

The Christ Must Suffer

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 January 2012

Preacher: The Venerable Daniel Gifford

[0 : 0 0] Well, we're continuing on our series with 1 Samuel. We're looking at chapters 18 through 20.

So if you can turn to that on page 241, that'll be helpful as we're going through. It's a very big piece that we're looking at. And I want to point out to you that the title of the sermon is Christ Must Suffer.

And that's supposed to be part one. It looks like it's point one. And that is going to be a very long point. And there's several others. I think there's four parts to this sermon series, actually, particularly looking at the suffering of David and looking at the way God's purposes, His perfect will, is carried out in the face of extraordinary circumstances.

And as you're looking at that, I want to bring up a very big news story that has happened this past week. You have probably seen the terrible sight of a half-sunk cruise ship off the coast of Italy.

It's a striking scene. And there are even disaster tourists who are going to look at this ship that is stricken there. Now, one of the extraordinary things about this whole situation is that there are two captains who have captured the attention of the world for their very different responses to this crisis.

[1 : 3 1] And what has happened is that there's a dramatic exchange that has been caught on audio and played for the world to hear. And you see two very different responses.

There's the cruise ship captain, Shatino, who appears to evade his responsibility in this crisis. And he says, I fell into a lifeboat and it took me away from the boat long before hundreds of passengers were rescued from it.

And the other man is Captain DeFalco, who is of the Italian Coast Guard. And you hear him in this exchange, angrily and with very colorful language, ordering him to do the right thing.

The other captain is very reluctant to do it. And then he finally, he commands Shatino very clearly to go on board and explains to him how you would go about saving and directing the rescue of hundreds of passengers on the ship.

Both of these men's lives have really been defined by their response to this crisis. One is a hero in Italy and the other one is a villain.

[2 : 4 7] The one who shirked his responsibilities is seen as somebody who has brought Italy disgrace. And the other captain is seen as one who is redeeming Italy. Very dramatic.

But I think it's a very helpful picture for us as we go into this passage that we are hearing about. Because in our passage two, there are two men who are also defined by a crisis.

Those two men are Jonathan and Saul. By the way, if I misspeak, it's too bad there aren't children here who can raise their hand and say you got it wrong.

You can tell me after the sermon. But Jonathan and Saul respond to a crisis completely differently. The crisis is not a tragedy.

The crisis is that God has chosen another king. Even while Saul is the king. God has had David anointed as king and we read all about that.

[3 : 48] before those calories of Christmas. And we've seen that David was anointed as one who would save Israel.

Now what happens is that Saul and Jonathan respond so strongly to God anointing David that their whole life from that point to their death is defined by their response to David.

And I want to look at both of them in this sermon. Saul is deeply jealous of David and his success. Do you remember what happened back in chapter 15, verse 28?

Samuel told Saul, I'm taking your kingdom and your kingship away from you. And he says, and Saul is upset.

He rips Samuel's robe. He wants to stop it from happening. And Samuel said to him, this is a picture for you. The Lord has torn the kingdom of the Lord from you this day.

[4 : 48] The kingdom of Israel is ripped away from you. And he has given it to a neighbor of yours who is better than you. Now Saul doesn't know who that neighbor is. But Saul realizes very quickly when David comes on the scene that this is the anointed one, the true king.

And he must have started thinking about that when David killed Goliath. But it's made crystal clear to him after he has success against the many Philistines.

It's Philistines. And he's successful every time in these battles. And so if you look at verse 7 in chapter 18, you see what happens after Saul has sent David out in these battles.

There's a new top 40 song and the lyrics of it in Israel are in verse 7. The women sang to one another as they celebrated. Saul has struck down his thousands and David's his tens of thousands.

Now this was actually meant to praise both Saul and David. But Saul was jealous and very angry. And his deep insecurity is revealed in verse 8.

[5 : 56] He said, I actually should say he whined, they have ascribed to David ten thousands and to me they have ascribed thousands. What more can he have but the kingdom?

And of course that's prophetic. He's right. He knows in his heart that God has given David the kingdom even though he's still the king in power.

And that's why in verse 9 it says, Saul eyed David from that day on. And what that means is that his vision of David is changed. For the rest of his life, Saul is going to see David with jealousy and anger and hatred.

His vision of David will be distorted. And his life from that point on until the very end of 1 Samuel will be consumed by this desire to destroy David.

And there's one reason for this. Look at verse 12. It's because Saul is afraid of David because the Lord was with him but he had departed from Saul.

[7 : 03] And that's what it comes down. You see, nothing that David has done causes this hatred. It is the very opposite. David actually does everything well that Saul asked him to do.

But Saul hates David because it is clear that God is with him. And it's clear to him that God has judged him for his disobedience and instead chosen David to save and protect Israel.

Saul's no longer part of that plan. And so what is Saul's response to that? Is it to accept God? To accept what he is doing in the world saving Israel?

No. He plans instead to rid himself of David. This reminder of God's judgment. And so in these three chapters that we have here we see Saul doing everything in his power to get rid of David.

And in each case we see that God delivers him very powerfully and directly. And I just want to take a few minutes here to look to just look at some of the examples of this.

[8 : 07] Look at verse 11. Right away Saul tries to kill David with a spear. What happens? David is able to evade him twice.

And then look jump down to verse 17. Saul sends David out in the most dangerous battles here to earn marriage to his daughter Mara. And the reason he does it is to he thinks it's better for the Philistines to kill him than for me to kill him.

But God again rescues. He brings success to David in every battle. And so what does Saul do? He reneges on the deal and he marries Merib off to somebody named Adriel.

And another of Saul's daughter Michael loves David. And so Saul sees another opportunity. And he says okay David you can marry Michael once you have personally killed a hundred Philistines.

And you have to bring back a gruesome trophy. You have to bring back four skins from each one to prove it. He doesn't trust David's word. But again God gives success to David who kills two hundred.

[9 : 15] And Saul has to give Michael to him as his wife. And then if you jump down in verse 29 you see that as a result of this David Saul is even more afraid of David.

And so Saul was David's enemy continually. Then in chapter 19 you see the plot widen to kill David.

You see Saul's efforts increase to kill him. And so in verse 19 when he speaks to Jonathan and all his servants he says I want all of you to kill David.

You know look for the opportunity to kill him. And there's no reason again because it follows right after the fact that David had more success than all the servants of Saul.

You know at the very end of chapter 18 verse 30. There's no reason for it. But what happens? God again raises up Jonathan and Jonathan warns David and in fact in verse 5 in chapter 19 we see David Jonathan really convincing Saul that David is innocent and that he in fact has done so much for Israel and for King Saul.

[10 : 28] And this convinces Saul that he has no legal or moral right to kill David. But that doesn't last. David wins another battle against the Philistines and David is right back at it.

He throws another spear and this time David flees for good. So he's not going to be in Saul's presence again. And God provides for him Samuel as a safe haven to stay with.

Saul would not see him again. What Saul does then is he sends messengers which is a code for assassins and thugs to get David. But he has a very resourceful wife.

Michael gets wind of it and he lets David down through the window the night before and she then stalls for time by putting like a dummy something that looked a little bit like David in the bed and saying he's sick.

Don't come to the door you're going to catch something really bad. He's sick. Go back to Saul. Buys time but when they find out that David has escaped and is living with Samuel Saul sends his thugs called messengers in this passage out to get him.

[11 : 41] But what happens is an extraordinary thing. If you look at verse 19 you see that the thugs are sent out the messengers are sent and he finds out that he is in Naioth which is Ramah.

He sends messengers verse 20 and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying and Samuel standing his head over them the spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul and they also prophesied.

So you have this group of people led by Samuel who are singing about God singing his praises and they are preaching about God to one another and these people who are there to kill David suddenly become people who are speaking about God's will towards one another.

They join in God's will. Saul of course is upset about that and he sends out more thugs but the Holy Spirit does the same thing to them again they start to prophesy.

So Saul says I'm going to finish the job if he can't get other people to do it right I'm going to go. He goes down to Naoth and God meets him directly and powerfully.

[12 : 54] The Holy Spirit overpowers him Saul takes off his clothes which is significant because it means that he is symbolically giving all of his power and authority away.

He's showing he is helpless before God and his purposes. and then instead of carrying out his own will against God his murderous will God makes Saul speak about God's will.

He makes him prophesy with all the other prophets and praise God for his saving work in Israel. It's a very powerful overturning of the evil desires of Saul.

So as we look at these evil plans we see something very extraordinary that happens. Not only is Saul unsuccessful but it's actually through all of his attempts that God makes clear to Israel and really to us as well that God has set his heart on David.

That's what it means that David is a man after God's own heart. God has set his heart on him. God has anointed David to save and to protect Israel and nothing no evil can stop him from carrying out his will.

[14 : 08] So when Saul sends David out to be killed in battle he wins great victories and people see this is what a king should do. When Saul sends his own people out to kill David his own family saves him.

When he sends out thugs to take him out God by the Holy Spirit personally stops him personally stops Saul as well and forces him to sing and speak about God's perfect will.

And this is important for us to see because we are seeing clearly here God's rule over evil. And this is something very important for us to be always clear about in our hearts and in our minds.

God overturns David's danger and his suffering and he works them for his good for his plan to save Israel. The worst threat that David faced the worse it became for him the more clear it was that God was saving Israel through him.

And I believe that God has set his saving purposes on each of you here today. That's why we are gathered here. God has brought you here, has brought you into the fellowship of believers because he is saving you.

[15 : 26] And your faith in Jesus is the outworking of that. And many of you also are experiencing or have experienced times of suffering and hardship, times of deep trouble as well.

But we're seeing very clearly here that evil and suffering are no match for God's saving work. He keeps you and he keeps me close to him, close in fellowship.

He has protected your faith. It's very helpful for us to see that in all these situations what is emphasized over and over again for David is that God is with him.

Those two things go together. David suffers, God is with him. And just as he was with David when he was under grave threat, so he has been and God is now saving you, whatever your circumstance is.

This is the character of God revealed in these chapters. Now the other extraordinary thing here that strikes us as we look at these readings is that Saul doesn't get it.

[16 : 34] He seems to really think that he can reverse God's decision, his will to make David king. And his life is defined by a rejection of God's anointed.

And he has this downward spiral of consistently rejecting God right until his death. Now we can marvel that Saul doesn't get it, but I think that Saul is a warning for each of us.

As we heard David short tell us last week, David, the king, was a Christ. That's the word for anointed one. The same word that is used for Jesus.

But Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, the eternally anointed one whom God has sent to save his people for all time. David is a prequel because one of God's purposes for him was to prepare us and to prepare all people to receive a king, a Christ who will suffer.

But like Saul, we each are faced with certain temptations to reject his rule over our life. There are aspects of each of our lives where we are tempted to be practical atheists.

[17 : 49] That's a very good word for us because in certain areas in our life we can pretend that God is not Lord, that he doesn't exist. People who in certain situations ignore the Lord God and act as though he is not the living king of your life.

We can become that in certain circumstances. We're vulnerable because our human nature is to reject God's lordship. And that's why God has given us the gift of repentance where we deliberately place ourselves under his rule again.

And God by his grace gives us the Holy Spirit so that we can repent. And I think that one of the reasons God provides Saul's children, Jonathan and Michael, to save David is because this is a call to Saul for repentance.

He could have declared, Saul could have declared David king. He could have supported David as God worked through him in his marvelous saving work for Israel.

He could have done that. That's what repentance would have looked like. And he knows he could have because that is exactly what Jonathan and Michael did. But with sin ruling his life, this is impossible because pride is so strong.

[19 : 06] Saul would have had to accept God's rule and then he could have accepted and embraced God's clear will for David and Israel. His life would have been very different.

It would have been filled with joy and love at God's saving work instead of being consumed by jealousy and anger. And often for us this happens that God calls us to allow him to crush our pride and to put in its place a joy and a love that comes from obedience to him.

Being replaced by a joy and a love that comes from God seeing God's saving work in us. And this brings us to Jonathan because in him we see the right response to the Christ, to the anointed one.

And we got to go back to chapter 18 to look at Jonathan. Here's a very different way of relating to the Messiah, the anointed one, the Christ, who was David.

David. Look at the beginning of chapter 18. It says, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

[20 : 26] Now I have to tell you now that there are some commentators in our very sex obsessed culture and generation that, and I hope this is for the first and only time in church history, want to interpret the love of David and Jonathan as a sexual love, amazingly enough.

And I hope it's obvious to you that this is absurd. In this chapter, everyone except Saul loves David.

So for instance, in verse 16, it's the same word. All Israel and Judah loved David, for he went out and came in before him. And you see all of the servants loving David in the same way as well.

It's the same word. And nowhere in any of the verses about David and Jonathan is there even a hint of sexual behavior which was clearly forbidden by God and unheard of in ancient Israel.

So it's good just to put that to rest. And now I think it's probably a good rule that when Satan deliberately distorts the Bible, there's probably something very important about that passage that we should pay attention to.

[21 : 35] for our culture. And this is critical, Jonathan's love for David. It's crucial for us because God uses him to show how we, how you and I, are called to relate to our Messiah, Jesus Christ.

So if you keep going down to verse 3, look at what happens. This is an amazing scene. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and he gave it to David and his armor and even his sword and his bow and his belt.

There's incredible meaning to this because Jonathan was heir to the throne of Israel. And that robe that Jonathan took off was the royal robe. And his weapons were the means of protecting and saving Israel.

So when Jonathan gave David all of these things, he was symbolically transferring his right to royal authority over to David. And he was saying, you, David, are the true king.

I am dedicating my life to you. I will serve you. And you see this in his deep commitment to David throughout these three chapters. In fact, all of chapter 20 is a description of Jonathan carrying out an elaborate plan to save and protect David.

[22 : 58] Jonathan was a constant advocate of David with Saul, even risking his life for David. You heard in chapter 20, Deirdre Reed, that Saul became very angry with Jonathan for protecting David.

And he told him that as long as David lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will ever be established. And then he tries to kill Jonathan with a spear as well. But you see what God is doing here.

God uses Jonathan to teach us how we are meant to love our Lord Jesus Christ. We are taught in our society that we have many rights. We have many entitlements.

This is who we are. This is what defines us. But Jonathan shows us how to lay down our entitlements and our rights at Jesus' feet, at the anointed one's feet, and to stand for him, even when it is risky for us.

There's a wonderful constancy and steadfastness about Jonathan's love in every circumstance. And there's a sense of joy that he has of being able to give his life away to David.

[24 : 06] And so the question is, are you trusting Jesus in this way? Is it a joy to give your life and your future over to him? It's not easy to do.

Do you love Jesus and stand for him when it is risky to do? Well, this is where we call on the Holy Spirit, our helper, to help us to love Jesus in the way that Jonathan loved the anointed one, David.

And finally, I want to close with this question about David and to leave this passage thinking about David himself. Because in this passage, and in the passages to come, David suffers unjustly over and over again.

And he's in constant danger until he finally enters his kingship. So why does God allow this? He could have just made David king. He could have just happened. David asked the same question at the beginning of chapter 20.

After all he'd gone through in chapter 18 and 19, he cries out to Jonathan in despair and he says, what have I done? What is my guilt? What is my sin before your father that he seeks my life?

[25 : 17] And the answer is nothing. He is innocent. Why is this happening? Well we don't know why David had to suffer. But we do know that great good came of it.

First of all, it prepares the world for Jesus to be the king who will suffer for us, for the world. That God's own son came to be rejected and to die for the forgiveness of sins.

We are saved through Jesus' suffering who dies in our place so that God is always with us. And that's emphasized in David too, the God who is with him. When our lives are defined by Jesus' Messiah, we know that God doesn't save us from suffering.

He saves us in our suffering and through our suffering. He is with us in Jesus to make us successful in our place of suffering. And he carries out his purposes.

He loves us. He keeps us close to him. He works his saving plan for us in our suffering. And this is something that David understood. It's something that Jesus entered into as well.

[26 : 28] And that's why David could write the Psalms very beautifully of God's presence, his saving work, and power in the midst of suffering. And so we should close with Psalm 59.

And I hope that you are able to read Psalm 59 sometime this week because David wrote it when those thugs were coming to catch him, to pick him up at his place with Michael.

And he says this at the beginning of Psalm 59. He says, Deliver me from those who work evil. Save me, God, from bloodthirsty men. For behold, they lie in wait for my life.

And of course, many of those thugs came after him. But he ends the Psalm with a joyful, loving song of who God is for us. He says, But I will sing of your strength.

I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning. For you have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress. O my strength, I will sing praises to you.

[27 : 34] For you, O God, are my fortress, the God who shows me. Steadfast love. That is who God is for us because Jesus has suffered for us.

So may our lives always be defined by our love for Jesus, the anointed one who has first loved us. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.