

**Message #48****I Samuel 20:1-9**

Last November, Emily Koford, a 20-year-old from Dallas, Texas, was at the Grand Canyon and wanted to take a picture of her mother Erin. She and her mom were on a ledge and when Emily took a step back to take the shot, she slipped and just about fell to her death. Fortunately, she regained her footing before falling. She was just one step away from her own death.

Have you ever been in a situation when you thought you were one step away from death? Years ago in our fellowship groups, we asked each person if they ever were in a position where they really thought they might die. Most had some experience that could have been fatal, such as a wreck or something, but most did not live with a constant thought they might die. David did (v. 3). He literally knew that he was one step away from death.

Three times Saul tried to kill David with a spear. Two times he sent him on missions against the Philistines trying to get him killed. He had put out a hit contract on David so David had to crawl out a window and flee to Samuel. Then, he had just witnessed four attempts on his life. Saul had sent messengers to kill him three times and when that did not work, Saul himself went to kill David a fourth time.

So when David said, “there is hardly a step between me and death” he is not exaggerating. This is very real. He literally was running for his life. He hadn’t done anything wrong to bring this on, but he was running for his life.

In the process of living life like this for a while, he learned a valuable lesson:

**WHEN WE ARE FAITHFUL TO GOD AND FIND OURSELVES IN THREATENING SITUATIONS, WE MAY DEPEND ON GOD TO PROVIDE FOR US, PROTECT US AND EVENTUALLY PROMOTE US.**

That is exactly what David learned in his life. He was a faithful, loyal, dedicated man of God. He never sought limelight fame. He just found himself by decree of the sovereignty of God in that position.

He dropped Goliath and he put a new momentum into the nation Israel. He was faithful and loyal to King Saul, and his payment was Saul hated him and hounded him. Saul wanted him dead for no reason except satanic jealousy.

We may remember that Saul had tracked David to Naioth, which was the community of the prophets. Naioth was the place where God's word was studied and taught. When Saul got to Naioth, he came under the power of the word of God and the Spirit of God and he was lying down on the ground all day and night. God’s word had humbled him, but it did not change him. Being under conviction is not the same as responding to the conviction.

**Verse 1** begins with “then.” While Saul was being delayed by the power of God in Naioth, David was able to escape. Frankly, this is another of God’s timing provisions for David.

This is important to see. Even when godless people set out with a plan to destroy us, God will not permit them to succeed. He sovereignly intervenes and sees to it that we are able to escape their diabolical plots, plans and schemes.

God is not about to let David be killed by Saul. He is going to protect him and preserve him and honor him and David is about to learn that even though he thought he was one step away from death.

**Now one important thing to observe here is that there is a lot of interaction between David and Jonathan.** Jonathan will become a key agent that God will use to help David.

This is actually a remarkable provision of God because Jonathan is Saul’s own son and it is Saul who wants to kill David. God is raising up a very unusual and very special friend.

There are six interactions that take place here between David and Jonathan:

**INTERACTION #1 – David meets with Jonathan. 20:1**

While Saul was under the controlling influence of the Holy Spirit in Naioth (19:23-24), David took off and went and found Jonathan. He may have doubled back to Gibeah.

Jonathan was the king’s son and David saw himself as subordinate to Jonathan. In fact, in this very meeting, David describes himself as Jonathan’s servant (20:7-8). In all reality, David is the next king of Israel and he is the champion warrior. But you get to see the heart of David; he did not see himself as anything great. He was a humble, submissive friend and servant of Jonathan.

The truth is, God was sovereign over what was happening to Saul. The Holy Spirit was bringing Saul under conviction and that Spirit was giving David time to escape.

There are times when a wise thing to do is to get out of a place or one will get eaten alive. David was not going to hang around Saul because he had a fatalistic belief in the sovereignty of God. He was not going to sit around to be a target for satanic hatred and attack, so people could throw spears at his head.

Sometimes the best thing to do is get out of a godless situation.

When David came to Jonathan, he asked him three questions:

**Question #1** - What have I done?

The true answer to this question is David, you have done nothing but good for Saul and for these people.

**Question #2** - What is my iniquity?

If a person is truly interested in being right with God, he must be willing to ask this question. He must have the integrity to ask it and answer it. Now the word “iniquity” refers to any perverted thing David had done. So David says, what perverted thing have I done against your father.

**Question #3** - What sin did I commit so that your father wants to kill me?

The word “sin” refers to missing the mark in any way. So David is asking where have I missed the mark of doing right in regard to anything.

These are three legitimate questions. If David had done something wrong, he could resolve it. He could repent of it and make it right. But the truth is, he has not done anything wrong here.

Now one does wonder why God would permit David to go through this when he has not done one thing to bring this on? The real reason is that God is molding David and developing him so that he would realize the amazing grace of God. David would learn that God was watching him, protecting him, providing for him and caring for him.

Let me read the words of Dr. Leon Wood in his book “Israel’s United Monarchy.”

“The thought must not be missed that God was with David at all times and saw to it that Saul was never successful in taking David’s life. David was to be Israel’s next king and therefore must not die. Natural means seem to have been used to provide the necessary protection until the last attempt on his life, when, as noted in chapter 19, God intervened directly. The Holy Spirit was sent upon three groups of messengers and then on Saul in such a way that none of them so much as touched David. He was spared from any harm, while Saul lay all the following night in a fit of despair. Saul had great power as Israel’s king, but so long as God’s protection was over David there was no chance for Saul to take his life. This should be a comforting thought to every child of God who faces perilous conditions.”

When you are right with God, you are not afraid to ask the questions David asked. There is nothing wrong with asking what sin have I committed. There are times to vindicate yourself. Job did it (Job 13:15). Paul did it (I Cor. 4:4). Jesus did it (John 8:46). Here David does it.

**INTERACTION #2** – Jonathan encourages David. **20:2**

When David flees to Jonathan, he truly believes he will die. He believes Saul is going to track him down and kill him. That is Saul's goal.

Now Jonathan has not had a meeting with David since I Samuel 19:7, when he told David that everything had been worked out with Saul. His dad had vowed that he would not harm David and that is the last Jonathan knew. It may be that Jonathan did not even know about the latest attempts to kill David when he was with Samuel.

Now look carefully at what Jonathan says to David. He gives David two messages:

**Message #1** - You will not die.

Jonathan knew the will of God. He is being used by God to communicate the will of God to David.

**Message #2** - My father tells me everything and I will tell you.

Jonathan has integrity. He stood for what was right even though his own father was king.

Many a school or church has been ruined because someone starts propagating something or doing something wrong and no one confronted it or spoke up about it. Jonathan was not like that.

**INTERACTION #3** – David responds to Jonathan. **20:3**

David said Saul knows you are my friend and therefore he will hide his plans from you. David said he is not going to tell you his plans, because he knows you are on my side. He says Jonathan you need to know that I am one step away from death here.

David is telling Jonathan you don't know the details of what your father is doing because he is keeping all details from you. He knows you favor me and he knows that this plan will grieve you. But your father is after me and he wants to kill me.

Now it is clear here that David has not yet learned the fact that God is His refuge and protector. He thinks it is up to him and Jonathan.

Again we do have the responsibility to see threats clearly and take appropriate action. We do need to plan. We do need sound council. But we also need to realize God is sovereign and if we are doing what is right, He will protect us.

**INTERACTION #4** – Jonathan submits to David. **20:4**

Jonathan realized the validity to David's argument and he said tell me what to do and I will do it. Now this is a remarkable thing because Jonathan is the king's son and if David were out of the picture, he would stand to become the next king.

But Jonathan knew the will of God. He knew David had not sinned. He knew David could be trusted and he was ready to help any way he could.

There are some people who want to debate things and there is a place for that. But there is also a time and place for saying you tell me what I need to do and I will do it.

**INTERACTION #5** – David devises a plan for Jonathan. **20:5-8**

David came up with a plan. David and Jonathan were meeting the day before the "new moon."

Now the "new moon" was the first day of the month that was celebrated by offering special sacrifices (Num. 28:11-15). This usually included a meal (II Kings 4:23; Is.1:13; Amos 8:5) and it also included religious and civil festivals (Num. 10:10; 28:11-15).

This festival was usually celebrated with one's own family. Now David was married to the king's daughter and he was a military hero and he was supposed to celebrate this festival with King Saul. He as supposed to be seated at Saul's table. But David came up with another plan (**verse 5**).

This plan would require that Jonathan act like a secret agent spy against his own father. He was to observe his father's responses to determine his attitude toward David.

According to **verse 6**, David said I will not show up to the dinner. Instead, I will hide myself in the field and if Saul misses him at all, Jonathan is to report that he had asked permission to run to Bethlehem to celebrate with his Davidic family.

Now Saul had specifically forbidden David from going back to Bethlehem (18:2) so in all reality when Saul would hear that David went back to Bethlehem that could anger him. But that is what David wanted Jonathan to tell his father. He went home to celebrate with his own family.

According to **verse 7**, David wanted Jonathan to pay special attention to the way Saul responded. If he said, "It is good," then everything was fine. If he got very angry, then Jonathan would know that Saul had devised an evil plot to kill David.

Saul's reaction would speak volumes. You can sometimes read a person by how they react to certain information.

David reminds Jonathan that they were in a covenant relationship with each other before God.

Now this is a big request to ask of the king's son. This is a very deceptive move and David was aware of what he was asking Jonathan to do.

At the end of **verse 8**, David said to Jonathan, if I have committed iniquity, then put me to death yourself. Don't take me to your father, just do it yourself.

**INTERACTION #6** – Jonathan encourages David. **20:9**

Jonathan said, "No way." Jonathan said if I learn that my father is planning evil against you, I will tell you.

As I see it, David is emotional and his feelings are getting the best of him. But what happened here is that David learned just how honest and loyal Jonathan actually was.

God knew David needed a friend to help him through this and He sovereignly provided one.