

File No. 57

I SAMUEL 18:1 — 20:42

I Samuel 17:58

SAUL TRIES TO KILL DAVID / GOD KEEPS DAVID SAFE

(SBS Bk 2 Story NoS. 37 & 38)

Story Notes

Saul made sure that David stayed with him. His kingdom depended on such men. His son Jonathan stood to gain nothing politically from a rival, however he took David into his heart. They enjoyed the fellowship that arises from a shared trust in God (cf. 14:6–15).

Saul used David because of his wisdom and success, but then he had to deal with David's popularity from grateful women and the troops he led. His need for David turned to suspicion, rage, dread, and then to cunning. Perhaps the evil spirit from the Lord was meant to awaken him to what his life had become. However, knowing God had left him and was with David only focused his resolve to remove this new servant of the Lord. He thought promotion would leave David exposed to the Philistines.

Anger and fear must have blinded Saul to the significance of the Goliath incident. The king's pleasure was to bring David's life into danger (18:20). However, when David realised he could have the king's daughter as his wife by destroying a number of Philistines, he was glad to do this. Then, Saul's pleasure turned to even deeper bitterness and fear. Nothing could halt the ascent of David.

Chapters 19 – 20

Saul had now fallen into the sin of Cain against which the elder John warns us (I John 3:11–12). His murderous wishes were temporarily averted by his son's diplomacy but David's further successes drove him back to murder. (David may have written Psalm 59 on this occasion.) Murder was avoided again by his daughter's cunning. Saul saw these members of his family as enemies but they were true friends. In acting out their delight in David, or love for him, Saul had another opportunity to look at what was really happening. The occasion when Saul sat with spear in hand, and David with a harp, was a parable. David could fight, better than Saul could, but he could also stop and sing with a heart that was glad in God.

So, David fled, to Samuel. He needed to be with another man of the Spirit. This same Spirit protected them by coming upon the servants of Saul, and then, on Saul himself. He prophesied again, as he had done when he was changed into another man (10:6, 9–13). Perhaps this was his opportunity to begin again. However, the tragedy of Saul's life was that the same Spirit who had begun aiding him now frustrated him. The question remained; was Saul really among the prophets? He certainly had opportunity to be so. On the other hand, David was nurtured by the man who anointed him, and by the Spirit of God.

Jonathan had reason to be confident with his father. He had once reconciled his father to David (19:4–6). He said that his father consulted him on everything (20:1). David needed better assurance than this, but his reliance on Jonathan was total. His life was in his covenant partner's hands.

Cf. Psalm 55:12–14, 20.

Jonathan accepted the risk of being a friend to the Lord's anointed. He prayed that God would be with David as he had been with his father, virtually acknowledging the transfer of leadership to David (cf. Saul's reaction to this in 18:14–15; 20:31). He foresaw the time when he (if he survived the transfer of power), his family, and his successors would need the protection of David on the throne. Love can make great demands (cf. John 14:15), and so it happened now. Jonathan made a covenant with the new dynasty and required a vow from David that his family would be protected. Here was a foretaste of the Jesus who would lay down his life for his friends, and of the disciples who would gladly suffer for God's anointed, and of the rich fellowship Christians would have with one another (John 15:12–13).

Jonathan's word was put to the test. He acknowledged his friend before his perverse father and nearly paid for it with his life. Jonathan knew now that the split between his father and his friend

was final and was grieved by the dishonour shown to his friend. So, he told David the news by the arranged signal. David's honour for his loyal friend was total, his tears copious. Jonathan, also with tears, sent him away safely, acknowledging that the Lord was arbiter over what happened from now on. The friendship between these two men had grown through the faith they shared. Both men knew God would favour his people and give them victory. Both had been captured by this grace and it showed in their lives.

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