

Ein Gedi

David Inquired of the Lord

In the dry, desolate wilderness within eyesight of the Dead Sea we find Ein Gedi, “spring of the wild goats.” Perhaps the first thing to catch your eye is the ibex, a wild goat with long, slightly curved horns. As though welcoming guests, they wander the parking lots and harsh terrain surrounding the area. Yet, a short hike into a wadi (ravine) reveals a desert oasis! Trees line the tiny creek that flows down from wading pools and waterfalls.



It is a place well known to Israel’s favorite son, David. When he wrote of wild goats and rock badgers in Psalm 104:18, I wonder if he was gazing upon the landscape and wildlife as we see it today. Oh, David knew the area well, as it was a place he found refuge (at least for a time) from King Saul who was intensely jealous of David and relentlessly pursued him.

Despite Saul’s attacks, David had history with a giant named Goliath, and he knew the battle belonged to the Lord!

⁴⁵ Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. ⁴⁷ Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord’s, and He will give you into our hands.” (1 Samuel 17:45-47)

David blessed the heart of God when he acknowledged the omniscient, all-powerful nature of God. He wanted the entire earth to know there is a God in Israel! But, as in our own lives, when God is acknowledged for who He is, the enemy is awakened. Such was the case for David.

In 1 Samuel 18, we learn of the deep, enduring friendship between David and Jonathan, King Saul’s son. Jonathan advocated for David before his enraged father who wanted to kill David. The contrast between Saul and David was stark:

¹² Now Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, but had departed from Saul...¹⁴ And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the Lord was with him. ¹⁵ Therefore, when Saul saw that he behaved very wisely, he was afraid of him. (1 Samuel 18:12, 14-15)

An angry, envious enemy with a desire to eliminate his nemesis was no threat to a man who had defeated lions, bears and giants. But beyond that, the Lord was with David, but had departed from Saul. Yet, David was such an honorable man that he humbled himself before the king anyway. When Saul deviously presented his daughter, Michal, to David in marriage, his response was, “Who am I, and what is my life or my father’s family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?” (1 Samuel 18:18)

Of course, giving up his daughter to David was simply a ploy to snare him. Perhaps David could be drawn close and Saul could strike unexpectedly. Instead, it only stoked the fires of hatred in Saul's heart.

With envy and jealousy comes conniving. How tempting to tear down the one who has what we covet. Yet, it is the coveter who is dealt misery and must play games in attempts to attain that which is just out of reach. Saul tried to tear David apart and 1 Samuel 19 records his patterns of attack on David, Jonathan's advocacy on David's behalf, Saul's false repentance and unfulfilled promises, and his renewed intensity in pursuit of David.

False repentance is no repentance and without the Holy Spirit, words are empty and powerless. One who cannot control himself also cannot fulfill promises. Without the Spirit, Saul was enslaved by his hatred, but David had a different power source.

23 Then they told David, saying, "Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and they are robbing the threshing floors." 2 Therefore 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 Keilah." 3 But David's men said to him, "Look, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?" 4 Then David inquired of the Lord once again. And the Lord answered him and said, "Arise, go down to Keilah. For I will deliver the Philistines into your hand."... 10 Then David said, "O Lord God of Israel, Your servant has certainly heard that Saul seeks to come to Keilah to destroy the city for my sake. 11 Will the men of Keilah deliver me into his hand? Will Saul come down, as Your servant has heard? O Lord God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant." And the Lord said, "He will come down." 12 Then David said, "Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul?" And the Lord said, "They will deliver you." 13 So David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah and went wherever they could go. Then it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah; so he halted the expedition. (1 Samuel 23:1-4)

David's secret: he inquired of the Lord, and he kept inquiring! Straight to the point. David inquired, God responded...and in the end God delivered. I love it, don't you? No beating around the bush. To David, God was like the perfect GPS! David consistently inquired of the Lord. Is that our habit as well?

Now, we finally arrive at Ein Gedi. David took his 600 murmuring men to Ein Gedi and when news made it to Saul, he promptly took 3,000 of Israel's finest fighting men and pursued him there. Upon arrival, Saul entered a cave to "attend to his needs." Little did he know David and his men had taken refuge in that very cave. Suddenly, David's men became very spiritual and pulled the "The Lord told me..." card, suggesting "at God's prompting" that David should take care of business regarding Saul! David arose and cut off a piece of the hem of Saul's robe, but was immediately convicted and returned to his men with this message: "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord." (1 Samuel 24:6) Honor won out.

What can we learn from David? He didn't listen to man, he inquired of the Lord. "Inquired" is translated from the Hebrew word *sha'al*, meaning "to ask, entreat, or to borrow something." David borrowed the very wisdom of God. He did not borrow from the nonsense of man. When others believe they know what God is telling you to do, it is wise to inquire of the Lord directly! If it's something God wants you to know, do you think He's going to keep it secret while telling others? Nonsense!

Then, after correcting his men, David did something astounding:

⁸ David also arose afterward, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, saying, "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed down. ⁹ And David said to Saul: "Why do you listen to the words of men who say, 'Indeed David seeks your harm'?" ¹⁰ Look, this day your eyes have seen that the Lord delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me to kill you. But my eye spared you, and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed.' ¹¹ Moreover, my father, see! Yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you. Yet you hunt my life to take it. ¹² Let the Lord judge between you and me, and let the Lord avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you. (1 Samuel 24:8-11)

Don't miss the magnitude of the moment! This man was trying to kill David, yet David bowed down in honor of the king. Neither evil nor rebellion were present in David and he entrusted himself to the Lord's judgment. Imagine if we approached our enemies with the same depth of faith and trust!

Once again, Saul offered false repentance in verses 16-19, but it came with conditions!

²⁰ And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. ²¹ Therefore swear now to me by the Lord that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my name from my father's house." (1 Samuel 24:20-21)

Repentance with stipulations is not repentance! Saul did not have a relationship with the One who had the power to change him. Likewise, some claim to be Christians, but have no relationship with Jesus. Instead, they try to "do" repentance on their own. Like Saul, we are hopelessly inadequate without the resurrection power of Jesus and the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. David had it. He related to God, he inquired of God, and he entrusted Himself to God to do what only God can do!

Not only did David inquire of the Lord, he delighted in Him! So, let's follow David's advice:

*³ Trust in the Lord, and do good;
Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.
⁴ Delight yourself also in the Lord,
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.
⁵ Commit your way to the Lord,
Trust also in Him,
And He shall bring it to pass.
⁶ He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light,
And your justice as the noonday.
(Psalm 37:3-6)*

May God grant you wisdom, humility and understanding today and every day as you inquire of Him!