

Let's open our Bibles tonight to 1 Samuel 19 as we continue our study through the narrative parts of the Old Testament.

We have mentioned to you more than once that narrative presentations - which is how the Old Testament history is given to us, as well as the book of Acts - are designed to have you learn by placing yourself in the story. Sometimes God covers a day in chapters; sometimes 100 years pass in between them. You sometimes want to say, "LORD, what happened?" But this is what we've been given to know, and this is what we've been given to learn from. Paul, when he wrote to the Corinthians as well as to the Romans, said that the Old Testament was written for our learning so that we, through the comfort and through the patience of Scripture, might have hope (Romans 15:4).

So we're currently in 1 Samuel; 1 and 2 Samuel only cover about 130 years or so - from the birth of the first prophet (the last judge), Samuel, until the death of King David.

In chapter 16, we began David's ministry. Saul came and went. He ruled for forty years, but the LORD really gives us his life in two major battles. They are covered just in three or four chapters. We're not rid of Saul yet, but the LORD has set him aside, and really his desire now, as we continue to learn tonight, will be to destroy him whom God has sent to replace him and to continue to fight against God's choices as he has done most of his life. David, when he was called, was called as a teenager. He was chosen by the LORD through the prophet Samuel. It was a quiet, low-key kind of slow-to-rise prominence, if you will. He was prayed for by the famous prophet who's been in ministry for sixty years and then finds himself just going back to work watching his father's sheep. But something happened. The Holy Spirit fell upon him to begin to prepare him for what God had prepared for him. We don't know how long that took, but we know that his exposure to Saul was fairly innocuous. David was a good musician. He was a man who could play the harp better than most. When Saul began to be troubled by an evil spirit that the LORD had sent his way (taking from him the Holy Spirit), a request was made to find a musician that would soothe his heart. David was chosen, and so periodically he'd

come to the capital, if you will, would deal with Saul - minister to him - and then go back to work.

His exposure to the nation came - if you were with us - in chapter 17, when David's father sent him to bring his older brothers some food (they were serving in Saul's army), to bring their captain some food as well. And he arrived about six weeks into not only a standoff between the Philistines and the Jews but also at a time when, twice a day, their champion, Goliath - 9'6" of him - would come out to taunt the Jews, to taunt their God, to question their courage; even challenging them to a fight, one-on-one, and whoever wins, the loser will serve the winner. David arrived right towards the end of these almost six weeks of this going on. If you were with us in chapter 17, David heard what this guy was saying, got furious. His brothers got mad at him because they thought he was just trying to spy out the place; even belittled him, said, "Your job is to watch some poor sheep. What are you doing here on the front lines?" And David said, "Isn't there a cause? He's talking about our God!" Saul, meanwhile, had offered his daughter's hand in marriage, a tax-free life, a nice house - just to motivate anyone that would take on this giant. No one would. And so David said, "I'll go." And no one seemed to buy that as a good idea - this little wimpy guy. But David said, "I've learned that the LORD is able. I watched my father's sheep, a bear tried to take one of them, I destroyed it by my bare hands. So I'm pretty good at fightin' off lions and bears. I'm sure the LORD can do that with this." And so you know the story if you were with us. The victory that David gained in taking this giant out by faith and with that slingshot, cutting his head off and bringing it into town, obviously brought him into the eyes of everyone. He now became a national figure, immediately so. Saul quickly enlists him into fulltime ministry (in chapter 18); asks who his father was. Saul's boy, Jonathan, godly young man - quite a bit older than David but still kind of sharing their same faith; they became the best of friends. In fact, Jonathan gives to David his royal robe, his armor. He recognized that God's hand was upon this young man, that though he was Saul's son, he would never be king; that this wasn't something that God had interest in. And so Jonathan supported David. We are told in chapter 18 - and some time passes - that David showed himself wise in everything he did. When he got promoted, as far as the army was concerned, he was just wise. When Saul lashed out at him, he just showed wisdom. And so he really did wait upon the LORD, and the public noticed. I mean, God began to bless David. They came back, and the people gathered in the streets to sing, and their song was, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." And boy that didn't sit well with Saul who'd already been set aside by the LORD, and now he saw

this kid, David, as a threat to his popularity and his power, if you will. And so he determined that he would try to get rid of him. When David came to play music for him - because he was so troubled - twice Saul took his spear and chucked it at him. David was swift afoot, I guess; and he missed him a couple of times. But let's not be in any doubt about it - this guy wanted David dead. For a while, it was quiet and private.

Tonight, in chapters 19 and 20 (which is what we're going to look at), Saul's determination to finish David's life goes public. He can't contain himself. Last week's efforts to kill him were more covert; these are no less severe, but now they're in the open. And we will find that to be so for the next seven-and-a-half years of David's life. So what is the lesson? This poor young man who is chosen by God while he's watching his dad's sheep, faithful young man, called by God to be king - comes out of obscurity, by faith slays the giant, shows himself wise, and then he's on the run for seven-and-a-half years. What are we supposed to learn from that? What are the benefits of suffering for the sufferer? Because David is in this particular situation - he'll be in predicaments of his own doing like we are sometimes - but all of this is a result of doing well. So, for the next seven-and-a-half years, and for the rest of the book of 1 Samuel, we get to watch David be on the run - barely escaping, unfair, frightening, death defying, betrayed by his own countrymen, betrayed by his friends. Nothing seemed to be going right. And Saul goes from ruling the nation and protecting them from their enemy - mostly the Philistines - to just having one goal: kill this guy. With all of his resources and power and army and wherewithal, and David and a bunch of ragtag guys who are learning to trust God like David is learning, it doesn't seem much like a fair fight at all. So, Saul might have, I guess, tried to stop the orbit of the sun; God would protect David, as God will protect you.

There is nothing that will come into your life unless God will permit it. You know that to be so, don't you? Isaiah 54:17 said, "No weapon formed against you shall prosper." So you're living your life now in a world that is really anti-Christ in many ways. We're almost a post-Christian society the way that Europe now treats the believers. But it's the world that God has placed you into and wants you to be a minister to and an outreach for. And so we need to know that God's on our side, don't we? Because it looks like an unfair fight otherwise.

And David is kind of in that same place. He's going to have to learn to trust God in all that he faces. He becomes a man after God's own heart because when he falls,

he repents; he turns back to the LORD. For Saul, who is still a part of this story, his heart just gets harder, if that's possible. And the good thing is how the LORD teaches us - doesn't gloss over the story. We get to see the weakness of the saints, the wickedness of the aint's. David, at times, is a great example, even sometimes a type of Christ to us. Other times, he's just a type of us. But for forty chapters, good or bad, God sets before us this report of David and Saul; and for at least these chapters in this book, the conflict of David just trying to do the right thing, and man, life was hard, just trying to do the right thing. He shows us the consequence of sin in Saul's life and the blessings and consequence of obedience in David's. So lest you think, "Gosh, I've been serving the LORD, my life is hard," yeah, welcome to the neighborhood. "In the world you're going to have some tribulation" (John 16:33).

It is a good biblical lesson to realize that when persecution comes your way, and it will, if you're doing the will of God, the result will ultimately be that you're going to be blessed. I know you don't see it now - and I complain about it more often than rejoice in it - but even the suffering of the early church quickly turned to multiplication and fruit and lots of fruit. Right? The dispersion and the persecution after the death of Stephen, for example, brought the gospel to the land. You read in Acts 8:4 that those who were scattered because of the persecution went everywhere preaching the word. It was hard, but it brought fruit. David would write, in Psalm 76:10, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise You." That wrath of man will praise the LORD. When you're suffering at the hands of others, God can be honored. And that's certainly David's story. If you're looking to David to figure out how to live an easy Christian life, you should probably skip this book. Go on to something else because David's the antithesis of easy, but he definitely is the example of faithfulness in difficulty that comes with it; especially these first seven-and-a-half years when Saul just wanted him dead. So, wherever you go in Acts - Acts 12:24 talks about the word of God multiplying, prevailing in chapter 19:20 - wherever persecution followed, so did great fruit. So, look, if you're goin' through it tonight, and you feel like, "Gosh, I'm right where God wants me to be, why am I suffering so?" I would look around to see what He's doing because I think you're going to be excited to see what comes out of it. You'll be blessed as a result. But put yourself in David's shoes for a minute. There are a couple of times in here that David literally says, "I'm gonna die! I barely got away alive this time. I don't think this is gonna happen again. I'm just gonna run for the hills and leave the land and run from God and do it on my own." It sounds like us, doesn't it? But the LORD was with David.

So we're taking these two chapters because one story kind of fills the whole chapter, so we'll be able to read through many of it to get the lessons. But let's start in verse 1 of chapter 19. "Now Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David;" (what a nice king this is) "but Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted greatly in David. So Jonathan told David, saying, 'My father Saul seeks to kill you. Therefore please be on your guard until morning, and stay in a secret place and hide. And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak with my father about you. Then what I observe, I will tell you.' Thus Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father, and said to him, 'Let not the king sin against his servant, against David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his works have been very good toward you. For he took his life in his hands and killed the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great deliverance for all Israel. You saw it and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood, to kill David without a cause?' So Saul heeded the voice of Jonathan, and Saul swore, 'As the LORD lives, he shall not be killed.' Then Jonathan called David, and Jonathan told him all these things. So Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as in times past." Notice the turn here - from secret, private, to Saul saying to his boy, "We've gotta kill David. I can't have him around." And Jonathan, favoring David in love, not only warns David but he suggests to his father that David's been nothing but faithful. "What would you do to hurt him when he's done nothing but bless us?" I think that Jonathan probably didn't believe his dad was this rotten. "Just hide for the night. I'll talk to him. It'll be fine. But let me at least go find out. He's having one of his fits. He's known for these insane rages. You've been there and played for him. He's tried to stick you to the wall" (pin the tail on David) "a few times. So you know what he's like." So Jonathan reviews to his dad the faithful service of David and at least gets him, for now, to relent. "Okay. Things are gonna get better, David. I talked some sense into my father." So Jonathan intercedes at great personal expense to him. If you were with us back in chapter 12, you might remember that his dad, in some foolish vow, had put his own son's life in danger; and it turned out it was his son, indeed, that had broken the one law he had demanded that the people follow of not eating until the battle was over. And Jonathan had. But the people stopped him. So this isn't a guy to be trifled with. Right? He's not a man who is even a very good father in many ways. But Jonathan was a good son, and he wanted to make sure that things were going to be okay.

So, verse 8 tells us that, for a while, things were all right, "And then there was war again; and David went out and fought with the Philistines, and struck them with a

mighty blow, and they fled from him. Now the distressing spirit from the LORD came upon Saul as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand." (This is not a good time to play for him.) "And David was playing music with his hand. Then Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear," (this is now the third time) "but he slipped away from Saul's presence; and he drove the spear into the wall. So David fled and escaped that night." So one more victory and, again, that jealousy is aroused in Saul's life, and it begins to resurface. "This is a pretty tough crowd. I'm not takin' this gig anymore." "Can you play Friday night?" "No, I can't." "Or Saturday?" "I'm busy for the year." Right? So, as David is ministering to Saul, Saul again turns on him. David ducks, and he flees. God delivers him. We read in Psalm 34:7, "The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them." Could have been written as David began to experience this. But I will say this to you - though God delivered him, David had to duck, and David had to flee. I know we sometimes sit around, saying, "LORD, You're not doin' anything." Well, no. You do your part, He'll do His. So ducking and fleeing were David's part; watching over his life was God's part. Yet here, when man is filled with rage and satanic influence is heavy upon his life, God keeps him. Well David is now about to run for his life. He's gonna go on a run that will last seven-and-a-half years. It would wear out Forrest Gump. He is gonna be runnin', man, and runnin' until you can't run anymore. And he'll be hiding until Saul dies. From here on forward. Imagine doing the right thing - having obeyed the LORD faithfully in all your ways - and this is what you get as a reward: you're running for your life.

The ways of the LORD always have to be trusted. Yeah? But the ways of the LORD cannot always be explained. And I really don't know how to explain to you why the LORD allows things except I start to fill in the blanks with things I do know. Like God is good - that He's for me and not against me (Romans 8:31); that He'll finish the work He started (Philippians 1:6); that He doesn't waste my tears (Psalm 56:8). You can make a list for yourself. You know what they are. So when these things come your way, and nothing adds up in the win column, and yet you're doing all that you know to do, there's something to be said for just letting God have His perfect will and watching to see what will follow you. The ways of the LORD, like I said, can't be explained, but they're always good.

Well David, after the third dodgeball game, runs home. Verse 11, "Saul also sent messengers to David's house to watch him and to kill him in the morning." (He's already in the house.) "And Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, 'If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed.' " (This was Saul's daughter.)

"So Michal let David down through a window. And he went and fled and escaped. And Michal took an image and laid it in the bed, put a cover of goats' hair for his head, and covered it with clothes." (This has got to be an ugly lookin' thing!) "So when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, 'He is sick.' " ("He can't go anywhere.") "Then Saul sent the messengers back to see David, saying, 'Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may kill him.' " (Nothing secret about this.) "And when the messengers had come in, there was the image in the bed, with a cover of goats' hair for his head. Then Saul said to Michal, 'Why have you deceived me like this, and sent my enemy away, so that he has escaped?' And Michal answered Saul, 'He said to me, "Let me go! Why should I kill you?" ' " So David heads home, where he learns from his wife that the assassination plot is outside. They've staked out the house; he's gonna be dead by morning. So David leaves that way, under a cover of darkness. We can read in Psalm 59, which David will write a little later, that in the introduction of that psalm, it is this experience - where he has to be let out of the window. Here's what he wrote in that psalm (verses 1-3, 16), "Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; defend me from those who rise up against me. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloodthirsty men. For look, they lie in wait for my life; the mighty gather against me, not for my transgression nor for my sin, O LORD. But I will sing of Your power; yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning; for You have been my defense and refuge in the day of trouble." A prayer that he prayed that's not recorded here but he would later record in the psalms. So David, he runs off at night with a prayer on his lips.

Meanwhile, back at home, Michal is pretending David is sick in bed and takes one of her images. The Hebrew word is "**teraphim**." It is a word that usually means false god, if you will, image. Covers him in goat hair. I don't know what this thing looks like. David was not a good lookin' guy.....I don't know. But "**teraphim**," at least in Old Testament times, were household idols of fertility, usually, found in the houses of Chaldean families. So Saul's daughter would have then fallen for the practices of the idolatrous lives of the people in the area. We have no biblical insight into Michal's spiritual life at all besides this. Not even another comment. So, interesting though, years later Solomon's downfall through his wives that he married would be these images as well; he would begin to bow to these foreign gods. So, she tries to help David, but notice she helps him by lying. Not sure if that's always the best way to go. In fact, I would say that's probably not the way to go. Fortunately David, for the most part, will seek to stay alive by faith, not by deceits of the flesh. Having said that, we're gonna run into five or six places that David just absolutely bails out the window spiritually and goes to his flesh. But

usually it's more like, "Commit your ways to the LORD and trust also in Him, and He'll bring it to pass" (Psalm 37:5). So, for the most part..... So Michal tells her father that David threatened to kill her if she didn't let him escape, which was a lie. Look how wicked his heart is in verse 15. He says to the soldiers who said David's sick, "I don't care if he's sick. Pick up his bed. I just want to kill him. It'll be easier. He's half-dead anyway. Let's do that." It's amazing how blinding sin is, that Saul would seek to kill his most trusted servant who had done him absolutely no harm.

Verse 18 tells us, "So David fled and escaped, and went to Samuel" (and Samuel is old, in his 80's by now) "at Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and stayed in Naioth. Now it was told Saul, saying, 'Take note, David is at Naioth in Ramah!' Then Saul sent messengers to take David. And when they saw the group of prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as leader over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied," (kind of under the power of God's Spirit). "And when Saul was told, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. Then Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also." (You get the idea maybe the LORD's protecting David.) "Then he also went to Ramah, and came to the great well that is in Sechu. So he asked, and said, 'Where are Samuel and David?' And someone said, 'Indeed they are at Naioth in Ramah.' So he went there to Naioth in Ramah. Then the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on and prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah. And he also stripped off his clothes and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they say, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?' " So, David runs to the prophet, which makes sense to me. Right? Samuel has been the voice of God, the first national prophet in their history for the past sixty years. It is an hour away from Gibeah, where Saul was living. Upon seeing the prophets and Samuel, these soldiers that come in three groups come to arrest David because Saul wants to kill him, and they all fall under the power of God's Spirit. They begin to prophesy. Are they saved? No. Just like the donkey wasn't saved. But God has a way, doesn't He? So the LORD began to just put these guys in their place, and they can't do anything but say what God says and walk away. Great protection. David should be learning. He should be taking notes. When in trouble, wait upon the Spirit. Second group, same thing. Third group, same thing. Finally Saul comes to think, "Well, I can handle this." But Saul fares no better against God's protection than his other group. In fact, he ends up walking down the street prophesying if he ever gets to them; and then when he sees them, tears off all of

his clothes, lays down naked before them, and for 24 hours just can't move. I like this servin' the LORD thing, don't you? God has a way of puttin' the enemy in his place. So, it looks - to everyone who's watching - that David may have the advantage here, that God was with David and that fighting against God or His work is a useless endeavor. So, for 24 hours, Saul lays on his face so that the people want to begin to think, "Well, maybe he's a prophet. Look at him! He's goin' hour after hour." It's an interesting picture of Saul trying to fight God and losing. And, by the time that Saul is able to get up and move around, David's long gone. The LORD had put him in his place. So David had plenty of opportunities to leave. He heads home to talk about it with his friend, Jonathan, because now he doesn't know what to do. I think Saul and the soldiers are a pretty good lesson to be careful of those who claim spiritual superiority by spiritual gifts. Well, they had them.....for a while. So here in Ramah, where Saul had been publicly anointed as king, he now finds himself on his face. It's almost as if the LORD said, "Hey, by the way Saul, I'm still in charge. Now get dressed and go home and leave David alone." But he wouldn't. But David should learn. And what did we say this evening when we started? At least one of the lessons of David's running is you've got to learn to trust God to handle all your problems. And this is a pretty good lesson. I want to see the videotape of this. I'm sure that, in heaven, they've got it in the archives. Right? We can see it. It's gonna be great watchin' ol' stupid Saul laying on his butt, naked, worshipping the LORD, trying to get David. I guess that didn't work out for him very well.

Chapter 20, verse 1, "Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and went and said to Jonathan," (back an hour the other way) " 'What have I done? What is my iniquity, and what is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life?' So Jonathan said to him, 'By no means! You shall not die! Indeed, my father will do nothing either great or small without first telling me. And why should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so! " (See, he wasn't believin' it.) "Then David took an oath again and said, 'Your father certainly knows that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said, "Do not let Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved." But truly, as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death.' " So Jonathan is David's best confidant. He goes to him, and he says, "Your dad's tryin' to kill me, man! He sent three groups and himself to find me, and if the LORD hadn't intervened, I probably would be dead already." And Jonathan said, "No way. You don't know my dad like I do. He'd never do anything without telling me. David, you're just running scared. Fear will make you go crazy. Just relax, man." And David says to Jonathan, "Relax?! I'm only one step ahead of death all of the way.

There's only one step between me and death." That's how David feels. But the LORD had just graciously and miraculously delivered him, and yet David's pretty upset, pretty discouraged, pretty overwhelmed with what he's going through. Young guy's doing all the right things and he just thinks, "How long can this last?" And he swears to him because Jonathan's not believing it. He swears an oath to him. "Look, your father tried to kill me! I could have been dead." And Jonathan says, in verse 4, "What can I do to help you?" " 'Whatever you yourself desire I will do it for you.' " "What do you want?"

Verse 5, "And David said to Jonathan, 'Indeed tomorrow is the New Moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king to eat. But let me go, that I may hide in the field until the third day at evening. If your father misses me at all, then say, "David earnestly asked permission of me that he might run over to Bethlehem, his city, for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family." If he says thus: "It is well," your servant will be safe. But if he is very angry, be sure that evil is determined by him. Therefore you shall deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the LORD with you. Nevertheless, if there is iniquity in me, kill me yourself, for why should you bring me to your father?' But Jonathan said, 'Far be it from you! For if I knew certainly that evil was determined by my father to come upon you, then would I not tell you?' Then David said to Jonathan, 'Who will tell me, or what if your father answers you roughly?' And Jonathan said to David, 'Come, let us go out into the field.' So both of them went out into the field. Then Jonathan said to David: 'The LORD God of Israel is witness! When I have sounded out my father sometime tomorrow, or the third day, and indeed there is good toward David, and I do not send to you and tell you, may the LORD do so and much more to Jonathan. But if it pleases my father to do you evil, then I will report it to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. And the LORD be with you as He has been with my father.' " (But He was with him no longer.) " 'And you shall not only show me the kindness of the LORD while I still live, that I may not die; but you shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever, no, not when the LORD has cut off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.' So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, 'Let the LORD require it at the hand of David's enemies.' Now Jonathan again caused David to vow, because he loved him; for he loved him as he loved his own soul. Then Jonathan said to David, 'Tomorrow is the New Moon; and you will be missed, because your seat will be empty. And when you have stayed three days, go down quickly and come to the place where you hid on the day of the deed; and remain by the stone Ezel. Then I will shoot three arrows to the side, as

though I shot at a target; and there I will send a lad, saying, "Go, find the arrows." If I expressly say to the lad, "Look, the arrows are on this side of you; get them and come" - then, as the LORD lives, there is safety for you and no harm. But if I say thus to the young man, "Look, the arrows are beyond you" - go your way, for the LORD has sent you away. And as for the matter which you and I have spoken of, indeed the LORD be between you and me forever.' " So, here's the plan.

Jonathan's not buyin' this, right? It's his dad. David swears, "He is trying to kill me!" Jonathan says, "Well, let's find out. This'll be a good plan. You won't be here. Dad gets angry, we'll know he means evil. If he's good with it, then we'll know, David, that you're wrong. But, look, I want to make a deal with you, and the deal is if you become king, save my family. Treat my family with goodness. Take care of us. Show us.....and either way, we're gonna be friends forever. Here're our true intentions." And so Jonathan elicits from David an agreement that he will provide care and protection for Jonathan's family which, by the way, he does, and we'll get to that when we move along.

Notice, from verse 17, that Jonathan loved David even though he realized that David is his replacement. So here's a good guy, Jonathan, in a horrible family with an ungodly father, whose life turns out just fine. God has a way of just getting to people, doesn't He? And he becomes David's great confidant and support during this time and for the next several years.

So we move ahead, in verse 25, "Now the king sat on his seat, as at other times, on a seat by the wall. And Jonathan arose, and Abner" (who would be the head of Saul's army) "sat by Saul's side, but David's place was empty. Nevertheless Saul did not say anything that day, for he thought, 'Something has happened to him; he is unclean, surely he is unclean.' And it happened the next day, the second day of the month, that David's place was empty. And Saul said to Jonathan his son, 'Why has the son of Jesse not come to eat, either yesterday or today?' So Jonathan answered Saul, 'David earnestly asked permission of me to go to Bethlehem. And he said, "Please let me go, for our family has a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has commanded me to be there. And now, if I have found favor in your eyes, please let me get away and see my brothers." Therefore he has not come to the king's table.' Then Saul's anger was aroused against Jonathan, and he said to him, 'You son of a perverse, rebellious woman!' " (That's exactly how it reads in Hebrew.) " 'Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness? For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, you shall not be established, nor your kingdom. Now therefore, send and

bring him to me, for he shall surely die.' And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said to him, 'Why should he be killed? What has he done?' Then Saul cast a spear at him to kill him," (to kill his own son) "by which Jonathan knew that it was determined by his father to kill David. So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and ate no food the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David, because his father had treated him shamefully." So Jonathan finally realizes his father's wicked bent. It breaks his heart. David had told him; he was right. What a horrible revelation in understanding. You get the picture from verse 33 that Saul's kind of a hothead? But at least he's a terrible thrower, (Laughing) so I think that must be good. That's all I can find out.

Verse 35, "And so it was, in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad was with him. Then he said to his lad, 'Now run, find the arrows which I shoot.' As the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. When the lad had come to the place where the arrow was which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried out after the lad and said, 'Is not the arrow beyond you?' " (So, he sent David the message.) "And Jonathan cried out after the lad, 'Make haste, hurry, do not delay!' So Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows and came back to his master. But the lad did not know anything. Only Jonathan and David knew of the matter. Then Jonathan gave his weapons to his lad, and said to him, 'Go, carry them to the city.' As soon as the lad had gone, David arose from a place toward the south, fell on his face to the ground, and bowed down three times. And they kissed one another; and they wept together, but David more so." (It broke David's heart.) "Then Jonathan said to David, 'Go in peace, since we have both sworn in the name of the LORD, saying, "May the LORD be between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants, forever." ' So he arose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city." So, David now finds himself on the way out. Seven-and-a-half years he was going to learn to rely upon the LORD to protect him from the wickedness of an enemy and to learn that God loved him.

I think one of the hardest things to teach is a correct concept of who God is. And you don't oftentimes learn it in the fire. You should. But David will, more than once, as well as the people that were with him, decide that God's ways were not necessarily the best. And so they fight against the difficulty that comes from serving the LORD. There's an invaluable lesson in learning that God is for you, and you don't need to be so quick to fight for yourself. And I bring that up because later on, as we get to where David is a king and he sits on the throne, a lot of his

decisions are governed by what he learns now. So we don't have to fear what man does to us. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). Na na na na na na. It makes me feel pretty good. Fear can bring an edge only when you lose sight of who the LORD is. And circumstances don't necessarily communicate God's care. God said He wouldn't leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5), but He said we'd have trials. "In the world, we'd have some tribulation" (John 16:33).

So, in chapter 20 here, verse 3, David says to his best friend, "I got so close to death," and it leaves a mark on his heart that we will see for years to come. For now, it's a fear of death, it's a fear of how quickly this closes in on him. But later on it becomes a life that says, "I am ready to go if God is ready to take me." So, he lives and breathes aware of the danger that he lives in, but he learns that it isn't something to worry about or to fear. It was a close call. David leaned to the left and moved to the right, and there went that spear. It scared him. But he learns a valuable lesson, and that is there is only one breath between me and death, but the LORD is the One who stands in the way. Right? So, you can't just live for this life only. You've got to be ready to go when God's ready to go. Paul, in his 1 Corinthian letter, chapter 15:19, said, "If we live for this life only, of most men we are the most pitiful." If this is all you got. We did a couple funerals these last few weeks. And some show up at the funeral, and they know the LORD, and the person who died does; and everyone's grieved but hopeful. And then you talk to people that have no hope, that this is all they have, and you can't console them. There's nothing you can do to offer them any kind of hope. What do you say? "Things'll get better with time"? "They're better off now"? They may not have been. Nothin' matters to the person that lives for this life only. And David is going to learn not to live for this life only. Wasn't it Jesus, in Luke 12, that talked about that parable of the man who had so much treasures on the earth, who was going to build bigger barns? In the parable, He said, "This guy is such a fool! He's gonna die tonight. And then what happens to all that stuff he's worried about?" So David said, "There's only one step between me and death." For right now, that's fear for David. In the times that will come, it will be a peace where he'll rest in God's care. But it takes growth. He didn't live for this life only. He kept up with his walk with God. He stayed in fellowship with the LORD. And he does really well, and he will do really well.

I guess if you had to walk away with a lesson in this book, the lesson has to be God's gonna take you through stuff to get you where He wants you to be. You have to take that road a hundred times to learn it.....or once. Right? Because we're not

quick at learning. We can't, "God, deliver me! I never wanna do this again!" Learn nothing.....or we can find ourselves understanding what God is trying to do. These seven-and-a-half years for David, these many chapters - through chapter 31, find a young man who loves God fiercely but knows very little about how to let God have what he's going through. We will find David trying to act crazy to save himself. We will find David threatening people with death if they won't listen. We will find David giving up. And then a whole bunch of chapters we'll find David just smiling in peace as he teaches 300, then 400, and ultimately 600 men that become his army - that God can be trusted. When they say, "Let's kill Saul," David says, "We can't lay our hands on God's anointed." When they go into the camp and say, "Look, he's sleeping in the open, God brought us here, now we've got him where we want him," David goes, "Yeah, we can't do that either." Six hundred guys go, "Man, he's so stupid." But David was years ahead of them in trusting God. These guys would come around and would trust the LORD as well.

So what is the benefit for suffering? Well, there're a whole bunch of benefits. But know this - there's a benefit when you're goin' through it. Right? There's a benefit. And if tonight you are struggling, there's a benefit. Sometimes it's the struggle that gets you saved. Right? You come to the end of yourself and you say, "LORD, just help me! Save me. Help me. Deliver me." And God uses those kinds of pressures to bring you to your knees. Other times you know the LORD, but you're not having to depend upon Him because an easy life is also usually pretty detrimental to your spiritual well-being. Because who prays much when everything's fine? Who fasts much when everything's fine? Who cries out to God when all is well? We usually just.....we're good. Our flesh is.....we like to just coast through life. But the person that's under pressure - they're calling the church for prayer, they're filling out prayer slips, they're calling their friends, they're posting on Facebook, "Please pray for me" - there's all kinds of crying out. And David, as well as he's done up to this point, is put in a position where day in and day out he needs to trust the LORD because later on, as a king, if he doesn't do that, the nation suffers. And they won't. He'll lead them to the zenith of their existence, at least between now and when the LORD comes back to rule, and they'll really get to see what He wanted all along. Amen?

Let's pray.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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