

Jonathan Warns David

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[0 : 00] Page 293 in the ESV Bible, 1 Samuel 20 and verse 18. Then Jonathan said to David, Tomorrow is the new moon, and you will be missed because your seat will be empty. On the third day, go down quickly to the place where you hid yourself, when the matter was in hand, and remained beside the stone heap.

And I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I shot at a mark. And behold, I will send the young man, saying, Go, find the arrows. And if I say to the young man, Look, the arrows are on this side of you. Take them, then you are to come to me, for as the Lord lives, it's safe for you, and there is no danger.

But if I say to the youth, Look, the arrows are beyond you, then go, for the Lord has sent you away. And as for the matter of which you and I have spoken, behold, the Lord is between you and me forever.

So David hid himself in the field, and when the new moon came, the king sat down to eat food. The king sat on his seat, as at other times, on the seat by the wall. Well, Jonathan sat opposite, and Abner sat by Saul's side, but David's place was empty.

Yet Saul did not say anything that day, for he thought something has happened to him. He's not clean. Surely he's not clean. Of course, if you had touched a dead body of an animal or something like that, that rendered you unclean to take your place at the table.

[1 : 16] So that's what it means by he's not clean. But on the second day, the day after the new moon, David's place was empty, and Saul said to Jonathan, his son, Why has not the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?

Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem. He said, Let me go, for our clan holds a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has commanded me to be here. So now, if I found favor in your eyes, let me get away and see my brothers.

For this reason, he has not come to the king's table. Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said to him, You son of a perverse, rebellious woman, 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, neither you or your kingdom shall be established. Therefore send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die. Then Jonathan answered Saul, his father, Why should he be put to death?

What has he done? But Saul hurled his spear at him. To strike him. So Jonathan knew that his father was determined to put David to death. And Jonathan rose from the table in fierce anger and ate no food the second day of the month.

[2 : 25] For he was grieved for David because his father had disgraced him. In the morning, Jonathan went out into the field to the appointment with David and with him the little boy. And he said to the boy, Run and find the arrows that I shoot.

As the boy ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. And when the boy came to the place of the arrow Jonathan had shot, Jonathan called after the boy and said, Is not the arrow beyond you? Which of course meant that David's life was in danger.

That was the sign. And Jonathan called after the boy, Hurry, be quick, do not stay. So Jonathan's boy gathered up all the arrows and came to his master. But the boy knew nothing. Only Jonathan and David knew the matter.

And Jonathan gave his weapons to the boy and said to him, Go, carry them to the city. And as soon as the boy had gone, David rose from beside the stone heap and fell on his face to the ground and bowed three times.

And they kissed one another and wept with one another, David weeping the most. Then Jonathan said to David, Go in peace because we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord shall be between me and you and between my offspring and your offspring forever.

[3 : 29] And he rose and departed. And Jonathan went into the city. Amen. And we pray that God will bless his own word to us. We're going to return to that passage later on. We're going to sing now in Psalm 103.

It's a traditional version of the Psalms. And it's on page 369. We're going to sing from verse 8 down to verse 13. Five stanzas. The tune is Kilmarnock.

Psalm 103. And that's the traditional version of the Psalm. And it's page 369, verse 8. The Lord our God is merciful and he is gracious. Long-suffering and slow to wrath in mercy plenteous.

Five stanzas. We're going to stand to sing. The Lord our God is merciful and he is gracious. The Lord our God is merciful and he is gracious.

Long-suffering and slow to wrath in mercy plenteous.

[4 : 44] He will not die continually. Nor keep his anger still.

With us we dealt not as we sinned. Lord, it be quite a will.

For as the heaven in its height, the earth surmounted fire.

So great to those that who him fear his tender mercies are.

As far as he is distant from the west, so far have been.

[6 : 01] From us we burn. All right. The Lord. The Lord is Peanut-button. Our love involves us all our iniquity.

Such pity as the Father hath unto his children be.

Like pity chose the Lord to such as worship him in fear.

Amen. We're going to turn together to the chapter that we read, 1 Samuel chapter 20.

Verse 8, Therefore deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the Lord with you. If there is guilt in me, kill me yourself, for why should you bring me to your father?

[7 : 23] And Jonathan said, Far be it from you. If I knew that it was determined by my father that harm should come to you, would I not tell you? And so on. This chapter forms the beginning of the longest pursuit in the Bible.

For the next 12 chapters, Saul, the outgoing king, the king from whom God has taken the kingdom, is going to relentlessly pursue David.

And he just will not stop until one of them dies. And that, of course, is exactly what happened.

But it wasn't David who died. It was Saul. For David, this was the beginning of the most horrific, seemingly endless time of uncertainty, which lasted, I guess, several years.

And in which he knew that around any corner could be Saul and his men, and they were not pursuing him to take him captive, Saul's intention was nothing short of David's death.

[8 : 46] As time went on, David was joined by supporters, men who, for various reasons, felt it necessary to join him, men and their families, in fact. And they felt it necessary to join him in being pursued by Saul.

I guess that these people were from the same tribe as David, his own tribe of Judah. And they were probably relatives of his who probably felt that their lives were in danger as well.

So we're going to follow David. We're not going to do a verse-by-verse following of David. This is not going to take forever. But we are going to follow David from one place to another and from one day to another and from one event to another.

We're going to see how Saul singularly fails to achieve his purpose in capturing David. He had all the forces, the army, the armory at his disposal, and with all that was unable to lay a finger on him. But as we follow David, we're not going to just tell the story, as it were, from the outside. I'm sure there are many stories in history that could, in which, that tell of one man or an army pursuing another.

[9 : 59] But this is not just a story. This is God's word. And David is not just a king, but the king who was chosen as a man after God's own heart to be the king of God's people, Israel.

And yet, he wasn't Superman. He wasn't invincible. Neither did he have nerves of steel.

He didn't have a body that was immune to tiredness and a mind that was immune to being cast down and disappointed and in despair sometimes and in fear.

He was an ordinary young man on the run, endlessly. He was a fugitive. God's anointed king was being chased and was in fear of his life.

So the question I want to ask you this evening is, how did David survive such fear and endless uncertainty? Well, you could say he trusted in God.

[11:09] I guess that's the standard answer that you might offer if you were asked that question. But it's all very well for us who have the benefit of hindsight to be able to read the story and to see how he trusted in God.

But for David, it was an absolute nightmare. And several questions must have arisen in his mind. Like, if God's plan, if God's purpose is for me to be one day king over Israel, why is the opposite happening?

The very opposite to what I would expect. Why does he not just take Saul's life away? These chapters are David's nightmare. Not knowing who he could trust and each day having to wake up not knowing whether it was going to be his last or not.

After all, the thought could have come into his mind, well, maybe the whole thing was a mistake. Maybe Samuel was mistaken in anointing me king. Maybe God didn't tell him after all. Maybe I was the wrong man.

Because according to what I see on the outside, this is just not happening. Nothing is working in my favor.

[12:22] In fact, the very opposite to what I would expect. I would expect to be, to come closer to the throne with each day that passes. And yet, with each day that passes, I'm being driven further away from it by the person who occupies the throne and who's determined to kill me.

And that's why, of course, we look down upon this story and we can be objective. The writer is objective. And we can see things that are absolutely marvelous.

How God steered and guided David from one event to another. and how all the time God was protecting him. Even although David sometimes wasn't aware of it.

Even although for David sometimes God was silent and he wasn't detectable. And that's what makes these chapters so important.

Because there are times in the lives of every believer when God's not visible and God's not detectable. We don't feel him. We don't sense him. We're not aware of him.

[13:26] We feel alone. And sometimes we're tempted to wonder whether the whole thing was a big mistake and whether all those thousands and millions of people in the world who are telling us that we're fools for believing in Jesus Christ maybe they're right after all.

That's what many people said to David. Where is your God? Where now is the God of Israel at various times? Because they too could not figure out why he was having to go through what he was going through.

Why was God allowing an enemy of the man after God's own heart if he truly is a man after God's own heart? Then why is God allowing his enemy to pursue him to within an inch of his life?

And when things happen in our lives that seem to be the opposite of what we think they should be and that seem to indicate to us that God is nowhere to be seen and nowhere to be felt, then these are the chapters that we go back to because these are the chapters in which David sat down often and wrote down his fears and his thoughts and his despair and when he tells us about how he cried to the Lord in his distress, in the darkness of his moment, the questions that arise in his mind sometimes, has God forgotten to be faithful?

faithful. These are the words that we come to time and time again when we are in distress and when we are in various forms of darkness and we are so comforted by remembering that even if God is not detectable, that doesn't mean that he has abandoned his people.

[15:15] sometimes we feel alone in the Christian faith, in the Christian life and these are the times when David said, when I'm alone, when I'm afraid, I will trust in you.

He didn't feel like trusting in the Lord. All the evidence was to the contrary and yet he was able somehow or other to just lay hold upon the fact that the Lord was his shepherd and he led him even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death and your rod and your staff I will fear no evil and your rod and your staff they comfort me and so on.

And so, I want us to look at just this chapter and how it illustrates the kind of situation that David was in. How did he know that he could trust Jonathan? How did he know that Jonathan, Jonathan was the crown prince, his loyalty must have lay with his family and with him being the heir to the throne?

And even although he was best friends with Jonathan in chapter 18, even although they were so close to one another, by chapter 20, who knows, maybe Jonathan has turned again.

He's spoken to his father, he's been in his father's company, he's been reminded once or twice again that his to him belongs the throne. What right did David have to go to Jonathan once again? [16:41] Well, there's only one answer to that and that was the covenant. Remember we spoke last week about how the two of them, David and Jonathan, in chapter 18 and verse 3, Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as his own soul.

Remember I told you what a covenant was and how solemn and how important a covenant was. You just did not break a covenant and that was it. There was no extenuating circumstances. You just did not break a covenant and that was a covenant meant forever. From then on, it wasn't a year's contract or a five-year contract.

Covenant was for the rest of my life and not only so, the covenant covered those who would come after me, myself, my family and those who come after me.

And then, so, the covenant was the only, the only thing that David could trust in because David and him had made, Jonathan had made a covenant together.

[17:47] He knew that there was refuge in time of uncertainty. Now, in this conversation that David has with Jonathan, it looks as if Jonathan is unconvinced.

He still believes, probably quite naively, I suppose, his loyalty lay with his father. He wanted to think the best of his father. He couldn't bring himself to imagine that his father hated David so much.

After all, David had done nothing but good for the kingdom. And Jonathan felt, well, surely, I can carry on. Remember, last week, we saw how Jonathan was a peacemaker, how he tried to broker peace with a measure of success in the last chapter.

But now, the tables are turned again. So, it looks as if Saul was against, he was opposed to David once again. And Jonathan, I guess, is trying his best to think, to imagine some way.

But there comes a time, of course, when you can't be in the middle. And when you have to accept that you have to be, that you have to stand on one side or another.

[18:54] He had made a covenant with David, so he was ready to promise David that he would fulfill his part of the commitment.

What does covenant mean? Well, it means, first of all, extraordinary commitment. We said that last week, but I can't overemphasize this.

Where a covenant was a bond that two people swore to, they promised, they vowed in the most solemn way to be supportive of one another, to take care of one another, and to be true and faithful to one another.

But the real value in a covenant is it reflects the commitment that God makes towards his people. That's why you find it all over the Bible. God came to Abraham and he said, I surely, I will be your God and you will be my people.

And the covenant formed the bond between God and his people from then on all the way through the Old Testament. And the Bible tells us that the gospel is God's new covenant with his people in which he pledges himself through the blood of Jesus Christ.

[20:10] How do you and I know this evening that God is for us? How do you know that not only we can come to him in prayer, but that he loves his people?

How do we know that? Because he has made a covenant through his son Jesus Christ. And because the blood of the Lord Jesus has been shed for us, that sealed, that promise of God never to depart from us and never to forsake.

So whatever my circumstances tonight, I know that I can stand before God in covenant relationship to him. I know that even if I've made a mess of the day, if I haven't performed as I should, I know that if I've allowed myself to wander into temptation or to wander off the straight and narrow path as I do so often, I know that that hasn't altered God's covenant love for me.

And that's what's important about this verse. In verse 8, the one I chose to be our text this evening where he says, therefore deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the Lord with you.

For if there is guilt in me, kill me yourself and so on. It says deal kindly with your servant. Now that word kindly is absolutely key to our understanding of the Bible because it's a word in the Hebrew language called *hezad*.

[21:35] And it's translated into, it's translated a number of different ways. The old Bible, the AV, calls it loving kindness. You can call it faithfulness.

You can call it love with a particular love, a committed love, a love that pledges itself to the other person, come what may.

And it's important because that's the love of God. And it's the love that we can hold on to this evening. Love that accepts us despite what we have done against him.

Despite our wanderings and our weaknesses and our failures. we can still come back to the Lord and know for sure that not one iota of his love has decreased for us.

Nothing we can do could make the Lord love us more. And nothing we can do could make the Lord love us less. That's the love of God.

[22 : 39] His hezed, his loving kindness, his love love that is faithful to the end. I know it doesn't always feel like that, does it, when we pray to the Lord and when we are so aware of we're not in the right frame of mind.

Isn't that correct? You go to a time of prayer, you say, I really need to pray to the Lord. I don't know where you go when you pray. I don't know what time of the day, was there a time of the day?

Well, there are no set times like there were amongst the rabbis and amongst the Pharisees. We can, but nevertheless, it's a discipline, isn't it?

The Christian life is a discipline. And if you don't discipline your life, then the chances are that prayer will get pushed further and further out of your routine. But whenever it is when you go to the Lord in prayer, sometimes you think, well, I just don't know how I'm going to begin because I'm not in the right frame of mind.

I feel as if I've wondered in my thoughts. I'm so caught up with something that's happening in my home or in my place of work or whatever, some crisis. And maybe I've just not acted correctly.

[23 : 48] I've overreacted. I've lost my temper. I've gotten into an argument with somebody. How in the world can I go to the Lord now after all I have done? And of course the devil gets in and he left you because you've been unfaithful to him.

No, no, no, it doesn't work like that. Kezed, kezed, kezed, the loving kindness of God which is continuously, permanently, relentlessly something we can lay hold upon.

Doesn't change. Doesn't change. And so that means tonight that you can confidently go to the Lord in prayer. Yes, we confess our sins.

So we should. That's what the Bible tells us to. We run to the Lord with our sin, in our sin, and we ask that the Lord will forgive us. But we do so knowing, with absolute assurance, we come confidently knowing that the Lord will forgive us.

Now, somebody might say, well, that's great then. You just sin, then you go to the Lord, and he forgives your sin, then you go and sin again. No, that's not the way it works. Because the mercy of God, when you come to really treasure the mercy of God, the loving kindness of God, when it really begins to hit home to you, then it actually is a deterrent against sin.

[25 : 12] sin. And so, what we need to know tonight more and more is this extraordinary love, this extraordinary commitment with which the Lord has pledged himself to his people.

That was the pledge that was there between David and Jonathan. It was a commitment that they had one to the other in which David knew the covenant said, I can trust this person.

I know that this person is on my side because he has promised in covenant to be my supporter and to be on my side.

But it also meant that it had to act in his case unconventionally. Jonathan was the crown prince.

And he here was David asking Jonathan for his support and for his help when David was the man who was about to take the kingdom.

[26 : 19] Jonathan knew that David was about to take the throne. By rights, Jonathan should have had him killed for treason as a threat.

And yet there's something deeply unconventional going on here in which the culture of the day is disregarded. And that's because Jonathan recognizes that this is God's doing and he is putting God first.

And when we put God first, convention goes out the window. What we're expected to do often has to be disregarded. We have to sometimes stand on our own and do something different and live differently for the Lord rather than doing what everyone else in the world is doing and going with the flow.

The flow said to Jonathan, this man is a threat to you and if you don't kill him, he will take the throne. You are the heir of the throne. You are the rightful heir of the throne.

You need to do away with him. But the Lord was saying, this is my choice. He's a man after my heart and you have to submit to that.

[27 : 37] Like I said last time, David being the anointed king meant that there was a challenge to every single man and woman in Israel and the challenge was this, whose side are you on?

Are you on the side of God's anointed? And that is the question of the gospel. That is the question that God puts to us tonight. Are you on the side of God's anointed?

The word for God's anointed in the Bible is the word Messiah. And we know who the Messiah was. Jesus, that is one of the titles of Christ.

Jesus came into the world as God's anointed. And as soon as he started, as soon as he started preaching, then it was a challenge to everyone, just like David was a challenge to everyone in Israel.

And the challenge was the same. Whose side are you on? Who do you believe I am? He asked his disciples. And they said, do you believe that I am the Christ?

[28 : 38] That's what Peter said to him. And it also meant that David promised Jonathan. And this was again on the other side how convention was reversed.

first. Because David promised Jonathan equally in the same covenant that if Jonathan should die before David, that David would look after his family.

That's what it says here in verse 14 to 16. If I am still alive, show me the steadfast love of the Lord that I may not die. And do not cut off your steadfast love for my house forever.

Now, why is this so unusual? Well, it's unusual in this. Because Jonathan's family would one day be a threat to David. If David takes the throne, then as long as Jonathan's family remained alive, they would always, by rights, have a claim to the throne.

Normally, when a new king came to the throne and displaced an old one, the first thing the new king did was to get rid of the old king's family because they were always laying claim to the throne and they were always a threat to him.

[29 : 51] And it's the same here. By rights, what you would expect to happen is that if Jonathan died and David was on the throne, then Jonathan's sons, they would be gathering support around them and clamoring for their place.

But David is saying, no, I will make sure that I will not cut off your descendants. I will not kill them. I will protect them. And that's actually, we'll see in a few weeks' time how that came to pass.

Jonathan had a son called Mephibosheth who was lame. He was crippled in both his feet. He could easily have laid claim to the throne, but instead of getting rid of him as David would be expected to do, he took care of him.

He looked after him and he loved him. He sat at his table. But it also meant the loss of Jonathan's world for the sake of God's anointed.

When Saul realized that David wasn't there for the second day and he lost it, and when Jonathan tried to reason with him and he said, look, David asked me to know Saul was having none of it, and he hurled a spear at Jonathan.

[31 : 05] That just shows how utterly insecure Saul was. But then it became clear that there was no negotiating with Saul.

Verse 30, Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan and he said to him, you son of a perverse, rebellious woman, 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, neither you nor your kingdom shall be established.

And so Saul was setting before Jonathan, the choice is either David or your kingdom, your world or God's anointed.

And Jonathan made his choice, and he was prepared to suffer the loss of all things. His whole life, his future, everything was sacrificed for the sake of this man David, God's anointed.

And that's what God always asks his people to do, to suffer the loss of all things. That's what a Christian is. A Christian is someone who's died to himself, come to the end of all that he was for the sake of his commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[32 : 21] It's total commitment. It is a total following. Gee, it demands, the cross demands my soul and my life and my all. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

Our Father in heaven, we give thanks once again this evening for the challenge of the gospel, for the question that is always put to us in the gospel and that is will we follow Jesus or not.

We pray that you will give us a heart that will commit to Jesus and will recognize that he is the only Savior of the world, the only one who can cleanse us and wash us from our sin.

Lord, bless your word to us this evening. We pray that in times when our lives are uncertain and dark, we pray that like David, even when we come to be reduced to simply a cry before you, we pray that you will hear us, hear us in those groanings that cannot be uttered and show us one day how you have taken them and interpreted them and received them and answered our prayer.

In Jesus' name, amen. Psalm number 56 in closing is on page 73. Psalm number 56 is on verse, and we're going to sing from verse 9 to the end of the psalm.

[33 : 45] Psalm 56, verse 9. The tune is Stuttgart. When I call on you to help me, then my foes will turn aside. This is how I will be certain that my God is on my side.

Page 73, and it's Psalm 56, it's in the Sing Psalms version, and it's verse 9 to the end of the psalm, when I call on you to help me. We're going to stand to sing.

When I call on you to help me, then my foes will turn aside. This is how I will be certain that my God is on my side.

In the Lord, whose word I honor, in my God I praise his word.

I will trust and not be fearful. What can man do to me, Lord?

[34 : 55] heart? I have taken vows before you. To my God I will be true.

Sacrifices of thanksgiving I will gladly give to you.

For you kept my feet from stumbling and from death you set me free, so that I may walk before you and the light of life may see.

now may the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest on and abide with each one of us both now and always.

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

[36 : 03] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.