we are so consumed with ourselves, with our own struggles and pains that we don't serve others, for we aren't thinking about others.

If we were David, we would be like, "I'm just gonna hide here and have everyone else protect me."

Yet David is willing to risk Saul knowing his location and risk his life by saving a town in need. *[pauseeee]*

So David gets his answer from God to go save Keilah, but David's men are hesitant and fearful.

So David goes back to the Lord, and the Lord promises to give the Philistines into his hand.

That's when they go, fight the Philistines, and save the city of Keilah.

All is good, right?

You would think that this would have a happy ending, stopping right there, but that's not the end.

Saul hears about David's success, and Saul in his false piety, incorrectly states that God has given David into his hand. *[pause]*

Interestingly, Saul wasn't happy with the victory over the Philistines and the salvation of a town of Israel...

...Instead, he's happy because he sees that he can trap David in the town of Keilah. *[pause]*

He gets the people ready to go, but David finds out about Saul's plan, and asks for Abiathar the priest to bring the ephod to him. *[pause]*

Now why does David want the ephod?

The ephod was a special, priestly garment that had a breastplate attached to it which held the Urim and Thummim.

And the Urim and Thummin were these objects whereby Israel could receive divine revelation.

We don't know exactly how they received the revelation from these objects, but nevertheless, that's why David wants the ephod brought - to hear what God says. *[pause]*

And so David inquires of God about what's going to happen, and God tells him that Saul's going to come down to the city.

David asks if the men of Keilah would surrender him to Saul, and God states that they will. *[pause]*

Now that's kind of hurtful, isn't it?

The town that David just saved was going to surrender him over to Saul.

But I believe it really came down to fear.

The town was so fearful of Saul that they felt like giving up David was the only option. *[pause]*

So David, knowing that he needs to leave, departs and goes into the wilderness of Ziph.

Saul hears of this and gives up the expedition, yet continues every day trying to find David, yet God doesn't give David into his hand. *[pause]*

*Now what does this first section teach us? None other but about...*

### **I. The sustaining work of God's Word (1-14)**

This whole section revolves around God's Word to David.

David goes to save Keilah based on what God says and then he escapes Saul's evil plan based on what God says.

It was the Word that was sustaining him, and helping him to continue on further, out of Saul's grasp. *[pause]*

What David looked to and needed was God's Word, and that helped him.

He actually inquired of God four times in this section.

David was very concerned with knowing what God said, and it made me wonder if we were the same way?

Are you focused on, passionate about, and interested in what God has to say? *[pause]*

People often are concerned with what a celebrity or politician has to say.

But our most foundational and needed concern should be: what does *God* have to say? *[pause]*

When you are going through a trial, where do you turn?

That right there displays your thinking and your priorities.

Do you truly believe that God's Word is what you need over all other sources?

Do you truly believe that "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."?<sup>1</sup> *[pauseeee]*

It's amazing how little we truly act like the Bible is what it is.

We may say all the right things when asked about our view of Scripture, yet do we live our lives in light of those personal doctrinal statements? *[pause]*

When you are going through a hard time, are you searching the Scriptures?

When someone says something questionable, are you examining the Scriptures to see if it's true?<sup>2</sup>

I mean just think about it, here today we have God's very Word to us.

Did you get that? *God's very Word to us.*

And we have the complete Word that He wanted us to have in our lap, yet we act like it's just some good advice.

We act like it's just one of the wise things to consider when making a decision. *[pauseeee]*

Now for David, because of the time in salvation history that he lived, he received God's Word from inquiring.

And sometimes we would like to be in David's spot, receiving direct answers to specific questions.

We would like to know, "Which college do I attend? Which job should I take?" Or even, "Who should I marry?"

But the truth is, we have so much more revelation from God than David did because we have the complete Scriptures.

We even live in a time after Christ has come and spoken. *[pause]*

We have so much truth, yet we often don't read it and study it as much as we should.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 4:4, which is quoting Deuteronomy 8:3.

<sup>2</sup> Like the Bereans! (see Acts 17:11).

God has given us what we need in the Scriptures, but will we see them as sufficient for all of life? *[pauseeee]*

When you compare David and Saul further here, you find something telling.

David was reliant on God's Word, and received divine guidance.

But what about Saul?

Saul is reliant upon human information, human wisdom, and human strategy.

And he is completely devoid of God's guidance, in fact, he just killed all the priests, and the last one ran to David with the ephod.

Now that's ironic. *[pause]*

Where do you turn when you need help and guidance?

David turned to God's Word, but Saul turned to human wisdom.

And this story reminds us that God's Word blows human strategy out of the water. *[pause]*

I find that sometimes we encounter something and we think, "I got this. I can think my way out of this."

Our Google searches could probably be cut down some, if we would only look to the Bible instead.

Our first action shouldn't be typing in a search bar, but searching the typed Word in front of us. *[pauseeee]*

In this story, the people of Keilah were going to hand David over to Saul, and yet God's Word directed David out of danger.

David could go in confidence when God spoke, but not always when others spoke.

And this reminds us that even though you can't always trust others, you can trust God's Word!

People will fail you, time and again, but you can count on God's Word. *[pauseeee]*

Dive deep into the Word of God daily.

Let it be your food, let it help you and guide you as you live this journey of life.

Like David, who was sustained here by the Word of God, may we be sustained with His precious Word. *[pauseeee]*

Let's move to the next section of 1 Samuel 23, AS WE READ VERSES 15-18. *[pause]*

Here we see that Jonathan goes out to encourage David, and he does so by reminding him of the promise of God about becoming the next king.

*He says that even Saul knew that David would become king.*

They then reaffirm their covenant together, and Jonathan leaves. *[pause]*

*Once again, we see the humility and love of Jonathan as he submits to God's will and willingly supports David as the next king, rather than pursuing the kingship for himself.*

And he even risks his life by going to visit with David. *[pause]*

*As we think through this little section in the middle of the chapter, we see...*

## **II. The sustaining work of others (15-18)**

One reason why David was sustained during the time in the wilderness was through the encouragement of Jonathan.

*Jonathan came and strengthened David's hand in God. [pause]*

It's a blessing to have encouraging friends, isn't it?

*They help you to persevere, look at things the right way, and sometimes they come along at just the right time. [pauseeee]*

David was just dealt with treacherously by the people of Keilah and would soon be betrayed by the Ziphites, but in between was Jonathan.

*Have you ever had a friend talk to you just when you needed it?*

Or receive an encouraging letter from someone on a bad day?

*That's the blessing of how other people can help sustain us in our walk of faith.*

When we are going through troubles, they can come alongside us and bring great comfort. *[pause]*

*You see, to encourage others, we need to act in encouragement.*

Jonathan got up and went to David and encouraged him.

*He didn't sit back and expect David to be encouraged, but he acted, even risking his life to do so.*

So we must act in love and encourage others.

*We must speak, write, call, and things like that.*

Who have you encouraged recently? Anyone outside of your family?

Truly, we can strengthen each other's hands in God. *[pause]*

Now what does that mean?

It means that we can help each other find strength in God - we can help strengthen their confidence and dependence on God. *[pauseeee]*

How did Jonathan do this for David?

He encouraged him with truth; more specifically with God's promise. *[pauseeeee]*

We aren't sustained through trials by trifle words lacking God's truth.

We don't encourage by saying, "You are enough. You are brave. You are courageous."

For that person soon realizes when times get really hard that they aren't enough or brave. *[pause]*

We don't encourage by saying, "Just think positive thoughts," or by saying, "Sending good vibes your way."

What good are those statements? They are meaningless fluff that have no power when you are facing your most difficult moments.

No, we are encouraged and sustained through trials by God's promises. *[pause]*

The most encouraging thing you can do for another person is to confidently point them to the promises of God. *[pause]*

Let's say you are attending a funeral of a friend's family member.

At funerals, many people don't know what to say so they either don't say anything or they end up saying insensitive things.

So then what can you do? Be there for them, and encourage them with the promises.

But how can you know the promises?

Get into your Bible more!

Memorize Scripture, hide it in your heart,<sup>3</sup> if you need to, buy a "promises of God" book.

In this way, you can help strengthen someone's hand in God. *[pauseeeee]*

If you think about it, knowing that I just need to encourage with truth is very freeing.

Why? Because it means we don't need to point them to ourselves and be something amazing.

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<sup>3</sup> An allusion to Psalm 119:11.

We don't have to come up with ground-breaking, innovative words and ideas.

We simply need to know and point people to God's promises. *[pause]*

Do you confidently believe the promises yourself? That's the place to start. *[pauseeee]*

Like Jonathan did for David, based on the promises of God, we can encourage people to not fear, but trust His Word.

And what a difference that could make in someone's life as they go through a trial!

Not because we came up with amazing things, but simply because we believed the promises of God, and encouraged another person to do the same. *[pauseeeee]*

You see, God uses His Word to encourage and sustain us as we read it, but He also uses His Word spoken through others to encourage and sustain us.

This is why Paul says that we are to "speak the truth in love," and he calls us to, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom."<sup>4</sup> *[pauseeeee]*

So Jonathan has encouraged and remained loyal to David, but as we go further in the story, verses 19-24 show us a group that definitely doesn't remain loyal to David.

The Ziphites go to Saul and tell him that David is hiding in their territory, giving Saul the location of where he was.

Again, we see Saul acting like God is for him by asking that they be blessed by the Lord, for giving up David's position.

And he continues his mentality of self-pity by saying, "You have had compassion on me." *[pause]*

Yet before Saul goes down to pursue David, he wants some more precise, solid information.

He wants the Ziphites to spy out David's movements, so that he can know for sure where he's at and as a result, make his attack more prone to success. *[pause]*

Let's CONTINUE READING to see what happens, beginning in verse 24. [verse 24-29]

That was intense, wasn't it?

It was like a cat and mouse chase.

Saul goes to David, David hears of it and moves.

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<sup>4</sup> "Truth in love" is from Ephesians 4:15, and the quoted verse is from Colossians 3:16.

Then Saul hears of the new location and they are so close to each other that they are on different sides of the same mountain.

Saul starts closing in on David, and all seems lost for David, but all of a sudden a messenger comes and tells Saul of a Philistine raid.

Because of this, Saul has to give up his personal vendetta to go stop the Philistines, and David is saved. *[pause]*

This close call was so amazing that they actually memorialized the place that it happened, and called it the Rock of Escape.

The words used here could also mean the Rock of Division.

Either way, this was the place that God showed up in a clear way, for though David was on the brink of capture, his life was preserved. *[pauseeee]*

*Through this portion, what can we take away from it?...*

### **III. The sustaining work of God's providence (19-29)**

God's providential protection of David was on full display here.

No matter how hard Saul tried to catch David, as verse 14 tells us, "God did not give him into his hand."

Even though Saul got super detailed information about David's whereabouts, still he was unsuccessful.

And the most clear example of God's providence was how Saul was closing in on David, and just in the nick of time, Saul is taken away because of a Philistine raid. *[pause]*

Isn't it amazing how God works?

In His providence, He can use anything, even the enemy. *[pause]*

I'm sure it was surprising to David that essentially the Philistines saved him because of their attack.

So don't count God out in a situation, for He can use anything, even surprising things. *[pause]*

God may use some surprising providential events in your life.

He may use situations and people that you would have never expected to direct your life in a certain way.

And you will look back at it and think, "Wow, that was amazing!" *[pauseeee]*

Now as we think about God's providence, sometimes we think that since God is providentially working then we won't need to face hardship.

But even in God's providence, we still face hard times.

I'm sure if you asked David about this event, he would tell you that it wasn't easy and fun in the moment.

Saul was right on his tail, closing in on him - that's a difficult thing to go through for anyone.

Yet David could rejoice in the Lord, and write a psalm based on this event, and say, "The Lord is the upholder of my life."<sup>5</sup> *[pauseee]*

God doesn't promise a care-free life.

He doesn't promise an easy path, but he promises to always be with you.

He calls us to trust Him all along the way and trust that He's in control. *[pauseeee]*

It's one thing to know that God is providentially working, but it's another to experience it dramatically.

David knew that God was in control, but in this spectacular moment of rescue, he got to see it in full color.

Since the message of the Philistine raid came at just the right time, it displayed that it could have only been God at work.

It was truly a "God moment". *[pause]*

Have you ever had something that happened at just the right time, where it just had to be a "God moment"?

Interestingly, many times if we hadn't gone through hardship, we wouldn't see those moments as clearly.

And in that, it's God's grace, showing us His goodness and glory even more than before. *[pauseeee]*

God has a sustaining work of providence in the world - that's really what providence is.

God is continually involved in the world so that it exists, is maintained, and is directed to fulfill his purposes.

Well here we saw God involved in fulfilling His purposes by directing Saul away from David at just the right time. *[pauseeeee]*

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<sup>5</sup> Psalm 54:4.

There are so many ways that God sustains us through His providence.

He sustains the very universe itself,<sup>6</sup> but He also works through circumstances in our lives to sustain us. *[pause]*

Aren't you thankful for God's providence?

Other people may betray us like the Ziphites did to David, but God's providence will never stop from faithfully working in the world.

And that's something that we can be assured of - His providence will sustain the world, and it will sustain you. *[pauseeee]*

*So how should we respond to God's Word this morning, as we consider 1 Samuel 23?...*

**Look to the Lord, the Sustainer of your soul!**

As I mentioned earlier, David wrote a psalm based on the event of the Ziphites giving up his location.

It's found in Psalm 54, and what does David conclude about this event?

He says, "Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life."

Other translations say, "The Lord is the sustainer of my soul."<sup>7</sup> *[pause]*

Do you believe that?

Do you believe that God sustains you through His Word, and that what you truly need in the wildernesses of life is His guidance?

Then each day, dive into the depths of the Word of God. *[pause]*

Do you believe that God sustains you through others? Then connect with some godly people, who will help strengthen your confidence and dependence on God.

And be that kind of person for others, so that you can play a part in helping other people persevere. *[pause]*

Do you believe that God sustains you through His providence?

Then trust Him - trust His amazing, often unseen ways of sustaining you as you go through life. *[pauseeee]*

In this story, David was encouraged as he had access to God through a priest, and really we have the same thing, but different.

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<sup>6</sup> See Hebrews 1:3.

<sup>7</sup> NASB version is one example.

Hebrews tells us that “since we have a great high priest...Jesus, the Son of God...let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”<sup>8</sup>

Because of Christ’s role as high priest, and because of his shed blood, we have access to God!

We can boldly approach Him and get help in our times of need. *[pause]*

Jesus is truly our “Rock of Escape,” for because of his shed blood in our place, we are delivered from the power of sin and sin’s penalty, which is death.

And even though every friend may betray us and desert us in this life, we still have the Lord, who stands by our side and gives us strength.<sup>9</sup>

Look to Him, the Sustainer of your soul.

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<sup>8</sup> Hebrews 4:14-16.

<sup>9</sup> See 2 Timothy 4:16-17.