
The Future King Protected

1 Samuel 19¹⁸

Russ Kennedy

I know what it is like to have been rescued, saved from attack...

From an attacking dog in our workshop in Africa...

From a mugging in the train station in Belgium...

The future king is going to protected, saved and rescued. Listen to the story...

Saved by Saul's Son

(v. 1-7)

¹ And Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David. But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David. ² And Jonathan told David, "Saul my father seeks to kill you. Therefore be on your guard in the morning. Stay in a secret place and hide yourself. ³ And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak to my father about you. And if I learn anything I will tell you." ⁴ And Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Let not the king sin against his servant David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his deeds have brought good to you. ⁵ For he took his life in his hand and he struck down the Philistine, and the Lord worked a great salvation for all Israel. You saw it, and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by killing David without cause?" ⁶ And Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan. Saul swore, "As the Lord lives, he shall not be put to death." ⁷ And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan reported to him all these things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as before.

The focus here is on Jonathan as the son of Saul and the friend of David.

A Contrasted Relationship

(v. 1)

The contrast here is meant to be very powerful. Saul has a deadly, murderous hatred for David. But the prince regent, Saul's son, Jonathan, delights in David.

Saul's attempts on David's life up to now have been personal and generally private. But now he moves to enlisting others in his murderous hatred.

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A Caring Warning**(v. 2-3)**

Jonathan, knowing his father's plot, hastens to warn his dear friend. "They are coming for you in the morning so you better hide yourself." Jonathan volunteers to stand beside and up to his father and see what will happen.

A Powerful Mediation**(v. 4-5)**

These are very powerful words. The appeal is based on two inescapable facts.

David's record- David has served God, the nation and king Saul with victory after victory. Therefore God is with David. Dare Saul go against God?

David's righteousness- David has not sinned against Saul in any way. If Saul persists in this, then he will have sinned against David and against God. Therefore, David is innocent. Dare Saul shed innocent blood?

This is bold speech. Jonathan is both a son and a subject of king Saul. But when it comes to confronting his father's trajectory towards sin and protecting his dear friend, humbleness and fortitude are needed.

A Persuasive Voice**(v. 6-7)**

Jonathan's voice is very persuasive. Saul relents for the moment. He swears an oath by God that David will not be put to death. With the threat removed, Jonathan calls to David, reports on the good news and brings David to Saul.

One writer put it this way, "The will of Saul that had been set 'against the Lord and against his Anointed' had not prevailed. It had been turned around—for the moment—by the goodness, the reasonableness, the rightness, the wisdom of Jonathan's words commending David." (Woodhouse, p. 371)

Jonathan is the hero. He has risked his own life to save the life of his friend. Jonathan has saved the one who will one day his place on the throne of Israel.

Saved from Saul's Hand**(v. 8-10)**

Peace in Saul's day was often short lived. There was war again.

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. ⁹ 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. And David fled and escaped that night.

David's Glorious Victories**(v. 8)**

David once again does good for Saul and the kingdom. He goes out against the Philistines and is successful. No more than that, David struck them a great blow. He routed them and wrought a mighty victory.

Saul's Murderous Attempt

(v. 9-10)

There they sit. David with his lyre, his harp, his voice and his songs. Humble yet gloriously victorious. Saul with his spear and the afflicting spirit. Saul's heart jealousy is enflamed by the darkness of the demon. His arm flicks and the spear sails across the room.

With a practiced eye, David dodges the impaling lance. It thuds into the wall behind him. With quick strides he flees the room. Is his heart broken? Or is his caution vindicated? It is no small thing to suffer the jealous and murderous rage of a demon afflicted king.

Saved by Saul's Daughter

(v. 11-17)

That evening, David returns to his own house. No more long evenings in Saul's place.

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." ¹² 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. 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?'"

This is an interesting episode. Here we have spies, a hidden and escaping husband, a protecting and deceiving wife and an irate king.

Saul's Stalking Messengers

(v. 11)

Saul prepares to ambush David. He sends people to watch outside David's house to report back when David is there. The language here may reflect more than just watchers, but actually guards. They are not just observing, but intending to keep him there until morning. Saul is planning to ambush David on his own home.

Michal's Protecting Deceit

(v. 12-13)

Once again, Saul's children protect David from their father. Michal is Saul's daughter, now married to David. She advises him to flee. She will do what she can to stall her father, the king. So he slips out a back window and flees into the night.

Michal puts a dummy in their bed. She grabs an image, possibly a life-size statue of an old household idol. She puts it in the bed. She puts a soft pillow under its head and clothes on it. She pulls the covers up over it. When the messengers come to take David, she tells them, "He is sick." So, now what?

Saul's Murderous Confrontation**(v. 14-16)**

Ah, here is an opportunity to kill David when he is weakened by illness. Saul arrives at David's house. His sword or knife is in his hand, rage and jealousy in his heart and eyes. He storms into the bedroom. He raises a gleaming blade. And he has been fooled... it is not David in the bed.

Michael's Defensive Deceit**(v. 17)**

Saul is both baffled and enraged. How could his daughter take David's side against her father? And him the king? Michal's eyes go down and maybe her courage fails her. Unlike the resolution of her brother, Jonathan, her tongue betrays her. Or maybe this is different sort of courage. Maybe what Saul hears in her words is his own murderous intent. Of course she helped him escape. Saul's threat against David is reflected in Michal saying that David threatened her.

Now, once again we are at a sticky place for moralists. What do you do with Michal's deceit? Is it sin? Is it wrong? Was Rahab's deceit in hiding the Jewish spies, sin? Will David's clear deceit of and spoken lies to the Philistines later be judged as sin?

The Bible prizes truthfulness. Let's make that clear. It is particularly evil to lie or to deceive another of God's people.

The Bible neither directly commends nor condemns any of those deceits. It records that they took place. But whether they were or sin or not may not even be a question.

In every case, the deceit is (1) against an enemy of God and (2) to protect one of God's people's lives.

In every case, God used it to accomplish His plan. The enemy was thwarted and the person's life was protected for a greater purpose.

It may be, that we are permitted then to deceive the enemies of God to protect and spare the life of God's people. But not if your conscience does not permit it.

Righteous living is not and has never been rigidly moral. Not all righteous is black or white. Some of it is situational. There are many examples of this in the Bible. Israel "plundered the Egyptians" when they left though stealing is forbidden. Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his son, Isaac, though human sacrifice and murder were forbidden in the Noahic Covenant. I am not hereby condoning or commending sin. But we have to take the Biblical record as it stands, not as we would wish it did. So, do not lie, do not deceive, be truthful – but always act in love for God and love for God's people which may mean, going to lengths to protect their lives.

Saved by God's Spirit

(v. 18-24)

Finally, frankly, an amazing episode that is in fact, ironic and tragic.

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. ¹⁹ And it was told Saul, "Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah." ²⁰ Then Saul sent messengers to take David, and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as head over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. ²¹ When it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they also prophesied. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they also prophesied. ²² Then he himself went to Ramah and came to the great well that is in Secu. And he asked, "Where are Samuel and David?" And one said, "Behold, they are at Naioth in Ramah." ²³ And he went there to Naioth in Ramah. And the Spirit of God came upon him also, and as he went he prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah. ²⁴ And he too stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel and lay naked all that day and all that night. Thus it is said, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

David's Residence with Samuel

(v. 18)

This is an important moment, not only in this text, but in the book itself. We have seen how God is working through great reversals to bring about His plan. His aim is to install His King in Zion. That has both a near fulfillment in David and a far fulfillment in Christ. Samuel had publicly broken with King Saul. But he had never publicly identified with David. His giving David refuge and sanctuary changes all of that. The prophet of God is now shielding and sheltering David. It is only a few miles from Saul's home estate.

Remember, David's anointing as the next king was not a public event. So the people know him as the champion in battle, the leader of the armies, the bringer of victory over the enemy, the friend of Jonathan, the husband of Michal and the comforter of King Saul. But now, all that has changed. That Samuel is sheltering David is itself a prophetic message to Saul and to Israel.

Saul's Messengers Prophesying

(v. 19-21)

Saul is now consumed with destroying David. He sends his messengers to David's new address where he is in residence with Samuel. There, probably under the tutelage of Samuel, is a band of prophets. This is probably the same group we saw in 1 Samuel 10:5. These prophets are prophesying under the power of the Spirit. Let's think about that for a moment.

The word here is used of the gift of prophesy in the exercise of the office. It is used of Spirit anointed praising by prophets and by people accompanied by musical instruments (1 Samuel 10:5ff). And it is used of Saul's "raving" when the evil spirit afflicted him (1 Samuel 18:10). So the word as it used by the author of Samuel means a recognizable activity of speaking or singing that is obviously caused by a spiritual influence outside of the person.

So what a shock it must have been. Imagine the scene. Saul's messengers arrive at the house and enter the courtyard⁸. There is a praise and worship time with the Prophet Band, the sweet singer and the preacher. The band is singing and speaking in the power of the Spirit. In storm the messengers from the king. They pull up short. Then suddenly the Spirit of God rushes on them and they join in the speaking and singing. Someone goes back to tell Saul. He sends two more groups of messengers, all who come under the power of Spirit and join the speaking and singing. This is beautiful and this is amazing.

Saul Humiliated Prophesying

(v. 22-24)

Well, Saul decides he will go himself. He evidently does not know where the residence is so he has to inquire when he gets to Ramah. And on the way, the Spirit of God fell on Saul so that he began to prophesy! And in the prophetic state he strips off his royal clothes and arrives at the house naked. Under the power of the Spirit, he is speaking and singing before Samuel. This is not a place of elevation – this is a place of humiliation. God has stripped him of his standing, his kingdom and now his dignity. The royal garments no longer belong to the house of Saul. (Woodhouse, p. 282) He is naked before the power of the Word of God, the Spirit of God and the prophet of God. For the rest of that day and all night, Saul is in the grip of God and is humiliated. By the power of the Spirit of God Saul has been broken and brought to submission under the prophet of God. The Word and Spirit have triumphed.

Now, before you draw a wrong conclusion about worship... The text is not commending nakedness in worship. Nor is this some proof text that the evidence of the Spirit is supernatural speaking and singing. The Spirit may and does produce gifted speech and singing, even supernatural prophesying through music and message. That is not the point of this text. Here, we see that the Spirit of God can and will break the most stubborn of sinners, the most murderous of mad men, the highest in station, the ones with all the power.

It has been a long, sad journey from 1 Samuel 10 to 1 Samuel 19:

1 Samuel 10:9-13

⁹ When he [Saul] turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart. And all these signs came to pass that day. ¹⁰ When they came to Gibeah, behold, a group of prophets met him, and the Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he prophesied among them. ¹¹ And when all who knew him previously saw how he prophesied with the prophets, the people said to one another, "What has come over the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" ¹² And a man of the place answered, "And who is their father?" Therefore it became a proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" ¹³ When he had finished prophesying, he came to the high place.

1 Samuel 19:23-24

²³ And he [Saul] went there to Naioth in Ramah. And the Spirit of God came upon him also, and as he went he prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah. ²⁴ And

he too stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel and lay naked all that day and all that night. Thus it is said, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

And now the earlier proverb that expressed surprise at Saul among the prophets expresses derision. It is now a different kind of question. This, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" was spoken at his exaltation to king and now at his humiliation before the prophet.

Reflect and Respond

From the first king of Israel who was like the nations, to all the kings of the nations, this Word goes forth from Psalm 2:4-12.

⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.

⁵ Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,

⁶ "As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill."

⁷ I will tell of the decree:
The LORD said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.

⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.

⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

¹⁰ Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.

¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.

¹² Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.

Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

That same word comes to us as encouragement for humility in the pursuit of harmony and unity in Philippians 2:3-11.

³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

May the Word of God and Spirit of God subdue us and empower us for this kind of supernatural singing and speaking.

⁸ This residence would probably have been large enough to house not only Samuel and David, but also this band of prophets. This may have been the first school of prophets that later is led by Elijah. It would have been common for a residence that large to have been built around an open courtyard in its center. This was not just a Roman design to come later, but has much earlier origins in those days.