

PROPHETS & JUDGES

IN THE PROMISED LAND

“Let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one.’ . . . If these words of Christ were heeded, they would check the utterance of evil surmising and unkind criticism; for in commenting upon the actions and motives of another, who can be certain of speaking the exact truth? How often pride, passion, personal resentment, color the impression given! A glance, a word, even an intonation of the voice, may be vital with falsehood. Even facts may be so stated as to convey a false impression. And ‘whatsoever is more than’ truth, ‘is of the evil one.’” {Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, pp. 67, 68}

WEEK 23 - THE RESULTS OF ENVY

I. Doeg the Edomite

1. As Doeg the slanderer gave his partial and exaggerated statement, what happened to Saul?

2. How does Satan feel when people today bear tales as did Doeg? How can we keep from slandering or exaggerating?

3. Why do kings or people in power sometimes get so angry and even filled with Satanic fury in their actions against God's humble people?

4. What is one of Satan's settled plans for the overthrow of God's people? What has kept him from fully carrying out this plan?

5. How do Saul's unbelievable actions against the priests stand as a warning for us?

II. David's Flight from Keilah

1. What was the result of Saul not overcoming his jealous, revengeful spirit?

2. What is the danger in taking the first step after a suggestion of Satan?

3. Once a person is set on his course of defaming and misconstruing the actions of another, what happens?

4. What is our only safety against these jealous, false accusers?

5. What were Saul's thoughts as he heard of what David had done to save Keilah? What would have been the result if Saul's heart had not been poisoned by envy and jealousy?

Doeg the Edomite**September 21, 1888**

When Doeg the Edomite heard the words of Saul offering as a bribe the gift of vineyards, and the position of captain over thousands and hundreds, his ambition was stirred, and he determined to turn informer. He had been at Nob and had witnessed the action of the priest when he provided David with bread, and gave him the sword of Goliath. He cherished hatred toward the man in holy office, because he had reproved him for his sins; and now a favorable opportunity presented itself, not only to gain riches and position, but to be avenged on the priest. {1.1}

Doeg responded to the words of Saul as one who would prove himself the friend of the distressed monarch. He said, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. And he inquired of the Lord for him, and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine." Doeg knew well that the action of the priest toward David did not proceed from any malice toward the king. The priest thought that in doing a kindness to an ambassador of his court, he was showing respect to the king. He was altogether innocent of any evil intention toward Saul or his realm. David had not taken a straightforward course before the priest, he had dissimulated, and on this account he had brought the whole family of the priesthood into peril. {1.2}

But Doeg was a slanderer, and Saul had such a spirit of envy and hatred and murder, that he desired the report to be true. The partial and exaggerated statement of the chief of the herdsmen, was suited for the use of the adversary of God and man. It was presented to the mind of Saul in such a light that the king lost all control of himself, and acted like a madman. If he had but calmly waited until he could have heard the whole story, and had exercised his reasoning faculties, how different would have been the terrible record of that day's doings! {1.3}

How Satan exults when he is enabled to set the soul into a white heat of anger! A glance, a gesture, an intonation, may be seized upon and used, as the arrow of Satan, to wound and poison the heart that is open to receive it. If the Spirit of Christ possesses us wholly, and we have been transformed by his grace, there will be no disposition to speak evil, or to bear reports freighted with falsehood. The falsifier, the accuser of the brethren, is a chosen agent of the great deceiver. Ahimelech was not present on this occasion to vindicate himself, and to state the facts as they existed; but Doeg cared not for this. Like Satan his father, he read the mind of Saul, and improved the opportunity of increasing the misery of the king by the words of his mischievous tongue, which was set on fire of hell. He stirred up the very worst passions of the human heart. All tenderness, pity, and humanity were extinguished from the breast of Saul. {1.4}

Like his master the devil, Doeg did not hesitate to accuse even the priest of the most high God. It was believed that there was a conspiracy between David and the priest, and that the priest had taken a leading part in helping the escape of the enemy of Saul, and in aiding him by giving him provisions, and by arming him with the sword of Goliath. Saul was beside himself with rage. When he had been brought under the influence of the Spirit of God, as David played rich and sacred melodies, he seemed to catch the inspiration, and would break forth in

impulsive and earnest expressions of praise and adoration. But when the influence was withdrawn, he would manifest the most opposite spirit. He seemed to be desperate, and was ready to do the most rash acts of daring and cruelty. The spirit of jealousy, which proceeded only from Satan, took possession of his heart. Good and evil seemed for a time to alternate in their control of the king. But on this day so dark a register was made in the books of Heaven by the divine Watcher, that the influence of good seemed to grow less and less perceptible in the life of Israel's monarch. He determined to pursue with the utmost fury the object of his hate and jealousy; for he thought that he now had an occasion for giving full vent to the worst passions of his heart. {1.5}

He sent for Ahimelech and all his father's house, and they presented themselves before him in their priestly robes of office that they might do him honor. And Saul said to Ahimelech, "Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse, in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me, to lie in wait, as at this day?" The priest then presented the matter in its true light to the king. "Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said, And who is so faithful among all thy servants as David, which is the king's son-in-law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honorable in thine house? Did I then begin to inquire of God for him? be it far from me; let not the king impute anything unto his servant, nor to all the house of my father; for thy servant knew nothing of this, less or more." {1.6}

It was evident that Saul was in one of his worst moods; but the priest and his household did not for a moment realize the danger that threatened them. They trembled when Saul set aside the testimony of Ahimelech. The king was so blinded with passion that the words of reason had no influence whatever upon him. He was so filled with Satanic frenzy that all regard for sacred things was lost. In his language he not only accused the priest of deception, but virtually charged God with counseling a traitor through his high priest. {1.7}

The action of Saul made manifest what a despot a king may become who has forsaken his God, and has given himself up to the control of the evil one. The explanation of the facts in the case of David and the priest was treated with contempt; the truth only served to infuriate the king, for it took away his excuse for following the dictates of his own evil heart. Saul preferred to believe the words of a wicked man, rather than the words of the servant of God. Thus it has always been and always will be in our world with those who serve the cause of the great adversary. "Justice standeth afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. . . . And he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey." When we understand how perseveringly Satan works to gain control of the hearts of men, we shall know why men have acted with such Satanic fury and determined hate toward the servants of God in every age. {1.8}

In tracing down the history of the church from the fall of Adam to our own time, we see that the righteous have been the objects of the assaults of evil angels and evil men. It is a settled plan of the enemy to seek for the corruption of the souls of those who would vindicate the honor of God; and when he could not accomplish this, he has caused them to be put to death. Satan has manifested the

greatest activity in order that the true worshipers of God might be swept from the earth; but he has not fully carried out his designs, for God has put a limit to his power. There have been tares sown with the wheat, but the wheat has been preserved. Faithful men have passed through fire and sword, heresy and delusion, and have come forth from great tribulation with their robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. Thousands have fallen at the stake, but others have arisen to take their places. Staunch advocates of truth have stood the conflict of battle, and the controversy has been brought down to our own day. The light of truth has shone upon us, that we may reflect it upon others. {1.9}

The world's Redeemer knows all about the warfare that must be waged between good and evil. He has felt the malice of Satan to a greater extent than have any of his followers. As Saul refused the words of a priest and took the testimony of a sinner, so the statements of false witnesses were received against Jesus, and his own testimony was thrust aside. When Jesus was presented by Pilate to the people, and Barabbas was presented with him, and the ruler asked, "Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?" the multitude, under the control of Satan, cried out like madmen, "Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas"! "Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands." And the demon-like cry arose, "Crucify him, crucify him!" This was the man in whom no fault was found when he was brought to trial; and yet a robber and a murderer was preferred before him. {1.10}

Satan takes advantage of circumstances. At times evil men seem to triumph without hindrance. They do their dark deeds and there is no interposition of Heaven. When men separate from God by transgression, Satan has no further conflict to wage with them, and they have no more opposition to offer to the adversary of God and man. Had there been no interference on the part of God. Satan and man would have united in an unbroken alliance against Heaven. There can be no enmity between fallen men and fallen angels. Both are evil, and both have become so by apostasy; and evil always leagues with evil against God and in opposition to those who keep his commandments. They have refused to fulfill the requirement of Heaven, and they are at enmity with those who love and obey God. {1.11}

We shall yet find that the same spirit of opposition to God and his people that existed in ages past exists in this day of boasted light and privilege. Satan is engaged in doing his own work. His angels will conspire with evil men today, and the combined energies of apostasy will gather together their forces to tear down that which they once built up, and to destroy the influence of those who are champions of the truth. {1.12}

The warning which Samuel had given Israel when they clamored for a king was beginning to be understood. They saw the prophet's statement demonstrated in the despotism of Saul. After he had heard the calm, truthful words of the priest, instead of acknowledging his error of imputing evil to the servant of God,

he shouted like a madman, "Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou, and all thy father's house." ^{1.13}

The inconsistency of jealousy was shown in this verdict. Without proving the guilt of any one of the priests, the king commanded that all the line of Eli should be slain. He had determined upon this course of action before he had sent for them or heard their side of the case. And no amount of proof could undo his malignant purpose. To vent his wrath upon one man seemed too small a matter to satisfy the fury of his revenge. ^{1.14}

"And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the Lord; because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not show it to me. But the servants of the king would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the Lord." The footmen had looked upon the priests of the Lord with the greatest reverence. They were convinced of the innocence of Ahimelech, and they could not consent to do this inhuman deed, although by refusal they placed their own lives in peril. ^{1.15}

If anything could have aroused the conscience of the king, it would have been the refusal of his servants to fulfill so barbarous a command. But jealousy is cruel as the grave; and the heart of Saul was blinded because he had gone away from the light which God had given him; and "if therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" ^{1.16}

Satan is never at a loss to find allies in his work. The most blood-thirsty tyrants have found instruments by which to carry out their hell-born designs. Saul's rage was not appeased by the noble stand of his footmen, and he turned to the man whom he had connected with himself as a friend, because he had reported against the priests. Thus this Edomite, who was as base a character as was Barabbas, slew with his own hand eighty-five priests of the Lord in one day; and he and Saul, and he who was a murderer from the beginning, gloried over the massacre of the servants of the Lord. Like savage beasts who have tasted of blood, so were Saul and Doeg. The king, not yet satisfied with his horrible cruelty, "said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod." And men, women, children, and cattle were all slain by this cruel Edomite. ^{1.17}

This is what Saul could do under the control of Satan. He could go to any lengths of barbarity. When God had said that the iniquity of the Amalekites was full, and had commanded him to destroy them utterly, he was too compassionate to carry out the order of the Lord, and spared that which was devoted to destruction; but now, without any command from God, under the guidance of Satan he could put an end to the priests of the Lord, and bring ruin upon the inhabitants of Nob. Thus is shown the perversity of the human heart that has refused the guidance of God. ^{1.18}

This deed filled all Israel with horror. It was the king whom they had chosen who had committed this outrage; and he had only done after the manner of the kings of other nations that feared not God. The ark was with them; but the

priests of whom they had inquired were slain with the edge of the sword. What would come next? ^[1.19]

David's Flight from Keilah

October 5, 1888

After the slaughter of the priests, "one of the sons of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped, and fled after David. And Abiathar showed David that Saul had slain the Lord's priests. And David said unto Abiathar, I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul; I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house. Abide thou with me, fear not; for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life; but with me thou shalt be in safeguard." ^[2.1]

Saul had cut himself off from every means whereby the Lord could work in his behalf to save him from himself. In the facts of sacred history, there are lessons showing what a dangerous thing it is to cherish a jealous, revengeful spirit. It is impossible to determine to what length this spirit will lead its possessor if it is not overcome. When an evil report is circulated concerning the character of those who are striving to serve God, a power from beneath seems to move the minds of those who cherish enmity. He who has prided himself on possessing a high sense of honor, by taking this path of enmity will often fall into error, and will say and do things of which he deemed himself incapable. If a prophet of God should portray before him the course he would be led to pursue by cherishing such a spirit, he would indignantly inquire as did Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" But let him turn from the straight path of right, and follow where the promptings of Satan would lead him, and he will manifest the spirit of his captain until truth, honor, and justice are sacrificed through the lusts of passion. ^[2.2]

Christ declared to the Pharisees, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." When men take the first step after the suggestion of Satan, they do not think that they will take another and another; but it will become easier and easier to follow, and finally they break away from all the bounds of honor and conscience, and do the work of the enemy, under a pretense of doing the work of righteousness. The plainest evidences of the truth and purity of the character of him who they wish to defame, are misconstrued. The most positive assurances of his faithfulness and nobility have no weight or power to control their slanderous reports. The most innocent works of conscience and charity are looked upon as actuated by selfish motives and unholy desires. The only safety for him who is thus assailed is to trust fully in God, not seeking to vindicate his own cause, but when falsely accused to his face to state only the plain facts of the case, and then leave the result with God. The Judge of all the earth will do right. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." ^[2.3]

While David was in his refuge in the forests of Hareth, he was informed that the Philistines were warring against the men of Keilah, and that the people were in great distress, for their enemies were robbing the threshing-floors. "Therefore David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the Lord said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah. And

David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah; how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines." The men who had cast in their lot with David, looked at their small force—only a few hundred men—and they were filled with dread at the thought of an encounter with the superior numbers of their enemies. They were also afraid that Saul would attack them, and that between the two armies they would be overwhelmed. [2.4]

David again sought the Lord. It was the manifest fear and reluctance of his men that led him again to inquire of the Lord. He had been anointed as king, and he thought that some measure of responsibility rested upon him for the protection of his people. If he could but have the positive assurance that he was moving in the path of duty, he would start out with his limited forces, and stand faithfully at his post whatever might be the consequences. David was well aware that while Saul was occupied almost entirely with planning and with executing his plans for his discovery and capture, he could not be strengthening his kingdom, or promoting the good of his subjects. [2.5]

The people of Keilah were being grievously oppressed, for, while their enemies were encamped without their walls, they were being robbed of the necessities of life. In answer to the inquiry of David, the Lord said, "Arise, go down to Keilah; for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand. So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah." [2.6]

"And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah." When the king heard the part that the son of Jesse had acted in the siege of Keilah, instead of being grateful that a champion had been raised up to defeat the enemies of Israel he was filled with a more determined enmity toward David. He thought that the action of David brought his own inaction into an unfavorable light before the people, and placed him in the discreditable position of one who was negligent of his duty as the ruler and protector of Israel. He could not but see that this was the truth of the matter; but he was angry with David because his works were righteous and his own were evil. The additional evidence that God was favoring David, in the fact that he had with only a handful of men gained a complete victory over a large force, served to make him the more furious. If his heart had not been poisoned with envy and jealousy, the manifestation of God's favor to David would have had a convincing power upon his mind, and would have led him to change his course. [2.7]

The king anticipated the speedy destruction of him whom he hated. He intended to inclose the city with his troops, and demand that the inhabitants of Keilah give up the son of Jesse as his captive and prey. Saul was elated with the thought of successfully achieving his plans in securing David. He was so blinded by the great deceiver that he exclaimed, "God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars. And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men." [2.8]

Although a great deliverance had been wrought for Keilah, and the men of the city were very grateful to David and his men for the preservation of their lives, yet so fiendish had become the soul of the God-forsaken Saul, that he could demand from the men of Keilah that they yield up their deliverer to certain and unmerited death. Saul had determined that if they should offer any resistance they would suffer the bitter consequences of opposing the command of their king. The long-desired opportunity seemed to have come, and he determined to leave nothing undone in securing the arrest of his rival. {2.9}

After the defeat of the Philistines, David felt that at last he had found a place in which he could be secure from danger without seeking to the caves and dens of the earth. If the people who appeared to be so grateful for their deliverance, would but be true to him and his interest, they could hold the city against Saul and his army. But he remembered the destruction of Nob and the massacre of the priests because one of them had shown him favor, and he became alarmed for himself and for the inhabitants of Keilah, lest they should all suffer in a similar manner. He dared not confide in their earnest assurances of fidelity, fearing that when driven by circumstances they would purchase peace and safety for themselves by delivering him over to his enemies. He could no longer feel secure in a city inclosed by gates and bars. {2.10}

David went to the Lord for counsel. He made his supplication before God, saying, "O Lord God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O Lord God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the Lord said, He will come down. Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the Lord said, They will deliver thee up." {2.11}

David could feel no sense of security in remaining at Keilah, even in the midst of the people who owed their lives to his efforts in their behalf. The inhabitants of the city did not for a moment think themselves capable of such an act of ingratitude and treachery; but David knew, from the light that God had given him, that they could not be trusted, that in the hour of need they would fail. {2.12}

"Then David and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah; and he forbore to go forth. And David abode in the wilderness in strongholds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand." {2.13}

{2.13}

Answer Hints

Section 1: | 1) 1.3 | 2) 1.4 | 3) 1.8 | 4) 1.9 | 5) 1.18 |

Section 2: | 1) 2.2 | 2) 2.3 | 3) 2.3 | 4) 2.3 | 5) 2.7 |

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