

Surviving in the Wilderness **1 Samuel 23 & Psalm 63**

Introduction:

1. There are times in our lives when we, figuratively, feel like we are on the mountaintop. Everything seems to be going so well. But, to use another analogy, there are other times when we feel as if we are in the wilderness, lost and bewildered.
2. Here in our text, David is literally in the wilderness. As this chapter opens, King Saul is still on his manhunt to kill David. David is fleeing throughout the wilderness, being hunted like a wild animal. vs. 14-15
3. David had been anointed as the new king of Israel, but yet he found himself wandering in the wilderness. God was not going to allow David to just prance up to the throne. David would be tested to see what kind of spiritual character he truly possessed.
4. Saul, of course, was filled with the spirit of Satan as he chased David and sought to destroy him. Paul said that this same devil is our enemy today, and seeks to wage warfare against the believer.
5. He wants to discourage and destroy us during the wilderness times of our lives. So, how do we survive the wilderness of trials and tribulations? From this text, we can look at David and learn some very practical principles that will help us.

First, stay in close communion with the Lord.

1. David wrote Psalm 63 while in the wilderness of Judah, here in 1 Samuel 23. While in the wilderness, notice what David wrote in Psalm 63:1 & 8.
 - This is exactly what we see David doing (read vs. 1-4). The word “*enquire*” means “to request; to ask counsel.”
2. One of the most difficult things you will ever do is to seek God diligently while in the wilderness of adverse circumstances. But, it is the most important thing you will ever do.
3. It is tough to pray when you are down and discouraged. But yet, the Lord is our lifeline. He is our source of wisdom and discernment. We tend to make very bad and emotion-based decisions when in the wilderness.
4. David didn't want to do this, so he told the Lord, “*Early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee...*”
5. Many times when we are in the wilderness, we run to all the wrong places for counsel. We make bad decisions and compound our problems. David said, “I'm not going to do that. I will seek God and thirst for Him.” 2 Corinthians 1:8-9
6. David knew that only the Lord could refresh his dry and thirsty soul. Are you going through the wilderness? Now is not the time to forsake your communion with the Lord. Now is the time to seek Him more faithfully and diligently than ever.

Second, continue to do what is right.

1. David heard that the people of Keilah (a city in the southern part of Judah) were in trouble. David sought the Lord about what to do, and God said, "Go fight the Philistines."
2. What was David to do? Should he risk his own life to go and help these people? If he came out of hiding, he would run the risk of having King Saul come and kill him.
3. Clearly, the right thing to do was for David to go and help his brethren in Keilah. David obeyed God's will. Notice the result in verse 5.
 - David had his own set of problems, yet he went and helped those people as God had instructed him to do.
4. When you are in the wilderness and discouraged, it is very easy to quit doing what you know is right. Satan puts thoughts in our minds such as, "You obey God and live unto Him, but look where it has gotten you - in the wilderness with all these problems."
5. Satan loves to discourage us and get us to question God. But Satan is a liar, and when we quit obeying God, all it does is compound our problems. It isn't right to obey God only when circumstances are good. It is right to obey God all the time! Galatians 6:9
6. David was in the wilderness, but he exclaimed, "*Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.*" Psalm 63:4
7. David was determined that he would do what was right, even in the wilderness.

Third, keep your eyes on the Lord, not people.

1. If David was depending on people to encourage him and get him through this wilderness, he would have been in some trouble.
2. If he was focused on people, he would have had plenty of reason to give up.
 - His own core group of men tried to discourage him. vs. 3
 - The people of Keilah that he risked his life for turned on him. vs. 12
 - The people of Ziph betrayed him to King Saul. vs. 19-20
3. There was one bright spot. Jonathan came out into the wilderness to encourage David and to remind him of God's promises (vs. 16-18). Thank God for friends like this! This is the kind of person we should be when others are in the wilderness.
4. But, here is the point: When you look at people and focus on people, it's hit and miss. They may encourage you. But then again, people will let you down.
5. Do you know what David wrote in Psalm 63 while in the wilderness (vs. 5-6)? He said, "*Lord, I will be satisfied with **you**. My mouth will praise you. My heart will dwell and meditate on **you!***" David was determined to keep his eyes on the Lord. Hebrews 12:2-3

Fourth, make the Lord your wilderness stronghold.

1. David fled from one mountainous rock to another as King Saul kept hunting him (vs. 24-26). As Saul was about to finally close in on David, God providentially protected David. vs. 27-28
2. The chapter ends with David dwelling in strongholds at Engedi (vs. 29). But do you know what David's true stronghold was? In Psalm 63:7-8, David told the Lord, "*Thy right hand upholdeth me.*" In the Bible, the phrase "God's right hand" is a symbol of God's mighty power.
3. David was trusting in the Lord. God Almighty was David's stronghold. When you are going through the wilderness, you need a stronghold that won't change or crumble.
4. Therefore, the only safe stronghold is Jesus Christ and His written Word. Abide and rest in Him, and trust in His Word. Don't turn to the bottle, drugs, illicit sex, fleshly pleasures, the bars and nightclubs, etc. They do nothing but bring further bondage.
5. Turn to Christ; turn to His Word. These are strongholds that will never fail.