

## Facing Hostility

*The Life of David*

By Chris Hand

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** 1 Samuel 18:1-16  
**Preached on:** Sunday, February 28, 2021

**Crich Baptist Church**  
Market Place, Crich  
Derbyshire. DE4 5DD (UK)

**Website:** [www.crichbaptist.org](http://www.crichbaptist.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/crichbaptist](http://www.sermonaudio.com/crichbaptist)

Well, we continue this evening in the life of David, our considerations of him and of reading every chapter of this very fast-paced at times narrative in this section of 1 Samuel. We're taking, as it were, themes that run through perhaps various chapters and just stopping to dwell upon those. And this evening, well, it's David's relationship, relationship, if you can call it that, with Saul. "Facing Hostility" is therefore the sermon title. Facing hostility. Hostility hardly does justice, really, does it to what David had to face from Saul's hand.

Well, where is David by this point. We remember he has just come fresh from his remarkable victory over Goliath and not daunted by the giant, didn't think that this was one thing too many but that the battle was the Lord's, and he viewed with spiritual eyes what lay ahead, that there was a victory within reach however unlikely humanly speaking it might have looked. He was right. The Lord was with him and there is, isn't it, the big theme here in this part of scripture that the Lord is with David. And now he's very much on that pathway to fulfilling prophecy of Samuel when he went to anoint him, that he would be the future king. And Saul was already reaching towards the expiry date on his kingship, that his tenure, his hold of office as king is now drawn towards an end. It's inevitable, God has spoken and no matter what Saul might try to do, there are plenty of things he tries to do, it's not going to work.

David is the heir apparent and he's now being trained for that position and David acquits himself very very well, doesn't he? Having defeated Goliath and very much drawn the attention of everybody, Abner, the main commander of Saul's army, very impressed with this man. And we note there, don't we, that when now David is taken from the fields, he's not going back anymore now. Well, it looks as if Saul has blocked him from the fields. He doesn't allow him to go back anymore to his father Jess. In fact, it's the Lord who has taken him from the sheepfolds to shepherd his people.

But now David is in charge of the army and his position there is well-respected. Saul's servants, the opposition, what good things come to them from that position, they have to admit that David is really quite the man. What a commander, what power and military strength he has. He comes back from slaughtering the Philistines, well, the Philistines

would often have something to say back in return but now they seem to be very very much on the back foot.

But David has some training to undergo before he's going to become remotely near to the succession to the throne. King in the making, yes, but there's a training that he is going to have to experience, a very hard training it is going to be. Not rescuing sheep from lions or bears, which was good training and stood him in good stead to stand against Goliath, but now he was going to have to deal with people and, in particular, Saul. And those who were following him would owe their all to Saul and therefore feel rather undone by, that they're seeing their privileges too that all came from their support of Saul frittering away. David has now begun to make enemies.

It's short-lived, isn't it? There are successes and indeed his successes are going to lead to the hostility that he's going to experience. Just a few verses of this success where everything just working so well, the victory over Goliath and then Saul's attention has been attracted and Saul is now in a downward path that is filled with hostility against David.

There is David, he holds great promises. We thought about that, didn't we, this morning, Psalm 60. On behalf of the nation, holds great promises and we had intimation that it's his family or that section of Judah that was going to be the family line that is productive of the Messiah. Well, he knew that at that point perhaps not, but he nevertheless knows that he is to be the king. And what testing. Who could imagine that? When he was told that he'd be king, could he have imagined the pathway God would choose for him? That Saul, who had seemingly given him these responsibilities and appointed him now the head of his army, should so quickly turn around against him, and that suddenly David is now in a wholly different environment and having to work and walk very very carefully, and this is where he is going to be very very sorely tested. And from this experience of having to encounter and deal with Saul and Saul's acolytes like Doeg the Edomite and what he would do, come some of the Psalms, quite a few of them, in fact, and the depths that David feels comes out of this period of his life, the preparation for being the king.

We might say that he's having to walk worthy of those promises. He's having to learn to carry those responsibilities maturely, to have the character sufficient to bear them. By and large, of course, we all know that down the way there's going to be some spectacular failure but by and large this preparation has indeed suited him well and he's going to be ready for office when that office is suddenly there, his to have to take. And we think, don't we, learning obedience from what he suffered. That's where he's at very much in this phase. He's learning obedience from what he's suffered. He'll become king, he will be crowned, there is a throne for him, but we think, don't we, of our Lord Jesus Christ. David is a type. His life, aspects of it, are reminding us of somebody greater who's also going to have to learn obedience through what he suffered, who has a throne that he has been promised and will surely come to, although route to that throne involves facing a lot of hostility. He's going to have suffer there the contradiction of sinners and he's actually going to have to yield up his blood as a result of that contradiction, that hostility toward him.

David, then, already is showing us that he is from Bethlehem, that tells us something. And we know that it's from his family, the throne of David is to be given to the Lord Jesus Christ so we're already alert that we're going to see here things that remind us of somebody else, somebody who is greater, and even in this matter, this hardship, this preparation and testing that David will have to have before he becomes properly speaking the king. He's definitely going to become king. Our Lord Jesus Christ, it's definite he's going to inherit the throne, inherit the kingdom and rule over it but only through having suffered beforehand to get there.

Well, let's see further and our first heading: Saul's hatred. Saul's hatred. And it comes, doesn't it, it comes very early, very soon. No sooner has David begun to do great exploits and secure great victories and suddenly Saul has turned around, assuming having had great respect for David and been willing quite quickly to promote him and seen that decision come off spectacularly well and that David is now going out before Israel, he's leading the army and he leads them back again having won great triumphs, but that is the problem. David is having great great victories and that is now coming home to Saul and the judgment that God has spoken against him, that he is not going to continue as king, now that is going to be fulfilled, begins to happen here.

There is hate and it leads an attempt to murder. We saw, didn't we, there with that spear being thrown at David, he has to evade that twice here in this section, this time of David's life. But there are other times too and we'll perhaps come to those a little bit later on, but his is an extreme and intense anger. We see in verse 8 Saul was very angry, and it is, it's just really really gone deep with him and that the whole way in which the anger plays out, that that hatred now, that jealousy of David establishes itself and is settled. There's now something immovable about it and that is, in itself, the judgment of God. He's on a downhill path and in that he will see nothing good in David. He will turn everything around in his mind to make David always the villain, to suspect David of the worst things, to imagine that David's plotting against him. All of this will begin to fill his mind as in this, this instability that is now a feature of him.

Well, we find in one moment prophesying and the next moment he's picking up a spear to throw at David. Extraordinary. One thing, then the other thing, and then almost like rapid succession and this is a disintegration that this man who had not felt strongly enough about obeying God and had not fulfilled what he'd been told by Samuel to do and not done the Lord's errands, even though he protested that he had. And we can read about that when he spares the king of the Amalekites, Agag, and doesn't kill him, doesn't kill all the creatures, the animals that belonged to Agag and the Amalekites. And having himself already previously offered a sacrifice that he shouldn't have done and waited for Samuel, that's what he should have done, he didn't.

So his disobedience to God has come through very strongly but he feels very strongly of holding onto his office, holding onto the crown at all costs, keeping all the trappings of power and the wealth that accrues, and the way in which he commands his servants and the rest of it. And the way in which this suddenly comes into play is there. It's there, it's

underneath. The man is not to be king, he's not fit to be king, actually. This is all waiting to come out and it comes out through this rather thoughtless and unspiritual refrain of the womenfolk here. If we think celebrity culture is anything new, forget it. Here it is, a big big time and they're singing, aren't they, in verse 7 and back from battle they come, there's Saul, there's David, and, well, they're singing, "Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands." And this is what made Saul angry, that David, if you will, had more Twitter followers and Saul comparatively speaking but few. Celebrity status. The women are wrong actually. It's very unspiritual what it is they're saying because God has given these victories actually. It's God who is with David in securing these victories, not David himself or Saul or anybody else. The Lord is with these servants of his, that's the thing, but that's gone out of their minds and it's all about some kind of hero worship here, how impressive David was and, well, we have to say the scripture says it, doesn't it? He's a good looking man and handsome in that way and here he is striking home victory after victory against the hated Philistines, the enemy who inflicted defeats in the past and now the boot is on the other foot and there's David making great progress.

So their song and the song, well, we don't hear that it went to David's head. It much perhaps displeased him to hear that, maybe he anticipated some of the trouble that it would bring because it has not gone down well with Saul. They preferred David, that he's more popular than me, is he. And then he conjectures on from that, now what more can he have but the kingdom? And the next thing begins with this, his popularity, and before you know it, he'll be the king, I'm out on my ear. So this whole thought of holding onto his kingdom that he can't actually hold onto. If he believed the word of God, if he believed Samuel, he'd know, well, this is the way it should go. We're going to come next week, the Lord willing, to see just Jonathan's friendship with David, Jonathan being the elder son of Saul. Jonathan seems to understand that there's something God is doing in David and he's already knit with him, and there's that covenant. And Jonathan has honored David, getting him his armor and giving him his robe. That was a sign that you thought that this man is the man, he's got the future here.

Jonathan saw it, Saul would not see it. It was there to be seen but he would not see it. Here was that neighbor that Samuel spoke of that was better than him, even to the extent that, yes, David's military prowess in securing tens of thousands of dead Philistines compared to Saul's thousands. Then, of course, there was Goliath the giant, and Saul had not been able to dispatch but David did. There it is clear as anything perhaps. David is the man intended to be king, and while Jonathan perhaps is beginning to get the message, Saul is going in the completely opposite direction and he's coveting the popularity that David has. He wants that. He wants himself to be the tens of thousands sung about and David can have his thousands, not the other way around.

So this is working very very badly and this is the trigger point, this is the kind of irritant that now allows for the eruption, that festering anger, hatred within, that instability of character, that it meant that Samuel speaking from God had taken the kingship away from Saul and would be giving it to somebody else. Whereas what should Saul have been doing? Well, there would have been succession planning here. He should have seen and recognized, well, David, David is that man, maybe even consulting with Samuel and

Samuel would have confirmed to Saul that David is that man. Help him. Prepare him to be king. Share what knowledge you have and your experience and your wisdom. Except he doesn't, does he? He wants to kill him instead, to spear him. No succession planning there. He wants to kill the person that God has appointed to be his successor. Well, his status, he couldn't let it go. The power, couldn't let it go. The wealth, wouldn't let it go. He wanted the adulation, acclimation of the people. He wanted to be the one with the tens of thousands.

Well, we have no doubt about the hatred and we you don't have a spear thrown at you on a couple of occasions and come away from that and think, well, has he really meant it? It was pretty obvious, wasn't it, that one and it happens there as we have already seen in verse 11 of this chapter, and just looking in the next chapter, chapter 19, verse 10, then Saul, "Then Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he slipped away from Saul's presence; and he drove the spear into the wall." So that was meant to be David but the wall instead gets the full brunt of his strong, this is intense kind of attack that he has launched against him.

We might also note this and this is interesting, isn't it, that God has sent a distressing spirit upon Saul. Now this not some sort of random thing that God did just to make life hard for Saul, this was a judgment, a judgment because of what already was there in Saul, this whole world that was within that now is expressing itself but was always there. And so the Lord has sent upon him a distressing spirit and that we see is in verse 10. It's curious, isn't it, that one moment he's prophesying, there's David playing music with his hand, and then suddenly there's the spear being launched towards David. Curious, rather curious but this is actually a judgment and this distressing spirit is not some accidental thing that just sort of crept in, but is actually sent of God and is intended there in a way to be part of the judgment, part of the breakdown of the man that he is. This is going to hasten, this is going to intensify and harden Saul, and in a way that will then expose him for who he is.

So this distressing spirit, in fact, had already begun to make its inroads in chapter 16. No sooner had Samuel anointed David in Bethlehem that we learn in 1 Samuel 16:14, "But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him." Get troubling thoughts that he would be given perhaps to fits of jealousy, that there would be these dark kind of impressions upon his mind and thoughts of what people are up to and how they're trying to destroy him, what's going on here. So this unstable man became more unstable still, more irrational, more ready to lash out with his spear.

It made him also to be very scheming now. There is David, well, Saul hadn't managed to finish him off with route 1, as it were, the hurling of the spear, so now he tries to manufacture, contrive the circumstances of David's death. Well, we race ahead a little bit and anticipate future things but, of course, later on David himself does this when he contrives the death of Uriah the Hittite. But here it's Saul saying to David, "Go out and fight great battles," secretly hoping that the Philistines would do the job for him and that David would die at their hand. David doesn't and David gets more victories.

So he now as he promised actually that whoever defeated Goliath would have the hand of his eldest daughter in marriage, but he backs out of that deal and instead, learning that Michal, the younger daughter, that she is actually in love with David. So he thinks this is my moment. I will manufacture the circumstances in a kind of constructive dismissal sort of death instead and says to David, "Well, you can have her hand in marriage. Gotta go, though, and kill 100 Philistines." Thinking to himself that will actually finish him off. That'll do it. What I couldn't do, it will happen that way and it won't even look as if I did it if he died at the hand of the Philistines. Well, that's what happens, isn't it, sad but except that David kills 200 Philistines and so Saul's plan there kind of backfires and he has to concede that Michal, his daughter, be given to David in marriage.

So a destructiveness and sort of planning, of scheming, this has now also begun to consume him. This is the darkness that is invading his soul, that this distressing spirit is part of, is making him to work in very underhand ways to try to destroy David. Well, the Proverbs tell us something there in Proverbs 14:30, "A sound heart is life to the body, But envy is rottenness to the bones." This is happening to Saul, isn't it? There's jealousy, there's envy, it's generating hatred, murderous intent. It's rotting the man, destroying his character and rotten to the bones with envy. And fear, fear is there. We see actually that Saul, first of all, was afraid of David as the Lord was with him but had departed from Saul. But here he actually recognizes God's with this man, but rather than thinking succession planning, let's help and support this young man, let's give him the benefit of what wisdom I have as king, he was afraid of him. He could see that perhaps David's got bad intentions towards me, that Saul projects onto David what actually Saul is about, that he could think that David could scheme to destroy him, Saul, take his life away. But far from the truth. David wasn't like that at all, but Saul in this dark, envious, brooding sense and with this distressing spirit always ready to think the worst of David.

For indeed, as David behaves himself so well and we're coming to this in a minute, but there in verse 15, "Therefore, when Saul saw that he behaved very wisely, he was afraid of him." Because he's gaining respect of the people. The way that he is behaving in such a mature way and he's carrying the victories there and carrying the weight of expectation comfortably with all the adulation, the women there, it hasn't gone to his head at all. Very circumspect. Very careful. And so the commanders and all of his servants respecting David. A remarkable man and that's making Saul even more afraid, that he can see that this could just all go in that direction and I'll be finished, I'll be dead. He'll kill me.

Well, we see that here is Saul seeing a threat actually here where there is no actual threat to his life, and where had he have heard what Samuel had said, accepted that that was God's word, could have actually been an influence for good here. But instead we see Saul's hatred and that must have been difficult for David, mustn't it? A young man and only recently introduced to the court, living now at this elevation to be the commander of the army while only a few years before he was looking after sheep in the field. This has moved on tremendously fast and then all of a sudden there is this bitter hostility, this irrational hatred that is being sort of literally hurled at him, arrowed at him, and he's having to learn to deal with that. How difficult for him.

Chapter 20, verse 1, when he's speaking with Jonathan, "What have I done?" he asks. "What is my iniquity, and what is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life?" David is trying to understand something of what's happening in Saul's heart. Well, why is he behaving like this? I'm not doing anything to occasion this. I'm not planning to kill him. I'm not looking to usurp the throne. And we will see, won't we, in the future, I'm sure you know that he had various occasions to actually kill Saul and he declines. He refrains from it. He doesn't do it which shows that David always had good intentions and right intentions in his heart. But there it is, sometimes people, people at work or wherever it is will hate us. They'll hate us with no apparent reason but they just dislike us intensely, imagine the worst of us, will seek to make life as difficult as possible for us, and that's what's in their heart. And you and I might be incredulous and think why are they doing this? What's going on in there that makes this come? Why am I getting this sort of thrown at me? I haven't done anything or said anything to generate this and yet there it is.

Well, Saul, Saul's the example, isn't he, there, that anger, hatred, jealousy, whatever it is that's working there and the times will be, sometimes that we will find that at work or wherever else in life, afraid there for our young people that are far along before you might bump into such people as this. So what can David teach us? The second heading then, the last heading: hostility brings pressure. Hostility brings pressure and you should think really it brought pressure on Saul, that he should have been a very troubled man, what he was doing. He should have been mortified that he tried to kill David on two or three occasions with his spear. Except he doesn't, he just goes on in that, doesn't he? He just is in tramlines now, God has left him to it and he's just going that way. No change. No reversal.

So there is David and the question is then that he always has to pose to himself, how will I react? How will I react to this provocation, injustice of it, the danger of it? A spear is being thrown around the place, it's a little bit of premiums from insurers there if you say, well, my employer throws a spear at me every so often. This is a difficult place and he's having to learn how do I do this because people are watching and watching. Saul's servants there, he's got the army there, he's got his family watching. He's got everybody watching, the women and all their dancing. There's a lot of pressure on him. The hostility of others brings pressure here to David who is in the public eye.

Proverbs 27:4, "Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, But who is able to stand before jealousy?" This is Saul, isn't it? Who can stand before jealousy? It just is there. It's eating the person up and the effect of it is just going to keep coming and coming and coming, and you have to stand against that. Well, who can do that? Well, it is, isn't it, it's going to need grace and it's going to need grace and David has that grace, doesn't he, in abundance, that he despite facing all of these damaging attitudes of Saul and thinking perhaps Saul is poisoning the minds of others, perhaps he's telling other people that David, don't be fooled by his going out there, he's plotting, he's planning. Indeed, Saul does begin to make people into that and bring them into this idea that David's got a conspiracy running. So David's under great pressure to behave impeccably, blamelessly,

to give no reason for anybody of unprejudiced mind to even think for a moment that he's plotting and that he's got Saul's downfall in view.

Well, we see time and time again that David does indeed behave blamelessly. So just in chapter 18, we read it but it's there at the end of the chapter, "Then the princes of the Philistines went out to war. And so it was, whenever they went out, that David behaved more wisely than all the servants of Saul, so that his name became highly esteemed." So there in chapter 18, the verses we did read, verse 14, "And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the LORD was with him." There he is, hostility, bringing this pressure and watched how he would react. David, you give me a spear and sort of hurl it back at you, and you're going to call imprecations down upon Saul's head. No. He is behaving blamelessly and wisely, and at the moment he is still out fighting, as it were, the king's battles, still as the king's commander of the army. He hasn't had to run away and be a fugitive, that's coming up and that will be a future sermon. But he is in that position, difficult position, people are watching him, wondering about him and perhaps hearing a little bit of what Saul is thinking and saying maybe to his immediate entourage. But he is behaving in that situation very wisely, blamelessly, giving no reason for offense, no reason for suspicion. It's a challenge, isn't it, there, dear friends, if that's your experience at work or wherever else. There is that pressure but here is David showing us that it can be met.

So finally a few thoughts on that, how to behave. Well, first of all, not naively. Right, not naively, that you can't sort of, as I say, look at Saul's behavior and think he didn't mean it. Well, if somebody throws a spear at you, I think that you get the message from that, that in a couple of times you very much get the message from that, that there's something very very wrong going on in Saul. And you can't just brush it off, you can't be naive. You get the message and you have to therefore take the actions that you need to take in your own thinking, to get clear in your own thinking on this, that you're facing something a bit unusual here. This isn't every day that there are these people and they're out there and you have to be thinking to yourself, well, that's what's happening here. I don't think I'm the problem here, haven't given reason for offense but there's something going on in this person just as there is in Saul.

So we are not naive. People are sinners, in fact, people are sinners and they can be up to things and thinking dark thoughts and murderous thoughts and everything else. Unfortunately we might be in their crosshairs and be the ones that they're having those thoughts about. What did David do besides that? Well, he took evasive action. It's as simple as that really. A spear being thrown at you, you reflect on it, over long get out of the way, and that's what he did. And he was very nimble, very agile, and so he escaped these murderous actions and sometimes that's what we have to do is just get out of the way. If there are people like that at work or wherever it is, get out of their way. Don't try and engage with them. Don't try any thoughts there. No backchat to them. Just keep out of their way. Don't be in their line of vision as much as possible. Don't be in their line of vision. David removed himself from that hostility. Didn't cure it, there wasn't anything he could say that is going to improve on this and pick that up. He's not naive, so he's keeping himself more and more out of the way to the extent finally that he has to get out of the

way entirely. He has to leave. He has to be a fugitive. As I say, we'll come to that another day.

David made inquiry of a good friend. This is Jonathan. It's a little bit interesting because Jonathan has a bit of a conflict of interest that plays out a little bit, and we're going to be looking I think it's next week at this remarkable friendship that David had with Jonathan, the older son of Saul. And he asks Jonathan's advice, the son of Saul. In a way he'll be loyal to his dad, won't he, but well, yes, to a measure but he'll also be loyal to David because he's made a covenant with him. He's seen something special in David. And David trusts Jonathan's judgment and he asked him, "Be honest. What's going on with your father? Why is he behaving like this?" We'll soon come to it that Jonathan's a little bit naive here, and even the spears being thrown, he hasn't quite worked out that maybe his father has not got a kind word or two there for David.

So Jonathan then gets there. He picks up on what's going on and he's a good man we will see, and even when it's his father that he has to speak against, he will do it or go where the evidence takes him. That's good. Somebody like that who we can talk to and ask, "Your honest opinion, what do you think about this? Why is this person doing it? Why just constantly getting it wrong here? Am I doing something, some annoying habit I've got? What is it that's doing it?" And ask them for their honest opinion and, of course, they may well say, well, sorry, it's this guy. In fact, he's got a track record. This woman, got a track record for this. Previous person here, I know somebody that has encountered difficulty in employment and lo and behold, that person has got a track record of doing the same thing. That's good, just to bounce the thoughts off others about what's going on here. It's them. They were trouble to this person and that person. It just settles you then in your conviction. It just gives you a greater sense of confidence in your own judgment.

So he has a good friend who helps him to see the situation, to not read too much into it or not reading enough into it, or over-interpreting it, or under-interpreting it, and Jonathan is that good friend. Then, as said, David behaved blamelessly. He had required himself that in his walk before the Lord, he required it of himself that he wouldn't fire back, that he wouldn't give in kind, that he was going to act in mercy, calmly, with compassion, very wisely. He's not going to invite the spears to come raining his way, but there is that in him that is fully resolved to honor God and to be able to walk blamelessly in good conscience before Saul however much as this tidal wave of murderous intent that is going to meet him. However much his behavior will be wrongly interpreted and the worst motives ascribed to him, well, he'll have to leave that to Saul. He himself will continue to hold himself accountable for the highest standard of action and of motive.

It can be very tiring, very wearing. Who can stand against envy? It's a wearing, wearing experience day in and day out if that's the work situation, and there are people like that out there. It's tiring, needs a lot of energy, a lot of thought, a lot of prayer because here's the wonderful thing, isn't it, that God is with you. God gives him grace. The departure of the spirit there from Saul is paralleled by the arrival of the spirit in a powerful sense of grace and enabling upon David. So as we've seen in chapter 16, verse 13, when Samuel anoints David, "the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward." The

Lord is with him, would help him, encourage him, will give him ability to quickly in evasive action. God was with him and he can be there with us and help us in that way or this, or get out of the way of that particular situation maybe there at work.

Chapter 18 again, verse 12, and onwards from there, there is the Spirit gone from Saul. Saul is afraid of David because the Lord was with him but had departed from Saul. The Spirit was with David and that meant the Spirit with grace that would be a help, there would be longsuffering, patience, an ability to endure more than if we were to sit down beforehand and think, well, that's what you're going to have to face. You think, well, count me out. But no, that the Lord there counts us in, he'll help, he'll be with us, give us strategies and be able to keep out of the way or whatever it might be, give us opportunities and wisdom, maybe even change the heart of that particular person so that instead, instead of seeing the worst, they begin perhaps seeing the best in us and our relationship moves on much much better.

There we are, we have like David the Spirit of God with us as believers, that we have helps and resources, that facing hostility, that there is behind us, well, all the help of heaven. David, well, needed to know that, didn't he? He needed to find that his situation there is beyond anything any of us will have faced, I'm sure, and we never will have to face, but that that extreme situation David was in shows us the much much smaller circumstances to have to deal with, that God can be with us and can give us grace.

So we continue to look at the life of David. Yes, it's Jonathan next week and this very strong good friendship that the Lord built between these two men.

# **FACING HOSTILITY**

## **(Sermon Summary)**

### **Reading: 1 Samuel 18: 1-16.**

Following David's victory over Goliath, and then his further success in military exploits, it is now very apparent that the Lord is with David in a very remarkable way. This, however, attracts the hostility of Saul. David has been trained in dealing with lions and bears when defending the sheep out in the fields, Now, he has to learn to deal with people. David had great promises which the Lord has given to him. But there are tests to be undergone before those promises will take real effect. He is being prepared for the day when he will ascend to power. He will have to learn obedience through what he suffers. In this way David is a type of Christ, showing us things in his life that will come true, in a bigger and more significant sense, in the life of the Lord Jesus. David has to prevail, like the Lord will have to, despite the wrongs and unjust hostility He faces.

#### **1. Saul's hatred.**

Saul's hatred matures into a full-blown desire to murder David. He is consumed with extreme anger (v8). This is now a settled pattern of sinful thought and behaviour with him. He is now on a downhill path, refusing to see anything good in David and imputing to him the worst motives possible. We are now seeing the real Saul. He did not have a heart after God. He was interested in the power and the wealth of being king, but not in how he could use the office to honour and serve the Lord.

It is the rather thoughtless and unspiritual song that the women sing (v7) that triggers the release of these ugly thoughts and attitudes that Saul has towards David. All he can see is a threat to his crown (v8) and so he eyes David with jealousy from now on (v9). Really, Saul should have taken to heart what the Lord has already told him about his crown being taken from and given to another, and realized that David was to become king by the will of God. Rather than trying to kill David, Saul should have been helping prepare David to be king after him. But instead of doing some 'succession planning', he preferred to cling to his power and the personal honour that came with being king.

There is no doubt about the serious way that he intended David ill. He hurls his spear at David on various occasions (v11 and 1 Samuel 19:10). Moreover, the Lord has judged Saul because of his hard heart and sent him a distressing spirit (v10; 1 Samuel 16:14; 19:9). He has now become a deeply unstable man, lashing out in unpredictable ways. He has become very scheming and malicious, trying to contrive ways to have David killed at

the hands of others (v17, v25). Proverbs 14:30 is true of him. We can also see fear working in the heart of Saul (v12), which only gets worse the better David conducts himself (v15) so that Saul has fewer grounds to justify his suspicions.

We have to learn, as David learns here, that people can hate us without a proper reason (see David's agony in 1 Samuel 20:1). Sometimes people will behave like Saul towards us in respect of their instability and anger. We have to learn to live with it.

## **2. Hostility brings pressure.**

When people are hostile towards us, it puts us under pressure. How will we react? This is all the more so pressing because David is so much in the public eye and he feels his responsibility before the Lord. He would feel what Solomon wrote in Proverbs 27:4. Living with a persistent attitude of jealousy and anger on the part of another is tiring and a burden. David is under pressure to behave very carefully (v30), avoiding giving any reason for offence to Saul or anyone else. David knows that Saul is looking for excuses to be angry with David and turn other people against him. We can find ourselves under these pressures in our families, at work or, even, in the church.

How are we to behave in these circumstances? Certainly, we should not be naïve. Saul is throwing spears at David. David gets the message. Saul hates him. It is not the time and place to see if Saul has some 'self-esteem' issue or is feeling a 'victim'. It is time to get out of the way. Jonathan, later on, is unwilling to believe the obvious about his father (1 Samuel 20: 2,9). We cannot afford to be naïve. People are sinners, and sometimes their sin manifests itself in this extreme way.

David, wisely, took evasive action. He removed himself from the situation. Sometimes that is what we have to do. We take the simple measure of keeping ourselves out of people's way.

We mentioned Jonathan a moment back. David makes enquiry of Him (1 Samuel 20:1). He asks advice to make sure that he has not misread the situation. We need to make sure that we have not read too much, or too little, into the behaviour of other people.

Finally, of course, David behaves himself blamelessly. He required this of himself, even though he was being wronged. Later on, we see that David refuses to take up the opportunity to kill Saul when it arises. Although it is tiring and wearing, and David is having to respond to a situation not of his own making, this is what he is called to do. We look to the Lord to give us grace to behave like this. The Lord was with David (1 Samuel 13:13; 1 Samuel 18:12). He will also be with us in situations where we face hostility from others.