

Message #51

I Samuel 20:35-42

When we come to this part of First Samuel, we come to the specific text that actually officially begins the “fugitive” or “outlaw” part of David’s life. For approximately the next ten years of David’s life, he will be on the run until Saul dies.

David has not done one thing wrong to bring any of this on himself. He is perfectly following the word of God and will of God and now, he must say goodbye to his best friend and run and hide for the next ten years.

The question we must ask is “Why.” Why would God cause all of these negative things to happen to David? We may not know every reason why, but we may assume seven reasons why God permitted David to be on the run for the next ten years:

- (Reason #1)** - God will teach David and develop David into a much greater level as a leader and as a person through all of this. **Godly character is developed by hardship and troubles and trials.**
- (Reason #2)** - God wants David to write many inspired Psalms in His word and this background was necessary in order for that to occur.
- (Reason #3)** - God wants to use David as a type of Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ had to leave His place of comfort for a while and come here as a righteous fugitive for us.
- (Reason #4)** - God demands that any great servant or disciple must be willing to leave all and follow Him.
- (Reason #5)** - God wants to show us that following Him does not mean one will be immune to hardship, difficulty and loneliness. Faithful people do go through hard times.
- (Reason #6)** - God wants to show us that following Him means we must run from things that can harm us. We do have the responsibility to do what we humanly can do to see to it that we are not destroyed. We must take steps to protect ourselves.
- (Reason #7)** - God wants to show all that no matter how intimidating the force or opposition, enemies cannot ever stop the will of God, even if they aggressively try for ten years.

What we see here is this:

WHEN ONE IS DOING EXACTLY WHAT GOD WANTS HIM TO DO AND MOVING IN THE EXACT DIRECTION GOD WANTS HIM TO MOVE, HE MAY BE FORCED TO MOVE AWAY AND RUN AWAY FROM THOSE HE TRULY LOVES.

There are many examples of faithful people who found themselves in some threat or mess that they did not create. There have been people who have been forced to resign, sell everything and move away and that ultimately led them to a ministry God blessed.

David Livingstone spent years preparing to go to China. Just as he was nearing the goal, opium wars broke out and he ended up having to abandon his China dream. That led him to Africa, where he influenced an entire continent for Jesus Christ.

As we come to this text, Jonathan must inform David that his father Saul wants him dead and that he needs to run away. We may recall that the plan was simple—Jonathan would shoot three arrows (I Sam. 20:20) and send a lad to pick them up. If Jonathan said to the boy that the arrows were on Jonathan's side, David was safe (20:21). If Jonathan said the arrows are beyond David, then David was in danger and he would need to flee by direct decree of God (20:22).

At this point, Jonathan knows the truth and now he must inform David. There are four steps Jonathan takes:

STEP #1 – Jonathan goes to the field according to the designated plan. **20:35**

Jonathan and David were two friends who loved God. They were two men who wanted to do God's will. They were two men who were great leaders. They were two men who deeply cared about each other. They were two men who were being led by God.

But they were also two men who still needed to devise a plan and they still needed to follow through with the plan they devised. Doing the will of God does not mean you can put your brain in neutral and coast along in warfare. Godly people come up with a game plan and they need to follow through with that game plan, unless God intervenes and moves in another direction.

Obviously God was in this plan and they are following through with it. Jonathan went out the next morning as they had planned. I am sure David was hoping the news would be good, but it would not turn out to be this way at this point of time.

STEP #2 – Jonathan shoots the arrows in accordance with the designated plan. **20:36-37**

Jonathan was about to shoot the arrows and then he told the boy to start running so he could find them. Now this boy has no idea what is happening here, but he is playing a key part of the program and plan of God. **This boy is doing seemingly an insignificant job, but this is a major part of the program of God.**

Now we may observe from **verse 36** that the noun arrows is plural. We know that Jonathan had told David that he would shoot three arrows, like he was shooting at a target (v. 20). Jonathan shot these arrows at some target as the boy was running. He apparently told the boy what he was going to shoot at and when the boy got to the spot, Jonathan yelled that he shot at least one of the arrows beyond him. This of course was the prearranged signal between Jonathan and David, which this boy knew nothing about.

There is no question that this boy trusted Jonathan because he turned his back and took off running before he shot. So he knew Jonathan would not hurt him. However, Jonathan did not tell him what was happening.

Many a plan is ruined because the wrong people got information they should have never had. Sometimes the best thing godly leadership can do is to form a plan and keep their mouth shut as they carry out the plan.

STEP #3 – Jonathan hurries the lad away from the place where this all happened. **20:38-40**

According to **verse 38**, Jonathan told the boy to quickly pick up the arrow and bring it back to him. This would keep the boy from snooping around and seeing David. Jonathan's big concern here is for David's welfare. He is trying to protect David from being discovered.

Verse 39 makes it clear that the boy knew nothing about this plan. The only two individuals who knew what was going on at this target practice moment were Jonathan and David.

According to **verse 40**, Jonathan gave his weapons to the boy and told him to take them back to the city. He would have had a bow, a quiver and some arrows. Jonathan quickly sent the boy back to town.

Jonathan earns a great name in eternity because of his loyalty to David. He stood beside David when most all other people were against him because he knew and sensed God's hand was on David.

It is this loyalty and allegiance to David that makes Jonathan such an esteemed man forever. He was David's trusted friend and he is a faithful and loyal servant.

STEP #4 – Jonathan says goodbye to David. **20:41-42**

In I Kings 4:5 there is this guy mentioned whose name is Zabud. We don't know much about him but the text says he was "the king's friend." That is what he is known for; he was Solomon's friend.

That is what Jonathan is known for; he was David's friend. This is a very touching scene. John Woodhouse writes that this meeting "was one of history's moving farewell scenes" (*I Samuel*, p. 404).

Both of these men are tough, military men. They are true leaders and they are godly. But as rough and tough as they were, they had a tender heart and a fond friendship feeling for each other.

There are five parting final moments between these two dear friends. Much of this happens without them saying a word to each other. They knew the implications of this. David is saying goodbye to Jonathan forever:

Parting Moment #1 - David paid honor to Jonathan. **20:41a**

Jonathan was still the King's son and even though the King wanted him dead, David still honored his son. David still saw himself as subordinate to Jonathan. He came out and fell on his face to the ground and bowed three times.

This is the only record in the Bible of someone bowing three times before someone and it is David bowing before Jonathan. David is a humble man.

Parting Moment #2 - David and Jonathan kissed each other. **20:41b**

This particular kind of kiss was a farewell kiss (Gen. 31:55; Acts 20:37). William Gesenius, in his Hebrew Lexicon, says that this farewell kiss signified that they were forever cemented as friends (*Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 571).

This is not some erotic kiss as the abominable homosexual's state. This was often done in a political context (II Sam. 14:33; 15:5; 19:39; 20:9).

There is a great prophetic scene in Psalm 2:12 in which the kings of the world are called to "kiss the Son."

Parting Moment #3 - David and Jonathan wept. **20:41c**

The intensity of the emotion is seen when this parting caused both of these men to weep. But the text says that David wept more. This is sad. David has done nothing but good for Saul and yet he has to leave family and friends because Saul wants him dead.

Now keep in your mind that David is a warrior who dropped a lion and bear and Goliath and hundreds of Philistines. This is as brave and as tough a man as ever existed. He was a manly man yet he was not afraid to cry.

I will never forget seeing an interview with General Norman Schwarzkopf during the war with Iraq. He was asked about the very few Americans who had been killed in the war. As he answered, there were tears streaming down his face. His lower jaw quivered and he literally cried. I thought what a leader. What a man. There are times when tough men shed tears and this was one of those times.

Parting Moment #4 - Jonathan speaks a final time to David. **20:42a-b**

There are two messages Jonathan gives to David:

(Message #1) - He encourages David to be safe. **20:42a**

David needed to get out of there for his own safety. David needed to protect himself and Jonathan encourages him to do that.

(Message #2) - He reminds David of their bond before God. **20:42b**

Jonathan again reminds his dear friend that they are friends for life before God. They had bound themselves together before God and that covenant stood. Jonathan knew the outcome of all of this. He knew that eventually David would become King and he is reminding him of the promises he made.

Circumstances and difficulties do not change promises made before God. David would later come to power after Saul and Jonathan were dead and he would still honor his promise to his family. There will be an “intergenerational” application to this promise.

Once Jonathan was dead, it would have been easy to go back on his word but David would not do that.

Parting Moment #5 - David and Jonathan part. **20:42c**

It finally came time for David to leave. When David leaves Jonathan, they do not know if they will ever see one another again. Actually, they will meet one more time (I Samuel 23:16-18).

He took off for the hills and Jonathan went back to the city. David will be on the run for the next ten years and he will face serious dangers from this moment on.

But God is with him. God will protect him. God will bless him.

When you are right with God, there will be times you will have to say goodbye to someone you love. There are times when a commitment to God’s truth means a division in one’s own family. Sometimes that commitment to God’s will means relocation from family and friends.

Perhaps the most applicable relocation we have experienced ourselves is in the matter of death. There will be times when we will cry and we will have to say goodbye for a while to someone we love. But the good news is, we will meet again.