

The Christ Must Suffer

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Preacher: Rev. Aaron Roberts

[0 : 0 0] Let's pray. Lord, would you open our hearts to hear your word this evening. In Christ's name, Amen.

Okay, team. It's probably useful just to summarize where we're at with Samuel at the moment. I didn't do that at all last week. I just kind of jumped into David and Goliath because it's kind of a well-known story.

So let's summarize where we've been so far in Samuel because we skipped a few weeks over Christmas. All right. So Samuel is a book about the rise and fall of kings.

And despite the fact that it's about these kings, it doesn't start, the book doesn't start in grand halls or with superstar warriors. It starts with Hannah, who was a very sad woman.

She couldn't have children. So she prays to God and God gives her a child, Samuel. And we know that Samuel was going to have something to do with the crisis, the leadership crisis in Israel.

[1 : 0 7] And the crisis was this. The priesthood was really corrupt. The head guy, Eli, you remember him? He was kind of a funny guy, like kind of sometimes good guy, sometimes bad guy.

Essentially, he was basically weak. He was a weak man. And his sons were just awful. That was the first few chapters. Then do you remember the ark stuff? That was really cool.

I like the ark stuff. Remember the Philistines took the ark? They captured it in battle? And so they have this ark. And everyone gets like hemorrhoids and boils and rats and stuff.

That was cool. And so the Philistines get rid of the ark and give it back to Israel. And it causes some problems there as well. And then Samuel says, okay, team Israel, you guys have got to repent.

You've got to come back to God. And they do. And it's wonderful. It's great. And they have this great win over the Philistines. And then everything is looking good, except that it seems like after that, the Israelites, who have been saved by God, decide they want to be like other nations and they want a king.

[2 : 1 1] Which is, it's a rejection of God, basically. They want a king to win their wars for them. And God has been the one doing that. And Samuel says to them, who's grown up and is the head priest guy at this point, he's going, guys, look, if you get a king, this is what it's going to be like.

If you get a king of your choosing, if you choose him, this is what's going to happen. And they're like, well, let's just, we'll go with it anyway, you know. And so Samuel, the priest, anoints Saul, who looks really good.

He's a very tall man. And he's the people's choice, basically. He has some initial success, but ultimately he disobeys God. He can't really get with the program in terms of, with God's authority, I guess, is probably the way to say it.

So God chooses somebody else. God chooses David, the shepherd boy. And Samuel secretly anoints David. And then, last week, we learnt about David, who became very famous when he defeated the Philistine giant, Goliath.

And I tried to make it clear last week that the story is not an example. David is not an example for us to follow in terms of being really brave, you know, in terms of us dealing with our personal kind of giants in our life.

[3 : 31] But rather, he's a picture of what Jesus has done for us. Okay, so that brings us up to this week. The way the book of Samuel has been broken up in terms of preaching means that this week we actually have three chapters.

It's 18, 19, and 20. We only read one chapter. And I think of that first chapter, I'm only going to preach from the first 10 verses. However, because it's all that, you're not getting ripped off, all right?

It's pretty much all in the first 10 chapters, in the first 10 verses of 18. However, just for continuity for the following weeks, what I'm going to do is I'm just going to summarise really quickly those three chapters so that you kind of know what's going on.

Does everyone know what's happening right now? Good. Okay. Okay. Donna's shaking her head. Just think about something nice for a couple of minutes. All right.

Chapter 18. Jonathan, the son of Saul, really connects with David. Says he loves David. And Saul is initially pretty into David as well because he's winning battles for him, right?

[4 : 34] So that's pretty cool. So he sends him out. He's really successful. Saul gets really jealous of David. Tries to kill him with a spear. And then he gets a bit more subtle about it. But, you know, he goes, oh, I'll try and work out that he can marry my daughter but then demand some big win for him and he'll totally get killed, you know, like by the first time.

So he's kind of really messed up at this point, right? Anyway, that doesn't happen. David doesn't get killed. He ends up marrying one of Saul's daughters. The people really love him because he's victorious. Chapter 19, which we didn't read.

All right. Jonathan talks to his dad and he says, Dad, like, you don't kill David. He's a really great guy. And Saul says, okay, I won't do that. But then David goes out and wins this huge battle and Saul gets really jealous again and tries to kill him with a spear again.

And so David goes back to his house and then he's thinking, I'm probably not safe here because Saul has sent some people to try and kill me again. And so he escapes out his window. And he flees to this remote place where Samuel the prophet is, who was the son of Hannah, you remember, right?

And Saul goes to kill him there. And a lot of attempted murders, right? And the weirdest thing happens is that Saul arrives at this place to kill him but ends up on the ground with his clothes off prophesying to God.

[5 : 50] Kind of a, you should read it. It's a really interesting story, right? It's basically, it's God saving David. God saving David. Chapter 20, David flees from there because it doesn't look too safe with Samuel.

Tracks down Jonathan, who he's still like this, you know, really great mates with. And he says, listen, we've got to work out this thing with your dad. Can you find out if he's definitely going to kill me?

Like, is he totally going to kill me? And so they work out this elaborate plan which involves firing arrows and a little boy behind a rock. It's pretty cool. You should read it. Jonathan talks to Saul and says, listen, are you going to kill, you know, he tries to work it out with him.

Saul begins to catch on that Jonathan really loves David and is more loyal to him than he is to himself. More loyal to David than he is to his father.

And so Saul actually tries to kill Jonathan with a spear but Jonathan escapes. Jonathan goes back and tells David, yep, Saul's pretty serious about killing you. And so he's a very angry, very angry man.

[6 : 56] Chapter 20 ends, it's quite beautiful actually. It ends with, it says that David and Jonathan have this very tearful goodbye. It says they're weeping and they kiss each other goodbye and it's very sad.

And it says, but David wept more than Jonathan. It's really dramatic and quite beautiful. So read that. So that basically brings us up to speed for this week.

Okay. I need to admit this has been a very tough sermon to write. The reason being that it's very complicated and there's a lot going on. And it's also a very tempting passage as a preacher because it's tempting to put the focus on yourself in the passage and take out of it what is not the main point but still probably quite interesting.

What I mean by that is it would be very easy to preach a sermon on friendship and its passage because of this beautiful friendship between Jonathan and David.

You know, what can I learn about being a good friend, commitment, suffering, communication, etc. You know, it's not bad stuff. It's just not what it's about. You know, it's also been a difficult passage to write because there is plenty of controversy around this text.

[8 : 15] Recently, a number of commentators have used this to say, well, here's an example of the Bible advocating homosexuality. That clearly David and Jonathan had a gay relationship or at least lovers or something.

And it's, you know, because it's, you know, Jonathan took off his robe, it says at the start, and his soul was knit to David's. And when they departed, they kissed each other. And so, I mean, there's plenty of that stuff as well going on.

But it's a very, I'm not going to deal with it because it's just, academically it's very weak.

I don't even want to spend any time defending the position because it's so weak academically. So, one of the ways that, as a preacher, that you guard against poor interpretations or erroneous interpretations is to see how a passage fits into the grand narrative.

It's to see how it relates to the greater story of God. And so, let's begin with that and then we'll zoom in on some of the smaller issues in chapter 18. So, in like really just a couple of sentences, the big story.

[9 : 36] What's happening here in Samuel in this particular part here is God is forming and he is establishing his Messiah, who at this point is David. He is the king who will defeat God's enemies.

He is the Messiah for the Israelites at this point. He is a king who will ultimately disappoint us. So, you know what's coming up, right? But in his success and his failure, it helps us to understand Jesus and I'll get more to that later.

But it's basically kind of a big picture. Now, let's zoom in on what is a very obvious question, I think. If David is the chosen king, chosen by God, not the people.

If God is like, yes, David, you're the guy I've picked out who's going to like be my guy. Then why is he having such a hard time?

I mean, why is it for three chapters here and basically for the next like four weeks, when we look at the way the scripture has been broken up here, is it's all David, people are just trying to kill David all the time.

[10 : 47] There are five or six assassination attempts in these three chapters. Why is this happening? Well, I can tell you for a start, it is not a lesson in how to be a good leader.

The point of this is not, well, you know, hardship makes you stronger, it's a good preparation for leadership. That is true. But I'm pretty sure it's not the point of this passage.

So what do we make of God's chosen king, God's Messiah, having such a rough time here? Because, I mean, it's awkward, right? This is the guy that killed Goliath. He's a big name. He's a powerful guy.

Everybody loves him except Saul. Saul's family all love him. His kids love him. The people love him. He's killed Goliath. And yet Saul, who's a crazy guy, is still on the throne.

Why? Why is this? Why all these assassination attempts? Why is David on the run? I mean, he has to leave his wife, you know.

[11 : 52] Escape out the window. The guy that killed Goliath saved everyone. Out the window. Walk away from his wife for a while. It's terrible. Okay, well, here's the point. Here's the point, okay. The Messiah, David, will not enter his kingdom through might, through power, through strength.

He will enter it through suffering. And we'll be talking about suffering for a while, over the next few weeks.

God, in this passage, is forming our expectation of what the Messiah will look like.

What the Messiah must be. And what the Messiah must be is a suffering servant. A servant who will suffer. Luke 24, if you want to read it later on.

Jesus says three times, the Christ must suffer. The Christ must suffer. I'm going to suffer, you know. Now, that leaves a lot of unpacking, and I will focus on that more probably next week, because otherwise I won't have much to say this week.

[12 : 58] But let me just say this. The idea of the Messiah being a suffering servant, just one little thing, just because I probably shouldn't leave it just hanging up there.

The idea of the Messiah being a suffering servant helps us, one, to understand what Christ did on the cross. Because what Christ did on the cross, it wasn't defeat.

It was success. It was victory. Okay. The suffering had a purpose. But we'll talk about that more next week. Let's look at chapter 18 now, and a few more nuanced aspects of that.

Okay, chapter 18. Probably helpful to have your Bibles there, team. Let me read these first five verses again, and Christ did a fabulous job. From verse 1.

As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the son of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day, and he would not let him return to his father's house.

[14 : 00] Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of his robe that was on him and gave it to David and his armor. He made his sword, his bow, and his belt.

And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him. There's some rich irony here, or I don't know if it's irony, rich something. Rich, interesting concept here.

David was the anointed one, right? This is what makes this story really, really cool.

What makes the friendship and commitment of Jonathan really cool, okay? Is that David was the anointed one. He was the king, the true king. The king that God had chosen.

Jonathan was the one that everyone assumed would take over the throne from Saul. So, in a fairly vicious society, they should have been rivals.

[15 : 05] Remember Jonathan saved the Israelites at that point? Remember that? I preached on that, I'm pretty sure. I don't know. Late last year, I guess. Jonathan was the guy that did that really cool thing where he just took his armor bearer.

Like, the king Saul wasn't doing anything and the Philistines were there. And Jonathan said, mate, let's just you and me. Let's just have a crack at this. Let's just have a go. Just you and me. Just you and me attack the entire Philistine army.

And he has this great line, perhaps God will act on our behalf. Maybe God will do something. And God does and it's wonderful, right? So, he showed himself to be this awesome warrior. Like, he wasn't like a second-rate kind of son that was a bit useless.

You know. He showed himself to be this guy that was a keener, that he had great faith in God. He was the natural heir. And then all of a sudden, this guy, David, comes along, kills Goliath and everyone loves him.

A much weaker man would have been a bit put out by that. A less confident man would have thought, I need to get rid of David.

[16 : 09] But instead of hating him, instead of power plays, Jonathan loved David. He loved David. And why did Jonathan act this way?

Well, the clue is Jonathan giving David his clothes and weapons. He stripped himself of his robe, his weapons and his belt and gives it to David. Now, despite what some people would say, this is not some erotic maneuver.

Okay? This is not some deviant behavior. This is not a weird thing, sexual thing that's going on. When Jonathan takes off his robe, his robe represented his position.

He was the heir apparent. He was the prince. He was ready to step in when his father died. The robe represented his crown rights. Jonathan is saying, by giving David his robe, he is saying, David, you are the rightful future king.

You're the future king, not me. I surrender that to you. It's not Jonathan saying to David, David, you're such a great guy. We've got so much in common. Look, I want to be your friend.

[17 : 24] Here's my stuff. Here's some of my stuff. It's cool. It's nice. You know? And it wasn't like this false humility thing of like Jonathan going, David, you be king.

No, you be king. You be king. No. You know, it wasn't kind of that kind of thing happening, right? It was... It was...

In fact, it was less about friendship and more about recognition. You know? It was faith.

That's why Jonathan did it. It was faith. He's looking at David and saying, God's salvation for us as a people is coming through you. You are the one who's going to defeat our enemies.

And Jonathan's thinking that, you know, the only way for me to participate in this is to get off the throne. And therefore I do.

[18 : 26] That's what the disrobing is about. That's a wonderful picture of faith. And the reason it's such a great picture of faith and a great model for us is because sin at its heart is not necessarily doing naughty things.

Sin at its heart is our heart saying, I want to be king. I want to rule my world. And to be a person of faith means walking away from your throne.

That's the first part of chapter 18. Let's read the first next few verses there. And they were coming home.

This is verse 6. When David returned from striking down the Philistine, the woman came out of the cities of Israel singing and dancing to meet King Saul with tambourines, songs of joy, with musical instruments.

And the Mormons sang to one another as they celebrated. Saul is struck down thousands and David is ten thousands. And Saul was very angry. And then he tried to kill him a few more times.

[19 : 36] Okay, so the second part of the sort of first half of chapter 18. It's there in dramatic contrast to Jonathan, right? The love that Jonathan has for David compared to Saul's jealousy and envy.

Now, initially the jealousy wasn't there. Saul used, saw David as this fabulous kind of resource. Do you remember like in early, no, wasn't it early, like mid-teens of Samuel?

Saul says, you know, if I find a valiant, if I find valiant young men, I'm going to use them, right? I'm going to use these guys because we're at war here. And this is exactly what he says is valiant young guys, I'm going to use this guy, right?

So he ropes David in and he's really successful and that's when things start going sideways. And we see this vivid picture of the destructiveness of envy. The commitment of Jonathan compared to the envy of Saul.

And envy is not a sin that we are... What's the word I'm thinking of? We aren't...

[20 : 45] We don't readily admit to envy, I don't think. You know, as a minister, I talk to people. People come to my office and want to talk to me and they seem, you know, happy to talk about problems with addiction or anger, you know, materialism or whatever, lust.

You know, classic foibles of kind of... of... that we have. I don't know. I don't think I've ever heard anyone admit to envy. And I think partly it's because we don't take it seriously enough.

If you Google envy, you'll get a lot of retail outlets advertising their products. You know, shoe envy comes to this place. You know, house envy, whatever, clothes envy.

You know, it's kind of like a... Actually, foible. I used that wrong incorrectly before. It's probably a good example of this. People see it as this kind of funny foible that society actually encourages. We don't take it seriously.

And yet, it's incredibly destructive as we see in Saul's life. You might not even recognize you have it. You might just be very unhappy with your life.

[21 : 57] Perhaps, in your heart, you harbor envy and jealousy. And you know you have a problem with it if you're unable to enjoy what somebody else has without thinking, I have not.

You know, it sucks the joy out of your life, basically. Envy. It's a symptom that you've made your life all about you. You know, which Saul did.

You know, he was committed to a dynasty. He wanted a dynasty, right? That was his God. And David was the person that was going to interrupt that dynasty. His life was all about him and his sort of empire and the continuation of that.

Well, how do we get free? How do we get free of envy and jealousy? Well, Jonathan shows us the way. You know, the cure for jealousy and envy is to give up your crown, is to walk away from your throne.

In other words, make Jesus the king of your life. Make him the most important thing in your world. Make your life less about you and more about Christ.

[23 : 01] If you want a really good example of that, if you like films and you find yourself that films are quite impactful in your life, I'd recommend a film I watched very recently called Of Gods and Men.

Has anyone seen that? If you've not, if you've noticed, Of Gods and Men. It's a movie about French monks in Algeria in the mid-90s during the Civil War and these monks have been there for a very long time.

They're mostly elderly. There's about seven of them, I think. Muslim extremists start terrorizing this remote village that they live in and these monks have to make a decision about whether they're going to stay there or not because they're Christians and so they're obviously an enormous target.

It is a beautiful picture of what it looks like to surrender your life to Jesus. I'd highly recommend that to you. Folks, if you think envy or jealousy might be a big deal for you, if you think the idea of walking away from your throne and control of your life sounds like a hard call, I would ask that you would come up for prayer at the end of the service.

You notice we probably changed things up a little bit in terms of how we do prayer. So instead of the prayer ministry happening at the back, we will have a couple of people up here that have name tags on which says prayer team. They'd love to pray with you.

[24 : 26] Something in the sermon has jolted your heart and you think, I need help. Just after the service or during the offering you can go up and speak to these guys. They won't do anything weird.

They'll say, why did you come up? And you can just say, oh, I've kind of got this thing, you know. They go, great. They'll just pray for you. They won't do anything weird. You know, prayer is something we do as Christians, right? We pray for each other.

It's a normal thing to do. Not an odd thing. Okay. Gee, what's the time? Ah, I've talked way too long. Okay, let me just summarise then.

There's tons of stuff I need to say about this but I'm not going to. Let me just finish with the big story again because I think that's really key. As I've said, God is forming his Messiah and at the core of this passage is the reality that God has abandoned Saul and he's anointed David.

Saul is out of control trying to kill David but he can't no matter what he tries. God, and this is important, God moves forward with his plan. God moves forward with his plan.

[25 : 34] He's chosen David and he's moving forward with David and that's why he's protecting it. The gates of hell will not overcome that. And this is all happening because God made a promise to Israel through Abraham that he would establish a kingdom through his king and God is faithful in his promise by preserving this king.

You think, well, that's all really cool but that's happened thousands of years ago. What relevance has that happened to me right now? Well, it should fill you with great confidence these stories of God moving his plan forward.

Just one example, your salvation. Now, I know some of you sometimes doubt your salvation. Am I good enough? Am I right enough? Am I enough of a Christian? When we study the Old Testament, we hear this incredible story about a God who is faithful to us even when we are unfaithful.

A God who is faithful to his promises that does not renege, that does not go back on what he has promised to do. Your salvation, even though if you feel distant from God, is sometimes as safely in the hands of a God who keeps his promises.

So keep walking with Jesus, folks. You can trust him. Keep casting aside your crown. Keep walking away from your throne.

[26 : 57] Amen. I love you.

Thank you. Steve. Thank you.

Okay. gio■■■