

Please open your Bible at 1 Samuel 18. We are looking at the work of God in the life of David: How he became a man after God's own heart. We saw that David was anointed. The Spirit of God rushed upon him. God gave David the power to do all that he was called to do. Then we saw that David was tested. Anointing, or calling, is always followed by testing and David was tested through an enemy he had to overcome and a trial he had to endure.

Today, I want us to see that David was kept. How God guarded and protected him during days of great distress. We will follow the story of how David suffered at the hand of Saul. Saul had every reason to be thankful for David. God had given Saul a great victory through him. David was a loyal servant to Saul. His music soothed Saul's troubled heart, and when David entered Saul's service, we are told that "Saul loved him greatly" (1 Samuel 16:21).

Saul sent to Jesse saying, "Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor in my sight" (1 Samuel 16:22).

But things changed after David's great triumph over Goliath. When Saul returned from battle, the streets in every town were lined with women who were singing. They were dancing. They were playing tambourines and they were rejoicing in the great triumph that God had given. And in chapter 18 we are told that they sang this song,

"Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Samuel 18:7).

This was a moment for the triumphant king to enjoy but this song made Saul angry.

And Saul was very angry, and this saying displeased him. He said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands, and what more can he have but the kingdom?" And Saul eyed David from that day on (1 Samuel 18:8-9).

These women did not intend any harm. They loved Saul and they loved David, but their song caused a great deal of trouble. It was the LORD who gave victory to His people, and it would have been better if these women had sung a song about the LORD. They could have said, *The LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes* (Psalm 118:23). But they focused their attention on Saul and David. They made too much of personalities. They praised people when they should have praised the LORD.

The same thing happened in the New Testament with leaders in the church. The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each (1 Corinthians 3:4-5).

Give to the Lord the glory that is due to His Name (Psalm 29:2).

That was the turning point in the relationship between Saul and David. In the verses that are before us today, Saul makes six attempts to destroy David, and all of them fail. Saul had rebelled against the Lord, and I want us to see the frustration of a rebellious heart. Then I want us to see how David responded when he was trapped and threatened, and when he suffered this great injustice.

The Frustration of a Rebellious Heart

1. Saul tried to destroy David with his spear

The next day a harmful spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house while David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day. Saul had his spear in his hand. And Saul hurled the spear, for he thought, “I will pin David to the wall.” But David evaded him twice (1 Samuel 18:10-11).

Saul made two attempts on David's life and David survived both because the LORD was with him.

2. Saul tried to destroy David through the Philistines

Then Saul said to David, “Here is my elder daughter Merab. I will give her to you for a wife. Only be valiant for me and fight the LORD’s battles.” For Saul thought, “Let not my hand be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him” (1 Samuel 18:17).

When the direct attack failed, Saul tried the opposite tactic: He would lure David into danger by offering him a great reward. Saul made David a commander in his army and he promised David the hand of his daughter Merab in marriage if he would go into battle against the Philistines. Saul had no intention of giving Merab to David. He felt sure that the Philistines would destroy him.

“Send him into battle. Sooner than later, that will be the end of him. It’s only a matter of time.”

But the LORD was with David and gave Him success in all that He did (1 Samuel 18:14). So when the time for the wedding came, Saul broke his promise and gave his daughter Merab to a man by the name of Adriel instead (Samuel 18:19).

When the Spirit of God departed from Saul, he faced one frustration after another. He throws his spear and David evades him. He puts David into the thick of battle and David returns triumphant with his reputation enhanced.

Saul put David into the heat of battle because he wanted to destroy him. What Saul did to David, years later David did to Uriah the Hittite, the husband of Bathsheba. The seeds of the same sins that bring pain to us actually lie in our own flesh. We like to think when we are hurt that we would never do to other people what they have done to us. But when you suffer at the hands of another person, it is good to remember that the seeds of the same sins that have hurt you lie within you as well. The sins of others that have caused pain for us are precisely the sins we need to guard against repeating ourselves.

3. Saul tried to destroy David through his daughter

Now Saul’s daughter Michal loved David. And they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. Saul thought, “Let me give her to him, that she may be a snare for him and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him” (1 Samuel 18:20-21).

Saul did another U-turn. “Maybe I made a mistake in breaking my promise to give Merab my daughter to David as his wife. If David is my son-in-law, the Philistines will want to destroy him much more than if he is just a commander in my army” (see 1 Samuel 18:25).

So Saul said to David a second time,

“You shall now be my son-in-law” (1 Samuel 18:21).

And this time Saul kept his word, and “*gave him his daughter Michal for a wife*” (1 Samuel 18:27). Saul tried to destroy David through his daughter, but that didn’t work either. Saul wanted Michal to be a snare to David, but God used Michal to save David’s life.

4. Saul tried to destroy David through his son

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 (1 Samuel 19:1).

Saul’s fourth attempt to destroy David was through Jonathan, and God willing we will look at his story next week. The natural course of events would have been that when Saul died, Jonathan would become king. So Jonathan would have motive to destroy David. But Jonathan loved David, and instead of destroying him, Jonathan intercedes for him.

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 (1 Samuel 19:4).

Saul listened to Jonathan, and he swore an oath, “*As the LORD lives, he [David] shall not be put to death*” (1 Samuel 19:6).

The promise didn’t last for long. Saul’s fifth attempt to destroy David was when he threw his spear a second time.

5. Saul tried to destroy David with his spear (again)

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 (1 Samuel 19:10).

After this second attempt on his life, David decided it was time to leave the palace and heads for home. *David fled and escaped that night* (v. 10). But Saul knew where he lived, and that led to the 6th attempt on David’s life, which is our focus today.

6. Saul tried to destroy David through his spies

Saul sent messengers to David’s house to watch him, that he might kill him in the morning (1 Samuel 19:11).

Saul placed David under surveillance, and David was effectively under house arrest. And the LORD kept David through the loyalty of Saul’s daughter.

But Michal, David’s wife, told him, “If you do not escape with your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed.” So Michal let David down through the window, and he fled away and escaped (1 Samuel 19:11-12).

Saul made six attempts on David’s life, and all of them failed. He tries to destroy David with his spear, through the Philistines, through his son, through his daughter, through his spies, but nothing that he does is working. The LORD frustrates the way of the wicked.

Now I want to focus in on this last scene of David under siege. What was this like from David's point of view? The spies are camped outside his house, and I want us to see how David responded. David's story is told in two places in the Bible. The events of David's life are recorded in 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles. But what was going on in David's mind and heart is recorded in the book of Psalms. And some of the Psalms tell us what was happening when David wrote them. We read Psalm 59 because this Psalm records what David was thinking and feeling when Saul's spies were camped outside his house.

If you turn to Psalm 59, there is a heading there that says,

"A Mitkam of David, when Saul sent men to watch his house in order to kill him."
(The word Mitkam is probably a musical term.)

This Psalm came out of David's experience in what he described here as *his day of distress*, when Saul was making the 6th attempt to take his life. It gives us the inside view of the story from David's perspective. It's clear that these spies must have been watching David's house for some time.

Each evening they come back, howling like dogs and prowling about the city
(Psalm 59:6).

And then again in verse 14,

Each evening they come back, howling like dogs and prowling about the city
(Psalm 59:14).

Imagine pulling back the curtains and looking out to see the shadowy figures of men who are outside your house because someone wants to take your life. Absolutely terrifying! David refers to this as "*the day of my distress*" (Psalm 59:16). He was trapped. He was threatened, and he was suffering a great injustice.

What do you do when **you** feel trapped? When you are threatened? When you suffer a great injustice? What do you do in the day of your distress?

David did three things that reflect the faith of a godly heart:

The Faith of a Godly Heart

1. Pray

Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; protect me from those who rise up against me; deliver me from those who work evil, and save me from bloodthirsty men (Psalm 59:1, 2).

i. He prays to God

This Psalm is obviously a prayer. David asks God to *deliver* him, to *protect* him and to *save* him. And something that we learn from this Psalm and all of the Psalms is that when David prays, he calls to mind the God to whom he is praying. As he prays, he remembers who God is.

You, LORD God of hosts, are God of Israel (Psalm 59:5).

He uses two titles there that are very important:

LORD of hosts, means that God has infinite power at His disposal: He is able.

God of Israel means He has promised to be faithful to His people: He is committed. He has pledged his faithful love, and He has pledged that He will deliver them.

And David says, “You are *my God*.”

Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; (Psalm 59:1).

My God in his steadfast love will meet me (Psalm 59:10).

“You have all power. You are committed to your people. I’m one of them. You are my God.”

ii. He prays to God with a clear conscience

For behold, they lie in wait for my life; fierce men stir up strife against me. For no transgression or sin of mine, O LORD, for no fault of mine, they run and make ready (Psalm 59:3-4).

David was not always in the right, but he was here. He loved Saul. He served Saul faithfully. So he was able to pray with a clear conscience. Whatever you face in life, there is a blessing and peace that comes from having a clear conscience. That is why Paul said,

I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man (Acts 24:16).

‘I will do whatever it takes to be in that position. What does it take? It will mean that I confess my sins to God so that they are placed under the blood of Christ and I have a clear conscience towards God. It will mean that if I have wounded another person, I will do what needs to be done to seek to make peace as far as it is possible. (Romans 12:18) I don’t want anything to hinder my prayers. A clear conscience is a precious gift, and I will do all in my power to maintain it.’

iii. He prays to God with a clear conscience and asks for God’s name to be glorified.

For the cursing and lies that they utter, consume them in wrath; consume them till they are no more, that they may know that God rules over Jacob to the ends of the earth (Psalm 59:12-13).

“Lord I’m looking to you to deliver me, protect me and save me. But what matters to me most in this day of distress is that Your Name should be honored: *That they may know that God rules... to the ends of the earth.*

When you feel trapped. When you are threatened. When you suffer injustice. When you come to the day of distress. Pray!

2. Watch

O my Strength, I will watch for you, for you, O God, are my fortress (Psalm 59:9).

When you realize the situation David was in when he wrote this Psalm, that expression about ‘watching God’ comes to life in a whole new way. ‘The spies are watching me. I will watch for You. My eyes are not on them. My eyes are on You. I will watch for You.’

When you feel trapped, when you come to the day of distress, when you are threatened; when you suffer injustice: You watch. You wait. You look to see what God will do.
Watching is what you do when you are expecting something to happen.

David has asked that God will meet Him, (v. 9) and he is confident that God will.

O my Strength, I will watch for you, for you, O God, are my fortress. My God in his steadfast love will meet me... (Psalm 59:9, 10).

There's hope there. If you find yourself in a very dark place. If you feel that you are trapped, threatened, or if you face a great injustice, ask God to meet you in this, and then watch to see what He will do.

Watching is what you do when you are waiting for something to happen.

O my Strength, I will watch for you, for you, O God, are my fortress. My God in his steadfast love will meet me; God will let me look in triumph on my enemies (Psalm 59:9, 10).

There's confidence there. God will let me look in triumph on my enemies. David knew that God would deliver Him. But he had to wait a long time for this to happen. There was a long journey from his anointing to his coronation. David was likely a teenager when he was anointed by Samuel. He was 30 when he began to reign (2 Samuel 5:4). So David was watching and waiting for what God would do for more than a decade! And in these dark and difficult years, God was shaping David for the work He had called Him to do.

Faith is a patient virtue. Learning patience, by definition, takes time. No one learns patience quickly! We learn patience by waiting. Pray. Watch. Sing.

3. Sing

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.

O my Strength, I will sing praises to you, for you, O God, are my fortress, the God who shows me steadfast love (Psalm 59: 16, 17).

God will meet me. God will save me. *I will look in triumph on my enemies.* So I can sing, even when enemies are lurking outside my door, David says, I will sing of God's strength. I will sing of God's love.

Alec Motyer says that these songs are “not in the minor key of lament over life’s toughness, but in the major key of confidence, praise, and... safety.”

Dear friend, what song are you singing? Are you singing a song in the minor key that's all about life's toughness? It would be so easy for David to be filled with self-pity: “After all I have done for Saul, look at what he has done to me.” But David has risen above that. He finds joy in God's strength; he finds peace in God's love, and he can sing!

And David says he will sing *in the morning.*

I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning (Psalm 59:16).

There will be a morning for me. And the reason there will be a morning for me is *Your strength* and *Your steadfast love*.

Application

The application of this to us is obvious. We know what it is to face days of distress, when we feel trapped, threatened and face injustice. And when these times come, by God's grace and the power of His Spirit, we can do what David did: We can watch, pray, and sing.

But the first application of what God did for David here is not so much to us, but to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. David is God's anointed king. And the story here is that God delivers His anointed king from the darkest place and causes Him to triumph. The story of David shines a light on the story of Jesus.

- i. In his house, David watched and prayed. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said, "*watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation*".
- ii. David asked that God in His love would meet him. When Jesus was in agony in the garden, the Father sent an angel to strengthen Him (Luke 22:43).
- iii. Spies camped outside David's house. Soldiers come to arrest Jesus with a mob armed with swords and clubs.
- iv. David could say "*for no fault of mine, they run and make ready* (v. 4). Jesus could say, '*Which of you accuses me of sin?*'
- v. David was in a house surrounded by spies, and with the help of his wife, he escaped through a window. Jesus was buried in a tomb guarded by soldiers, but by the power of Almighty God, He rose from the dead! Death could not contain Him!
- vi. A day would come when David looked in triumph on his enemies (v. 10). The day is coming when God will put all Christ's His enemies under His feet.

David anticipates that day in this Psalm. He speaks about the nations:

You, LORD God of hosts, are God of Israel. Rouse yourself to punish all the nations; (Psalm 59:5).

You have it again in verse 8:

But you, O LORD, laugh at them; you hold all the nations in derision. (Psalm 59:8).

And again, in verse 13:

consume them till they are no more, that they may know that God rules over Jacob to the ends of the earth (Psalm 59:13).

Why bring in the nations? Because David is looking for more than personal deliverance. He is looking, as all who believe are looking, for the day when the earth will be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea (Habakuk 2:14).

"Come quickly, Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 16:22).

God has set *a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness* (Acts 17:31). Threats and injustice will not prevail. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. The day of vindication is coming. Christ will triumph over all His enemies, and you will share in His triumph. God will right every wrong, and until that day comes, we will pray, we will watch, and we will sing.

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