

April 10, 2016
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Life of David
Community Baptist Church
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from 1 Samuel 19:1-17.

1. Was it right for Jonathan to go behind his father's back to warn David?
2. What often happens when a person takes up another person's offense?
3. What kind of evidence did Jonathan present to prove that Saul was wrong?
4. Saul swore an oath that he would not harm David. Would you have believed him?
5. Was it right or was it necessary for Michal to lie to Saul?

AN UNSTABLE, DOUBLE-MINDED MAN
1 Samuel 19:1-17

Most people are familiar with the legend of Diogenes, the cynical philosopher who reportedly walked through the streets of Athens in broad daylight with a lit lantern. The legend claims that when people asked Diogenes what he was doing, he replied that he was looking for an honest man. But even that view of the legend is called into question for its honesty. Reading in Laertius' *Lives of*

Eminent Philosophers we learn that Diogenes did not say he was searching for an honest human but simply, "I am searching for a human." That response fit well with the philosopher's cynicism. We might conclude that he was searching without success for that person who embodied all that humanity should be.

That idea is particularly interesting to us who know that God created humans in His own image, in the pattern of His own perfect righteousness, in order to have fellowship with Him. We are daily and painfully aware that complete righteousness is not to be found among humans. According to Scripture, we are all infused with the sin principle and even we, who love God and whom He has embraced in His love, struggle with sin.

The wonderful and amazing part of the story is that somehow, in His mercy, grace, and infinite wisdom, God still brings about His sovereign will while working with us and through us. That is the story of David. As we will see in future studies, David, though a man after God's heart, sometimes failed to follow God. Still God brought about His will which leaves David as the standard for all subsequent kings of Israel and Judah, and even presents David as a figure of the perfect king, the King of kings, Jesus Christ.

Maybe the more amazing work of God is accomplished while David's adversaries try to remove his influence and even his life. Saul comes to mind as an example of God accomplishing His will in spite of the most intense human efforts to circumvent it. Saul was a striking example of a double-minded man. Some people might even diagnose him as suffering from schizophrenia. One moment he declared how much he loves David, and the next moment he tried to kill him. David never knew when he would be welcome in the king's house or when he would need to run for his life.

And somehow through all this upheaval, God brought about His perfect will. David's story should encourage us to trust God even when life doesn't make sense. There are those days in our lives when it seems like God has walked off and left His creation to fend for itself—including us. That is never the case. Even while our enemies (real and imagined) seem to have success against us, God is still directing affairs for His glory.

Reasoning With an Unreasonable Person (vv.1-7).

This part of David's story begins with the fact that the wicked king sought to kill the faithful servant (vv.-3). Saul had no more secret hatred. He just put it out there in the open for all to see. *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 (v1)*. At this point, Saul has given up all pretense of loving or even tolerating David. This in spite of the fact that in the past it was reported that he loved David (1 Samuel 16:21). In the recent past, he had made David his armor-bearer (16:21). Later he even put David in command of much of the army (1 Samuel 17:5).

But when the people of the land began to praise David as being a greater warrior than Saul, the king's attitude changed. Saul became so obsessed with killing David that he secretly hatched plots that would put David in harm's way with the desire that harm would win (1 Samuel 18:17). Now Saul boldly told men over whom he had authority that he wanted them to kill David. This is simply another case of the reality that eventually the truth is revealed. We can pretend, we can play the hypocrite, we can even wish that truth is not truth. But time is always on the side of truth. As a result, we often observe individuals suddenly take an unexpected direction in life (i.e. leave their jobs, or spouses, or families). Or we see educational institutions forsake foundational philosophies and/or go out of business. Churches become so much like the world or characterized by error that they have no distinguishable reason for existing. Whole nations and cultures self-destruct.

The truth that there were problems lay under the surface for a long time. But one day they come out. Because this is true, it pays for us to regularly look into the mirror of God's Word and honestly assess what we see.

A friend who was deeply related to the people involved in this dilemma recommended protection from the unreasonable man (vv.2-3). *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. 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" (vv.2-3)*.

Jonathan illustrates the principle that a true friend will attempt to protect. This was not slander or gossip on his part. Slander is not

true and is an attempt to hurt the victim of slander. Christians should never do that. Gossip may or may not be true, but the information shared is not necessary and often hurts the victim. Apparently, Christians should never do that except on social media and in prayer requests.

Jonathan was right to do what he did because Saul created a legitimate danger. He was bent on harming Jonathan's friend. Therefore, Jonathan was not disloyal to his father to warn David. David was innocent and Saul was wrong. We would warn a friend who might be in danger of harm even from our authority, wouldn't we? We would do something else in a situation where we are in some kind of relationship with both parties.

A true friend will also attempt to correct. In this case, it was easy to determine that Saul was out of order and David was innocent. So, too, it is right for us to work for reconciliation in such cases. But at the same time, there are situations in which the problem is none of our business. If Jonathan had not been in a meaningful relationship with David or with his father, he would not have been in a position to warn or correct. God warns us that taking up another person's offense never works out well. *Whoever meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears (Proverbs 26:17)*. Too often we see people getting involved in a problem that is not their own, trying to fix what they don't understand, or trying to correct a problem that really doesn't exist. It is like stepping in quick sand. Soon the nosy person is enveloped in a mess he or she should not have any part of.

In an accurate illustration of the double-minded man, the wicked king in this story changed his mind again. . . sort of (vv.4-7). At first we are happy to discover that cooler heads prevailed (vv.4-5). Jonathan went to his father and appealed for righteousness. *And Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Let not the king sin against his servant David" (v.4a)*. We need to keep in mind that Jonathan was probably about 40 years old at this point. He was in a position to confront his father. Notice that he was respectful as he pointed out that his father was wrong.

Notice also that Jonathan did not hesitate to call sin what it is. Was it just Jonathan's opinion that his father was sinning, or did he have a valid argument? God's law required His people to treat their

servants with respect. Solomon would write later, *A servant who deals wisely has the king's favor, but his wrath falls on one who acts shamefully (Proverbs 14:35)*. David was certainly the servant who dealt wisely and deserved the king's favor. But he wasn't getting it. It is certainly God's law for us to love each other. Most obvious is the fact that murder is one of the "big Ten" prohibitions. When trying to correct a problem, we must be able to appeal to the principles of God's Word.

Furthermore, Jonathan appealed to evidence. He pointed out that David did not sin. David never missed God's standard of right in his relationship with Saul. *He has not sinned against you (v.4b)*. It was also true that though Saul resented David's success, his deeds actually resulted in good for Saul and the kingdom. *His deeds have brought good to you (v.4c)*. Jonathan reminded Saul that David even risked his life when God brought victory to Saul's kingdom by killing Goliath. *For he took his life in his hand and he struck down the Philistine (v.5a)*. In light of this evidence, maybe we could apply the words of Jesus when He responded to people who took up stones in order to kill Him. *"I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?" (John 10:32)*. For which benefit that he brought to Saul was Saul going to kill David?

Finally, Jonathan laid out the conclusion. God worked through David. When all the evidence was in, it was clear that *the LORD worked a great salvation for all Israel (v.5b)*. The evidence is clear that God was working through David. Would it not be fighting against God to fight against God's servant? The only way to refute this argument would be to attempt to prove that God is not concerned about or working through my adversary. But, Saul admitted God's favor on his servant. Jonathan reminded him, *You saw it, and rejoiced (v.5c)*. Was Saul not happy to see the Philistines defeated?

Jealousy creates the worst hypocrites. Like Pharisees who had to admit that Jesus taught well, healed the sick, helped the needy, but they had to kill Him anyway! Do we not feel like hypocrites when we are jealous of someone who is successful? Sometimes their success even benefits us. Jonathan would say to us, "Stop sinning against that person." In that same way, he said to his father, *Why then will you sin against innocent blood by killing David without cause?" (v.5d)*.

Good news. There was at least a temporary change of heart (vv.6-7). At the outset, it seemed like the mediator finally saw some progress. Or maybe not. *And Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan. Saul swore, "As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death" (v.6)*. Father Saul heard what Jonathan said, understood him, agreed with him, and responded positively. Invoking the name of God, Saul vowed not to kill David. This was a very serious matter because not to keep the vow would be to take God's name in vain which is listed along with adultery, murder, lying, and such as breaking God's commands. But to a person who is only concerned about themselves, God's opinion doesn't carry much weight.

Yes, but at least there is hope. *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 (v.7)*. For a while things were back to normal. However, this is an example of the fallacy of changing a person's mind but not their heart. The double-minded person is a person who knows in their conscience what is right and what is wrong, but they do not have any resource within them to do right.

Such was Saul. Earlier we read, *Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him (1 Samuel 16:14)*. Such are we. God gives us the indwelling Holy Spirit so that we can live above sin. Paul taught us, *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16)*. But when we quench the Spirit's influence, we will grieve Him by sinning. At least we can get back into fellowship with God by confessing our sin. What hope does a person have who is without the convicting and empowering influence of the Holy Spirit? *For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do (Galatians 5:17)*.

Did Saul have a changed heart? No. Quickly he was back on the warpath against David. Where was God?

Escaping a Determined Enemy (vv.8-17).

In a few days, David experienced more of the same old (vv.8-10). The faithful servant was successful in battle again. *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 (v.8).* David simply went out to do what Saul gave him responsibility to do. Again, it is obvious that God was with David even in battle. Previously in our study we read, *And David had success in all his undertakings, for the LORD was with him (1 Samuel 18:14).*

At the same time, the LORD delivered the harmful spirit to Saul which required that He deliver the faithful servant from Saul (vv.9-10). God sent the harmful spirit again. *Then a harmful spirit from the LORD came upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand (v.9a).* At the same time David enjoyed success in battle, God sent the troubling spirit to Saul. Human wisdom, not being aware of God's actions, would conclude that David's success pushed Saul over the edge. That is because human wisdom is able to perceive only what we experience in this world. There is also the spirit world where God fights amazing battles for us and where God arranges events and circumstances of life ahead of time.

So in this picture, things appeared to be rather humdrum and predictable. It would be like you in your home. The children are busy doing homework. Mom is busy sorting laundry. Dad is not busy sitting in his easy chair watching television. To the human eye, that is all that is happening. But what is God doing in the unseen world at that moment? In whose heart is God doing what? That question at least makes us stop and consider that God is always busy.

In that setting of more of the same, the double-minded man tried to kill the faithful servant. *And David was playing the lyre (v.9a).* *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 (v.10).* Suddenly, due to the influence of the evil spirit, it was Saul's driving desire to pin David to the wall with his spear, that is, kill him. Didn't Saul just recently vow to Jonathan in the name of the LORD that he would not kill David?

That is the problem when there is a changed mind but not a changed heart. When God creates a clean heart within us, our very nature changes. When we simply change our minds, we are likely to change them again. Changed minds are often the result of pressure, arguments, emotions or positive or negative circumstances. When the circumstances change, so does the mind. Prison is a good example of

this problem. When men and women are incarcerated and lose their freedom, they tend to come to their senses and conclude that crime doesn't pay. However, when they regain their freedom, they forget that crime doesn't pay, and too often they go back to the crime. Solomon said, *"Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly" (Proverbs 26:11).* That is why taking the gospel to the prisoners is such an important ministry. When, through faith in Christ, God creates a new heart in the offenders, they seldom return to prison.

Saul tried to fulfill his evil desire against David, but God gave deliverance again. *And David fled and escaped that night (v.10a).* Yes, it is true that David was agile as a warrior and able to dodge the thrown spear. Yes, David was smart enough to run. But ultimately God graciously delivered David.

That attack from Saul led to a new and more intense threat that God foiled (vv.11-17). The servant unraveled the enemy's plan for his death (vv.11-13). After David dodged the spear, Saul had David watched. *Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him, that he might kill him in the morning (v.11a).* This is the tactic of an enemy who seeks our destruction. God warns us that Satan does this very thing. *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8).* Satan and his demons diligently watch Christians looking for an opportunity to cause us to fail so that Satan can accuse us to God. Be as alert in life as David was regarding the men of Saul who lurked at every corner.

David's wife came to his aid. *But Michal, David's wife, told him, "If you do not escape with your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed" (v.11b).* *So Michal let David down through the window, and he fled away and escaped (v.12).* *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 (v.13).*

How do we deal with what appears to be an ethical conundrum here? We think it was right for Saul's daughter to warn David just like it was right for Jonathan to warn David. We think it was right for Michal to help David escape through a window as much as it was right for friends to help the Apostle Paul escape enemies who wanted

to kill him. But was it right or necessary for Michal to pretend that David was in bed?

A simple principle to remember is that when God delivers, lying is unnecessary (vv.14-17). Oh, but was it human shrewdness or God who delivered? David believed it was God. He wrote Psalm 59 in the context of Saul watching David's house to kill him in the morning. *But I will sing of your strength; I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning. For you have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress (Psalm 59:16).*

Human pride could appeal to shrewdness in this deliverance (vv.14-16). It involved untruth. *And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, "He is sick" (v.14).* That wasn't true. At this point David had already escaped. Why was it necessary to lie? Did Michal fear her father's wrath? It is good that David's escape was successful because Saul was so bent on his destruction. *Then Saul sent the messengers to see David, saying, "Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may kill him" (v.15).* Saul was out of his mind vicious.

But again, David was already gone. *And when the messengers came in, behold, the image was in the bed, with the pillow of goats' hair at its head (v.16).* Maybe Michal thought, "Ha! Fooled you!" No doubt much human satisfaction was gained by pulling a fast one on the bad guys. But why was the deception necessary?

The problem with lying is that it requires lying. *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?' (v.17).* This was such a human response. When in trouble, blame someone else. The story about David being sick and pretending he was in bed just compounded the problem of Michal helping David escape. Why couldn't Michal have simply admitted that she had helped David escape through the window for his own good? We do not know for sure that her story was true. One would assume in light of Michal's other lies that this was a lie also in order to protect herself. Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive. The indication in verses 11b-13 is that this was all Michal's plan. Was it a good thing that she "helped out" God in the deliverance?

In this story, we should learn that human failure like lying, deceit, dishonesty, murder is not necessary in pursuing God's

righteousness. We need to learn to trust God and, with a changed heart, commit our future to Him. We need to remember that God brings about His will, in spite of our failure, for His own glory.