

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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Sermon title: David's Reaction to King Saul's Growing Rage, I Samuel 20

Date preached: May 21, 2017

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INTRODUCTION: A lot of people tell me as they study the Bible, they get lost or they can't follow the sequence very well. Even the most educated theologians might struggle with the sequence of events and their meaning. But, this is good; it keeps us on our feet and keeps us studying and dialoguing with each other.

There are several books of the Bible that follow a good and interesting sequence—Joshua, Judges, I Samuel, and 2 Samuel. Reading them is almost like reading a novel. Joshua starts off with the children of Israel crossing the Jordan River and going into the Promised Land the Lord had given to them. Then, they conquer all these lands and kingdoms, and they start to form their tribes. As some of you might know, Israel had 12 tribes. They become a powerful force — seemingly unstoppable — when they obeyed God. When they obeyed God, they prospered, and when they disobeyed, they were defeated.

In I Samuel 20, we enter a period of King Saul's kingship. King Saul was Israel's first king, and he wasn't really a great king. Before King Saul, Israel was led by different leaders—Moses, Joshua, and the Judges (not like judges we have today—leaders appointed by God to be the leaders of Israel). The people of Israel were discontent because the nations around them had kings, and God didn't really want them to have a king. But, God permitted them to have a king.

Samuel was the last prophet and judge before God anointed Saul as the king. He was not that great of a king. In I Samuel, we read about Saul's antics. When King Saul was disobeying God, the scripture tells us God removed his favor from Saul while he was still the king.

And, David, a shepherd boy, was secretly anointed king by Samuel the prophet, who was still around during this time. It's interesting how the scripture tells us God sent some type of evil spirit to torment Saul.

And, young David goes to visit his brothers in the Army. They were at a stalemate because of the giant named Goliath. And, David gets suited up, and with a sling and five stones, he kills Goliath. Well, David comes back a hero, and Saul becomes jealous — one of Saul’s worst problems — being jealous.

Jonathan, Saul’s son and David make a covenant. And, Saul, in some type of political move, gives his daughter Michal to David as his wife. Saul is intent on killing David, and David begins his long journey of running from Saul.

In I Samuel, we see two parts:

1. David’s plan to run from a crazy man.
2. The expanded covenant relationship.

The scripture opens with David talking with his best friend Jonathan, who happens to be the son of King Saul.

SCRIPTURE: I Samuel 20:1-10 ¹*Then David fled from Naioth at Ramah and went to Jonathan and asked, “What have I done? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father, that he is trying to kill me?”*

² *“Never!” Jonathan replied. “You are not going to die! Look, my father doesn’t do anything, great or small, without letting me know. Why would he hide this from me? It isn’t so!”*

³ *But David took an oath and said, “Your father knows very well that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said to himself, ‘Jonathan must not know this or he will be grieved.’ Yet as surely as the LORD lives and as you live, there is only a step between me and death.”*

⁴ *Jonathan said to David, “Whatever you want me to do, I’ll do for you.”*

⁵ *So David said, “Look, tomorrow is the New Moon feast, and I am supposed to dine with the king; but let me go and hide in the field until the evening of the day after tomorrow. ⁶ If your father misses me at all, tell him, ‘David earnestly asked my permission to hurry to Bethlehem, his hometown, because an annual sacrifice is being made there for his whole clan.’ ⁷ If he says, ‘Very well,’ then your servant is safe. But if he loses his temper, you can be sure that he is determined to harm*

me.⁸ *As for you, show kindness to your servant, for you have brought him into a covenant with you before the LORD. If I am guilty, then kill me yourself! Why hand me over to your father?"*

⁹ *"Never!" Jonathan said. "If I had the least inkling that my father was determined to harm you, wouldn't I tell you?"*

¹⁰ *David asked, "Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?"*

First, DAVID'S PLAN TO RUN FROM A CRAZY MAN – PART 1

EXPLANATION: Saul continues his descent into mental disorder, taking his wrath out on David — a wrath spawned by jealousy. David fears for his life, and so he flees from Naioth at the side of Samuel to the side of his covenant friend, Prince Jonathan. Jonathan is somewhat surprised and feebly denies his father would try to kill David. Together they devise a plan to try to determine if Saul is indeed seeking to kill David.

Like all of us, David is not perfect. God never portrays his Biblical saints as such, but painfully etches for us in scripture their flaws, faults, mistakes, and sins. In this passage, we begin to see the subtle intrusion of the fingers of fear into David's thinking. He begins to doubt his calling and anointing.

I'm wondering as David witnessed the withdrawing of the Holy Spirit from Saul, if he was concerned the same thing might happen to him. We know from Psalm 51, which was written after his sin with Bathsheba, that this was a major concern to him.

APPLICATION: I want you to know the Holy Spirit never leaves the New Testament believer. We are sealed unto redemption by the Holy Spirit. I've had a few senior adults who question their security in the Lord toward the end of their lives. But, the scripture is clear. The Lord will never leave nor forsake us.

Once fear starts to wiggle its way into our thinking and we begin to doubt what God has done in our lives and the promises he has given to us, we can backslide quickly. I'm not a prosperity gospel preacher, nor a health and wealth preacher, nor a name-it-claim-it-frame-it preacher, nor a power of positive thinking preacher, but I do

think we treat negative thinking and speaking a bit lightly. The scripture over and over instructs us to speak and think that which is positive, constructive, and faith directed. I've noticed the older we get, if we are not careful, we have a tendency to be negative, critical, and complaining.

In verses 11-17, David and Jonathan reaffirm their covenant.

SCRIPTURE: I Samuel 20: 18-23 ¹⁸ *Then Jonathan said to David, "Tomorrow is the New Moon feast. You will be missed, because your seat will be empty." ¹⁹ The day after tomorrow, toward evening, go to the place where you hid when this trouble began, and wait by the stone Ezel. ²⁰ I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I were shooting at a target. ²¹ Then I will send a boy and say, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I say to him, 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you; bring them here,' then come, because, as surely as the LORD lives, you are safe; there is no danger. ²² But if I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you,' then you must go, because the LORD has sent you away. ²³ And about the matter you and I discussed—remember, the LORD is witness between you and me forever."*

Second, THE EXPANDED COVENANT RELATIONSHIP – PART 2

EXPLANATION: David calls upon the covenant he and Jonathan made previously. He knew he could trust Jonathan. They work out a code of sorts with arrows and a servant boy fetching the arrows. However, in addition to this, we have here an extension of the covenant between David and Jonathan. In Verse 15, David promises to extend the covenant to Jonathan's house and lineage. We will see the fulfillment of this promise later in 2 Samuel, when David rescues Jonathan's crippled son, Mephibosheth, from Lodebar. A neat story for study later on. 😊

ILLUSTRATION: I heard of the niece of a couple who was made guardian of their daughter if they died. Time passed, and the caregivers died. The new guardian kept her promise from long ago, and now she goes to visit her cousin in the care center where she lives after driving through traffic for about an hour and a half. Each month she meets with her ill cousin who doesn't even have the cognitive ability to know someone is watching after her welfare. All she knows is that when this woman named Gayle shows up, she has vanilla pudding for her, and she eagerly dives into it. She doesn't know Gayle meets with the staff on a regular basis

to be sure her needs are being taken care of. But Gayle made a promise, and she has kept it. Now, that's a covenant.

ILLUSTRATION: Before my father-in-law died, I promised him we'd take care of Susan's mom, and we did. Before my dad died, he asked me to do something for him, and I told him I would. What he asked me to do will require some circumstances to come together, and I will do it when the time is right.

APPLICATION: We would do well to develop and maintain covenant relationships with fellow believers. It's New Testament living. And, as people get older, those relationships become even more precious.

SCRIPTURE: I Samuel 20:26-34 ²⁶*Saul did notice that David was not at the meal but thought he must have done something that made him ceremonially unclean but the next day he asked why David is not there.*

²⁸*Jonathan answered, "David earnestly asked me for permission to go to Bethlehem." ²⁹He said, 'Let me go, because our family is observing a sacrifice in the town and my brother has ordered me to be there. If I have found favor in your eyes, let me get away to see my brothers.' That is why he has not come to the king's table."*

³⁰*Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of a perverse and rebellious woman! Don't I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you?" ³¹As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Now send someone to bring him to me, for he must die!"*

³²*"Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" Jonathan asked his father. ³³But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David.*

³⁴*Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger; on that second day of the feast he did not eat, because he was grieved at his father's shameful treatment of David.*

Jonathan shot the arrows and spoke the code signaling to David (who was hiding) that King Saul wanted to kill him.

SCRIPTURE: I Samuel 20:41-42 ⁴¹ *After the boy had gone, David got up from the south side of the stone and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together—but David wept the most.*

⁴² *Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD, saying, ‘The LORD is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.’” Then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town.*

EXPLANATION: The rest of the chapter really is more commentary on Saul’s rage against David and the conspiracy between Jonathan and David to help him escape. We see the two tell untruths — lies — to explain David’s absence at the king’s table.

I just had to wonder while studying this, what God would have done if David and Jonathan had told the whole truth and not fallen into deceit. What if they had been completely up front and relied on God’s providence to make a way of escape for them? We shall see in the next chapter how this pattern of deceit leads David to act like a crazy man himself in the enemy’s camp.

APPLICATION: You know, it’s better to tell the truth and let God take care of the fallout. He is the redeemer, the repairer of the breach, the builder of the wall. I’ve found he will make a way if we will determine to follow what he’s told us to do through scripture or prayer.

I want you to think about the value of your word. It’s something which is becoming devalued in today’s society. We encounter lying and deceit in our everyday lives from our politicians, in our courtrooms, even from the pulpit.

ILLUSTRATION: A friend of mine managed a hotel in the mountains. The owner of the hotel asked my friend to do something illegal in order to avoid some type of inspection. He very kindly told the owner, “That’s not honest, and I just cannot do it.” It could have meant his job, but as it turned out, they found out he could be trusted with the hundreds of thousands of dollars, which flowed through their investment.

CONCLUSION:

- Covenant relationships are valuable.
- Lies and deceit only lead to deeper trouble.

If you've been listening today, I encourage you to repent of your sin and turn to Jesus. The Bible tells us if you confess the Lord Jesus with your mouth and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Repent of sin and trust Jesus today. God bless you, and have a good week.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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