

“Nothing Left To Lean On” 1 Samuel 18-21

Wednesday 10/6/19 – Jeff Lyle

To truly embrace and experience all of what God has created you for, one element is essential: the recognition that God is now and forever will be everything to us. All our lesser loyalties and potential things upon which we might trust must either be renounced by us or removed from us so that we recognize that our lives are completely dependent upon God alone. While God commands us to love and appreciate all that He places in our lives, He forbids that we ever give our full trust to these things. David would be a great source of glory for God, but he would first need to learn what it meant to stand utterly alone, with nothing to lean on but God Himself. There was a season wherein everything else was removed from David, leaving him with absolutely nothing left to lean on.

I. David Is Sequestered From His Family (17:58 - 18:2)

"And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house." - 1 Samuel 18:2

Thus far in the life of David we have witnessed God give victory to David in the triumph over Goliath. Through this victory, God had entrusted fame to David as the people wrote and sang songs about his military triumphs. From childhood, God had provided a family for David, and to this point David's identity was tethered to his father, Jesse's, house. Now, as the winds of change had blown powerfully in Israel, God had entrusted elevation to David, making him essential to Saul's purposes. Saul would not allow David to return home, permanently removing him from the life of a son to Jesse and making him a servant to the king. From this point forward David would be living the life of a man.

II. David Is Stripped Of His Position (19:8-10)

A. David was committed faithfully (19:8) - "And there was war again. And David went out and fought with the Philistines and struck them with a great blow, so that they fled before him."

New seasons began with repeated battles with the frequent enemy, the Philistines. War would be the context for nearly the entirety of David's remaining years. God continued to favor David with military skill and victories. God was with him and had been since the day of his anointing.

B. David was treated spitefully (19:9-10a) - "Then a harmful spirit from the Lord came upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand. And David was playing the lyre. 10 And Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he eluded Saul, so that he struck the spear into the wall."

Saul's deep troubles continued as his paranoid envy of David grew. David had the Holy Spirit while Saul had a harmful spirit. David an instrument of peace in his hand as he played the lyre in service unto Saul. Saul had an instrument of death in his hand as he sought to kill David with the spear he threw. God graciously allowed David to escape, protecting His chosen man from the murderous intentions of the demonized Saul.

C. David was expelled unjustly (19:10b) - “And David fled and escaped that night.”

At this point, David had to commit to the life of constant awareness of Saul. He escaped the murderous moment and retreated to his own home where he had begun married life with Saul's daughter, Michal. He had lost his access to Saul's presence and was no longer welcomed as the court musician, armor-bearer or commander of soldiers. David had done nothing wrong at all, but here he lost his privileged position and would soon become a fugitive who had to run for his life.

III. David Is Separated From His Wife (19:11-17)

A. An impossible situation (19:11) - “Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him, that he might kill him in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, told him, “If you do not escape with your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed.””

David had married Saul's daughter, so Saul knew exactly where to look for him. The Scripture is clear that he sent the soldiers to find David and kill him. Presumably, he wanted David to be killed while he was not in the presence of Saul's daughter. Somehow, Michal was made aware of the plot to kill David and she warned David that he was trapped. Humanly speaking, David had run out of resources and was not the target of a band of royal assassins sent out by the king. He was in an impossible situation.

B. A momentary ally (19:12-16) - “So Michal let David down through the window, and he fled away and escaped. 13 Michal took an image and laid it on the bed and put a pillow of goats' hair at its head and covered it with the clothes. 14 And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, “He is sick.” 15 Then Saul sent the messengers to see David, saying, “Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may kill him.” 16 And when the messengers came in, behold, the image was in the bed, with the pillow of goats' hair at its head.”

While Scripture lends us a rather negative overall view of Michal, she began as a devoted wife to David. She loved her husband and wanted to help him escape the death-plot against him. Taking initiative, Michal helped David

escape by deceiving her father, Saul and setting up a plan to buy David some time to flee while her father believed he was still in the house. Saul finally decided he could wait no more and sent the soldiers into the bedroom of David and Michal. When they searched for David, they immediately discovered the deception of Michal on behalf of her hunted husband.

C. A painful betrayal (19:17) - "Saul said to Michal, "Why have you deceived me thus and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped?" And Michal answered Saul, "He said to me, 'Let me go. Why should I kill you?'"

We likely need to have a level of understanding toward Michal. Her father, who was clearly demonized and filled with rage, had caught her being loyal to her husband and betraying her father. Her life may also have been on the line. The people never knew what wicked Saul might do. So, when she was asked by Saul why she had deceived him, Michal lied, protecting herself, and said that David had threatened to kill her. Now, Saul had what he believed was a valid reason to exterminate David's life. Because of this lie from Michal, she and David were never the same after this.

IV. David Is Scattered From His Mentor (19:18 - 20:1)

A. David seeks out stability (19:18) - "Now David fled and escaped, and he came to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and lived at Naioth."

Now that he was officially a wanted fugitive within the kingdom of Saul, David had to run quickly to find safety. His instincts motivated him to go and find Samuel, the mentor who had been used of God to anoint David as the future king of the land. When trouble hit, David turned to his father in the faith. Surely Samuel could protect him from Saul and lend David wisdom about how to move on toward whatever would come next. Mentors are often used by God to give us specific guidance in intense situations. Samuel was the spiritual authority in the land and most people feared the old prophet. His presence would have brought David relational and emotional calm in the midst of the growing storm.

B. Human stability proves fleeting (20:1) - "Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah and came and said before Jonathan, "What have I done? What is my guilt? And what is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life?"

There was nothing Samuel could do to protect David from Saul. Word ultimately reached the king that David was hiding in Naioth with the prophet. Saul prepared to capture or kill David by dispatching his forces there to capture him. God supernaturally intervened and gave David opportunity to escape. Sadly for David, in fleeing Naioth, he also had to part ways from Samuel. As we follow the story,

David had now been separated from his parents, his position in the kingdom, his wife and his mentor. One by one, anyone and anything that David might have leaned upon or trusted in was being removed from him. There is desperation in his words when he encounters Jonathan and expresses his hurt and bewilderment at being hounded by Saul. At least David still had his best friend, Jonathan, to help bear the weight of his heavy burden.

V. David Is Estranged From His Best Friend (20:40-42)

A. Jonathan was an amazing friend (20:40-41a) - " And Jonathan gave his weapons to his boy and said to him, "Go and carry them to the city." 41 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..."

Jonathan officially put his neck on the line on behalf of his best friend, David. The son of Saul allowed David to remain hidden while Jonathan worked in stealth to learn if there was any chance that his father might back off from his quest to kill David. We cannot minimize this: Jonathan was committing treason in order to advocate on David's behalf. He would do anything he could to assist David. When David needed a man in his corner, Jonathan risked it all for his friend.

B. Jonathan was a limited friend (20:41b-42) - "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." And he rose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city."

Jonathan could provide intercession and information for David, but, ultimately, no deliverance. This would be last time these two friends would ever see one another. This parting of the ways likely knocked the remaining wind out of David as he kissed his friend goodbye, reaffirmed his covenant promises with Jonathan, and headed out in the opposite direction. David officially had nothing upon which to lean. Losing everything, David was utterly alone and had gone from being the great hero of Israel to the most wanted man in the entire kingdom. There was no remaining place that was safe for him. He had to get out of Israel.

VI. David Is Shamed In His Reputation (21:10-15)

A. David was operating in fear (21:10a) - "And David arose and fled that day from Saul..."

The young boy who so easily trusted God to defeat Goliath was now struggling with the fear inside of him. Who among us would not also be afraid of the most powerful man in the land putting a homicidal bullseye on our backs? David had been brought to that place of self-awareness that finds all of us when every single possible crutch has been removed from us. The truth is, none of us are as strong in ourselves as we think we are. Most of us have things to lean upon that we are not conscious of. We presume to trust God at a very deep level, so He wants to bring us to the awakening moment that reveals to us the exact degree to which we desperately need Him. So, what does He do? He exposes and then removes everything else that we might rely upon. In essence, He kicks out our crutches so that we can experience a total dependence upon Him alone. He will not share any of His glory with anyone or anything else. We must all come to that place where we become convinced that, apart from Him, nothing is worthy of our total and complete confidence.

B. David was desperate for help (21:10b) - "...and went to Achish the king of Gath."

This is unimaginable. David went to the very hometown of Goliath to seek refuge. The most famous warrior in Israel was so completely out of options that he chose the land of his enemies as the place of his temporary hiding. Perhaps David assumed that cowardly King Saul would never pursue him into the territory of the Philistines. Maybe David assumed he could figure it out as he goes and simply picked the nearest place that might have some strategic places to hide. More than likely, David assumed that nobody would ever consider that he would put his life on the line by walking into the headquarters of Israel's arch enemies. Was this faith or foolishness? We do not really know. Sometimes those two things look very similar. Either way, David was a man without a place to lay his head.

C. David exposed himself to danger (21:11-12) - "And the servants of Achish said to him, 'Is not this David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances, 'Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands'? 12 And David took these words to heart and was much afraid of Achish the king of Gath."

Once inside the city of Gath, David became aware of the precarious situation he was now in. David heard the rumblings from the people and knew that his cover was fully blown. He was fully exposed in the middle of enemy territory, and needed to figure out what he was to do before he became the target of the Philistine's king.

D. David was reduced to nothing (21:13-15) - "So he changed his behavior before them and pretended to be insane in their hands and made marks on the doors of the gate and let his spittle run down his beard. 14 Then

Achish said to his servants, “Behold, you see the man is mad. Why then have you brought him to me? 15 Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to behave as a madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?”

Fully out of options, David had only one thing left which he was forced to release. Feigning insanity, the great hero of Israel played the part of a madman who had lost his mind. David had been receiving great praise and glory for his righteous and courageous deeds, but those days were gone for now. If anyone would have feared his presence in Gath, they could plainly discern now that there was nothing to worry over. David was no longer a threat. He had been reduced and brought to the dust as a homeless man who sat by the gate, clawing at the wood with spit running out of his mouth and into his unkempt beard. As sad as this scene is, we must remember that this was not coming from God as punishment for something David did that was sinful. The scene unfolding in Gath was what David temporarily looked like when he had every single thing removed from him. Does this make God heartless and cruel? No. If David was going to be entrusted with the highest office and most glorious privileges as the king of Israel, God needed David to be completely humbled. God wanted David fully dependent upon Him. David was a living example of the truth which Jesus expresses when He declares, "To whom much is given, much is required." God was going to take David as a man could be taken. In order to qualify David for that immeasurable privilege, David had to learn how to stand alone with just himself and God. David's time in Gath was only the beginning of this essential lesson that would last for close to twenty years in David's life. God is willing to take as much time as necessary to get us ready to receive and make us suitable to steward the best treasures He has reserved for us. He must take each of us to that undesirable place where we have nothing left to lean on.,

CONCLUSION: To truly embrace the sum total of that for which God created you, one element is essential: the recognition that God is everything to us. All lesser loyalties and objects of reliance must either be renounced or stripped away so that we recognize that our lives are completely subject to the character of God. While God commands us to appreciate people and things he places in our lives, He forbids that we trust in these people or things. David would be a great conduit of glory for God, but he would first need to learn what it meant to stand utterly alone, with nothing to lean on...but God. He would learn that this is entirely sufficient for the predestined purpose of God for his life.