

JEALOUS HATRED AND LOVING FRIENDSHIP

I Samuel 19 and 20

I. SAUL'S PLOT AND JONATHAN'S ATTEMPT AT MEDIATION 19:1-7

A. Jonathan Warned David 19:1-3

Get the picture of the terrible danger David was in. Saul proposed a cold-blooded plot to eliminate David, and tried to involve his family and several of his palace cabinet and servants. David could do little to protect himself against a stab in the back from anyone who wanted to gain the favor of the king.

B. Jonathan Attempted to Placate Saul 19:4-5

We see another of life's dramatic ironies: Jonathan, whom David would displace, saved David's life. Jonathan first warned his friend to hide, and then reasoned with his father. David, he pointed out, had done nothing to offend the king. Indeed, to the contrary, David was quite valuable to Saul. Saul, admitting his sin, withdrew his instructions and David returned to the court.

C. Saul Promised Not to Kill David 19:6-7

Saul listened in the sense of believing and acting upon the advice of Jonathan. He probably had a genuine change of heart here, but not for long.

II. SAUL'S ATTEMPTS TO KILL DAVID 19:8-24

Saul tried to use every means he could against David, even his son, daughter and the prophets, but it is futile to fight against God and God's anointed.

A. At the Palace 19:8-10

Several months elapsed, and when David once again showed his military prowess, he became the victim of his own success. Winning over the Philistines, he became the object of a second murderous, but unsuccessful, attack by Saul. This is one of three episodes which illustrate Saul's hostility to David, and his forcing David to leave the royal court.

Note the paranoid act of sitting with a spear in his hand. Evidently Saul always had a spear at his side or in his hand. This same spear figures in several later events.

B. At David's House 19:11-17

1. The Facts of the Incident

Saul became more aggressive and tried to kill David at night in his own home. This time it was not Saul's son but his daughter, David's wife, Michal, who saved David. She used deceit and lies to achieve her aim and the "image" of verse 13 suggests that she worshipped other gods beside Yahweh (Hebrew, teraphim, is a plural form with singular sense, usually meaning household gods). The writer makes no moral comment on all this, seeming to imply that an extreme situation demands extreme measures. The point was that David's life hung by a thread. Discovering the deception, Saul scolded Michal: "Why have you...let my enemy go?" She lied, saying that David would have killed her.

2. The Lessons of the Incident

a. The event showed David's popularity.

He had won all hearts but Saul's.

b. The event helped to confirm David's innocence of any treason.

The two persons who so far had rescued David had been Saul's own children, Jonathan and Michal. If Saul had had any genuine reason to attack David, Jonathan in particular would not have sided with David.

c. The event showed that David's leaving the court was not an act of desertion.

He had no other choice (verse 18).

C. At Naioth with the Prophets 19:18-24

David would eventually be king, but the stark political reality at this time was that Saul was king of a united Israel and his will was law. Within Israel, David was at his mercy. Israel's kings had the power of life and death over their subjects -- at least, if they could catch them. The abuse of power is one underlying aspect of the story of Saul and David.

David went to Ramah, about three miles from Gibeah, to consult Samuel because Samuel was not only a prophet who might have advised him but one whose political influence might possibly have offered him some aid. Samuel was able to bring David temporary relief from pursuit, but not by political power. Naioth was perhaps a building or a school in Ramah. There was a community of prophets there, and we may assume that Samuel, free from responsibilities of national leadership, exercised leadership there.

The story, the fourth episode in a chapter of narrow escapes, seems strange to us but was consistent with the previous history of Samuel. "Prophesying" was an ecstatic state in which those participating lost control over their actions.

Saul's men and eventually the king himself lost all control of their actions. Although the prophets were not condemned, Saul became the object of scorn, since he lost all dignity.

These chapters never suggest that Saul was a helpless victim of circumstances, a mere plaything of the Almighty. He went to Naioth of his own free choice, in pursuit of an innocent man; if God there took away his self-control, it was not to harm Saul but to rescue David.
-- Payne, 1 and 2 Samuel

The phenomenon of *glossolalia* is here -- a frenzy of religious activity -- uncontrollable tongues, and perhaps with Saul, also loss of control of himself. This is a very instructive passage for tongue-speaking today. Note that they are no more spiritual because of it. It happens before the Ascension and Pentecost, so it is not a gift. It is simply a phenomena and the only one found in the Old Testament. Phenomena can come from God, from men, or from Satan (who loves to counterfeit!).

The New Testament gift of tongues was part of the sign gifts to authenticate the apostles before the Jewish believers. They lasted only for the life of the apostles and then ceased. When the Pentecostal movement began 2000 years later with tongues speaking, it was not the New Testament gift, but a phenomenon like this passage in Samuel.

III. JONATHAN'S WARNING OF DAVID 20:1-42

A. David Discussed His Fear with Jonathan 20:1-11

Another long period of time probably elapsed in the middle of verse 1. Perhaps Saul's prophesying experience made him recant for a time. At any rate things were in such a state that David was expected at the palace for a festival. David was at a turning point in his career and attempted to discover from Jonathan exactly where he stood in relation to Saul and why his life was in danger. However, he had to avoid being seen and he did not want to put Jonathan's life in danger.

Jonathan thought he could keep David informed because Saul told him everything. David, however, thought Saul would keep his own counsel, knowing Jonathan's affection for David. So they planned that the next day David would not show up at the customary Feast of New Moon on the pretext of a family sacrifice, and Jonathan would judge from his father's attitude how things stood. David asked Jonathan to be perfectly frank and pleaded that if he were guilty of any treason and must die, that Jonathan kill him rather than Saul. They went out to the field in the open country to work out details.

B. Jonathan Made a Covenant with David 20:12-17

The two young men had made a covenant at the outset (18:3), a solemn agreement though a little one-sided since David had nothing to give. Since both men, for different reasons, expected to be king one day, it is amazing that they were not deadly enemies. True friendship involves lasting obligation, loyalty, and if need be, personal self-sacrifices. "A friend loves at all times" (Prov. 17:17).

FIRST SAMUEL, LESSON 8

Friends enrich life because they give without counting the cost. Jonathan was a man who gave to David more than received; and in doing so he showed how different he was from the typical king described in 1 Samuel 8:11-17 when the people were asking for a king. Jonathan was supremely a giver -- and David, though destined to become king, persistently declined to take anything away from Saul. He patiently waited for God to give him the crown of Israel.

-- Payne, 1 and 2 Samuel

Under the conditions of the covenant, Jonathan recognized David as the rightful king and swore to protect him. David promised that when he became king, he would show mercy to Jonathan and his family and, unlike ancient oriental tyrants, protect him, if he were still alive. David fulfilled his promise by his treatment of Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth (see 2 Sam. 9:1-13).

C. Jonathan Arranged a Signal with David 20:18-23

Jonathan's plan was that on the third day David was to return to his hiding place and Jonathan, accompanied by a page, was to come and shoot three arrows. Should these drop short, all would be well; if they overshot the mark, it would indicate danger.

D. Jonathan Made an Excuse for David 20:24-29

Note that Jonathan had not deserted his father. He showed tremendous loyalty to both Saul and David. At first Saul thought David was absent because he was ceremonially unclean, but when David did not come the second day, Saul raged at David and also Jonathan.

E. Saul Argued with Jonathan 20:30-34

Saul screamed at Jonathan that as long as David lived there was no hope that his own dynasty would continue. Ironically, Saul's words in verse 31 were, of course, true. Though David was never seditious, it was still true that David would one day become king and Jonathan never would. Jonathan had already crossed that bridge. In his love for David and for what he had come to believe was God's will, he had abdicated the throne to David. Saul's immediate anger told Jonathan all he needed to know. Sometimes a king used the high honor of keeping a man at his court simply to keep somebody suspected of disloyalty under close observation. That was obviously Saul's motive here. David was to be honored alongside Saul's great captain, Abner, but for different reasons. Saul's straightforward speech revealed his true feelings and the depth of his hostility toward David.

Jonathan now proves his devotion to David in three ways (30-34):

- 1. He refused to change his mind about him, no matter what Saul said.**
- 2. He refuted Saul's argument with the question of David's innocence.**
- 3. He put his own kingship aside and put his own life in danger for David.**

Note the degree of deceit forced upon both David and Jonathan. The Bible neither condones nor condemns their lies, but uses the lies to illustrate and emphasize the peril in which they were placed.

F. Jonathan Warned David 20:35-42

Jonathan signaled David the next morning with arrows, and meeting, they wept together. Friendship with Saul was impossible but Jonathan swore unbroken loyalty to David. David departed and Jonathan went back to the city.

CONCLUSION:

This is a frightening story of the deadly power of jealousy to poison the heart and mind. At the same time it is the most beautiful story in all of literature of friendship, devotion and loyalty.

Because he was open to people, Jonathan felt himself drawn to David. "The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself." Jonathan first found himself bound inwardly to David. The word "knit" is helpful because it reminds us that you knit together things that are of the same nature. Jonathan and David were men who had much in common. Both of them were athletic and military men, courageous, "go-for-broke" individuals who instantly hit it off. We must accept all believers in Christ, but we discover that there are some people with whom we are especially knit.

- Gary Inrig, How to Build a Friendship

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 9

READ LESSON 8:

1. Share with the group what was interesting or new to you.
2. Share with the group a brief story of a friend to whom you have been devoted and who was devoted to you.

READ CHAPTER 21:1-9:

3. What weapon did David get at the Tabernacle?

READ CHAPTER 21:10-15:

4. How did David escape being imprisoned or killed by the Philistines at Gath?
5. By what title did they call David in verse 11?

READ CHAPTER 22:1-10:

6. Who joined David at the cave of Adullam and became his mighty band?
7. How was David thoughtful of his parents in 22:3-5?
8. From what country was the informer who told Saul that David was in Nob?

READ CHAPTER 22:11-23:

9. What four statements about David did Ahimelech give in David's defense?
10. Who killed the priests at Nob? Why?
11. In 20-23, why did David take responsibility for the killing of the priests?