

## 1 Samuel 19: God's Unconventional Salvation

### Introduction

I think it's safe to say this is one of the most unusual sections in all of 1 Samuel. Of course, Saul continues his crazy downward spiral. But I think even by that standard this is an unusual section. We see 2 of Saul's children protecting David from their own father. Jonathan basically defies Saul's command to simply kill David and persuades Saul to be rational. And it works for a while. Michal - in a very strange episode - saves David through the use of an image, an idol. What's an idol doing in David's house? Let alone one large enough to be mistaken for a man? And then God delivers David from capture by filling 3 companies of troops and eventually Saul himself with the Holy Spirit to make them prophesy.

If we were to invent a story of how God might deliver David from persecution and certain death, we probably wouldn't have chosen any of these. But as they say, the truth is stranger than fiction. If you were to summarize this whole section it'd probably be something like this: God often delivers his people in unconventional ways. We see this all throughout Scripture.

Remember in **Matt. 1** when the magi visit Jesus? They come hundreds of miles by camel from basically Iraq to visit Bethlehem for a single night to give Jesus gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Why is that important? We might talk the book of Daniel - where these guys were from - and how Daniel led the magi so they had Jewish influence; or the meaning of gold, frankincense and myrrh. But what happens right after they drop off the gifts? They head out of town and so do Mary, Joseph and Jesus in order to escape Herod. God used the magi to make Joseph, Mary and Jesus instantly wealthy so they could survive in Egypt until God called them back. Why didn't God just use some local rich guys to give Jesus the gifts? God chose to deliver them from danger in a different way. Maybe a way we wouldn't expect.

Speaking of Egypt, why did God deliver Israel out of Egypt with 10 plagues? Why not 8 or 4 or 1? Why did God keep hardening Pharaoh's heart and extend the plagues? **Rom. 9** makes it sound as though God used Pharaoh like a punching bag to display his power.

We could talk about Debrah the woman judge saving Israel when the men were scared, or Jael killing Sisera with a tent peg (**Jud. 4**). God saving Abraham's nephew, Lot, with 2 angels. All of these are unconventional ways that God saves. And that's what we see here as God saves David.

### Context:

Chapter 19 begins a long section in 1 Samuel of king Saul trying to kill David. We see that here of course.

Chapter 20: David is purposefully absent from a feast to test Saul's hatred for him.

Chapter 21: David is on the run again from Saul and eventually ends up staying with the Philistines.

Chapter 22: is a little bit of a turning point because people eventually come to David and he's no longer alone, but he is still on the run. Chapter 23: David saves the city of Keilah but has to run as they'd all give him up to Saul if they could.

The rest of the book really alternates between side stories about David and his running away from Saul, until Saul is killed in battle in Chap. 31. It's the sustained persecution of David from crazy, demonic Saul. We'll tease out different

**A)** There has always been persecution of God's people. **Heb 11:35-38** recounts people who "were tortured, refusing to accept release, ...others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

We live in an amazing culture of peace and security. We are outraged over cake bakers being sued by the state for everything they own - and we are rightly outraged. But they are alive! That's more than we can say for many places in the world where such a stand for the truth would get us killed.

**B)** And persecution usually isn't just in short spurts. When God's people are persecuted it goes for years, decades, centuries. We'll tease out various aspects of this persecution as we move through 1 Samuel but one of the big picture aspects we need to keep in mind is that persecution for God's people is rarely a brief time.

Our brothers and sisters in the faith have been in North Korean prison camps for decades. Churches in China are still pushed underground.

One the most moving things I experienced at the Shepherd's Conference was a young lady attending the Master's University played the violin for all those in attendance. It was simply amazing - and I don't even have a great appreciation for violin. She is one of the premier violinists in the world; there's a 30 minute violin piece that is considered by many to be the hardest violin piece for anyone to play. She has it memorized. But she didn't grow up in privilege or pomp - until she moved to the US last year she had only ever worshipped in an unauthorized underground church oping the authorities wouldn't find it out. Many of her family and friends have only known underground churches all their lives.

Muslim countries, communist countries, ardently secular countries have no use for citizens of the Kingdom of God. And yet the gospel goes forward even in those places, often with more speed and purity than here where we have so much freedom.

**C)** Persecution usually forms godly character more than peace time does. David really serves as a model of godliness in many ways the entire time he is persecuted by Saul. He's not perfect but he shows restraint and grace and kindness. But the moment he takes power and he's not on the run he begins compromising. He turns a blind eye to cold blooded murder of Abner, there's the whole Uriah/Bathsheba fiasco, his own children commit incest and murder each other and he just looks the other way. He gets lazy and compromises in his security.

As we look at the next few chapters we are continually reminded that we, like David, are so prone to spiritually coast when things are easy. It's when the fire of persecution comes that we become more like Jesus.

What's going on here? We're just going to break this up into 3 sections - the 3 ways God delivered David - and just work through them. This is going to feel more like a Bible study. I really only have 1 main point in all of this and that is that God often uses unconventional ways to save his people.

#### 1) Not all that unconventional - Jonathan reasons with Saul. **Read 1-7**

So it seems as though there came a tipping point for Saul and he held a secret meeting at night time. I say it was at night time because in **Vs. 2** Jonathan goes to tell David to be on guard in the morning. So it appears that David had gone home for the night - maybe after playing the lyre all day - and Saul had had enough. So he calls this secret meeting to tell his servants to kill David the next morning.

What's unusual here is that this seems to be a meeting of his household servants - his personal wait staff - not so much his military commanders. The military guys would have looked up to David - they loved him. **Read 18:30**

He was esteemed among the people and because he was a commander in the military - and most troops like winning in battle - he was highly regarded among the troops. So this was probably Saul's household servants who were ordered to kill David.

Jonathan - who already made a covenant with David - was in a tough spot. Does he align himself with David or with his father? To betray his father is treason; in ancient times you just didn't go against the flow of the king no matter who you were. You remember Esther bowing down to King just to ask for him to come to a banquet? Esther - the queen - came at an unauthorized time and because of that her life was on the line (**Esther 5**). Bathsheba bowed down to David and paid homage at the end of his life to remind him that he had promised to give Solomon the Kingdom (**1 Kings 1:11-21**). We often forget that kings wielded absolute authority and here Jonathan wasn't asked for an opinion. He proactively defends David.

Jonathan's speech is both bold and concise. He lays out 6 quick reasons that Saul should spare David in rapid succession. about David that sways his father's opinion.

- 1) It would be a sin to kill David.
- 2) David has brought good to Saul.
- 3) David has risked his own life for Saul with Goliath.
- 4) Yahweh - the Lord - is clearly working through David.
- 5) All of Israel benefits from David's service.
- 6) Saul himself rejoiced at David's success.

And then he closes by repeating that it would be a sin to kill David.

Practical Side: Sometimes when we're trying to convince someone of something, shorter is better than longer. Short and sweet and respectful is often more powerful. There have been many times people have swayed me or I've swayed others with just simple, respectful, on-point statements. Long, drawn out arguments can often be laborious as we just pile on.

And Saul, at least for a time, listens. He swears that he will not harm David. Now, just like in the previous chapter there are these back-and-forths between Saul's craziness and David's accomplishments. The same is true here. **Read 8-10**

This will be the last time David is ever in Saul's household. In chapter 18 he escaped twice when Saul threw his spear at him. But from here on out Saul's demonic hatred of David will keep in constantly on the run for the rest of Saul's life. And that was probably several years until Saul's death. Whatever cover Jonathan had provided for David is over and now he's on the run again.

## 2) Unconventional deliverance: Michal deception. Read 11-17

This is really a fascinating situation on a whole number of levels. First of all we have a divided allegiance again between Saul and one of his children. First it was Jonathan, now it's Michal. We like the fact that they are siding with David - and they should have - but again this is utter treason toward Saul.

Second, David makes the classic window escape from his house. If you were to do a biblical theology of secret escapes, being let down out of a window is one of the classic pretty high up there. Rahab let the spies out of Jericho through her widow that was in the wall of the city (**Josh. 2:15**). And the apostle Paul was let out of a window in a basket in Damascus because there were people trying to kill him (**Acts 9:24-25**).

We also see that Michal is not above lying for David. We've already worked through when it's okay to lie to those who want to kill other people back in **1 Sam. 16:1-5**. But it's quite the elaborate plot. She says he is sick, makes up their bed to look like he can't get up, and then when Saul confronts her on it she lies again and says David forced her to do it or he'd kill her. If Saul knew she was on David's side he would have killed her. All of this so David can safely escape out the window in the middle of the night.

But the big neon flashing sign that should have caught our attention in this whole section is what in the world are David and Michal doing with an idol in their house? That word "image" or "idol" is a false god. And apparently this thing is so big that it is mistaken for a full grown man because she uses the idol to deceive the servants of Saul by making it look like David is really in the bed.

But this is a violation of the 2nd commandment: you shall have not make what? An image!

**Exo. 20:4-5:** You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God..."

This would have been an utter abomination in Israel. Why in the world does Michal have an image in her house. And there's a little bit of a weird irony that to some extent because the soldiers think David is in the bed, David is given more time to flee from the city. So it kind of feels like this image actually aids in David's escape.

What do we do with that? Well throughout history the people of God have often been aided by pagans. Martin Luther was aided by Fredrick III - a Catholic - who continually gave him cover from the Pope who wanted Luther dead. God turned the hearts of the pagan Egyptians to favor the Israelites just before the Exodus so that Israel was said to have plundered the Egyptians on their way out of Egypt. We don't like it because it doesn't fit our squeaky clean idea of what deliverance should look like. And I'm not saying you should go buy an idol and keep it in your house just in case you need to escape from the government. But God doesn't always deliver us the way we think he would.

I mean, just look at the gospel. Who would have sketched out that God would himself take on flesh, dwell among us, suffer his own wrath on the cross for the sins of completely undeserving people? We count that as a glorious truth but there's a reason the gospel is considered foolishness to unbelievers. It's the most unlikely, upside down deliverance anyone could have imagined. But it's in the wisdom of God to use people like Judas and Herod and Pilate and the Centurion to save his people from their sins. Rarely is God's salvation squeaky clean. And that's the case here.

Now, we don't know for sure, but some people suggest that the guilt for this idol really was only on Michal not on David because David has already escaped when Michal brings out the idol to use it for her little scheme. So some commentators think she actually hid the image from David, and then used it conveniently once David was out. We don't know for sure, but that's probably the case.

To be honest, it's a little suspect that David wouldn't have noticed a man-sized idol in his own house. Where would she have hid this thing that David didn't see it? On the other hand, it does fit Michal's character throughout her life as someone who never really shows a love for God and who, like her father Saul, is an idolator. It's also hard to believe that David would have knowingly kept any idols in his house. He was a man after what? God's own heart (**Acts 13:22**). And it is possible that because David was often out of the house for months at a time in battle that he didn't know. I tend to think he probably didn't know about it.

Now I want to pause for just a minute before we get to the last section, which is another jaw-dropping means by which God saved David. What do you think was going on in David's mind sitting in his house that night? He knew Saul wanted to kill him. He knew that was really in the back of Saul's mind all along.

Well, it turns out we actually have a glimpse of David's thoughts because he wrote a psalm about the night he escaped from his house from Saul's men. Actually, what's really neat is that from here out David begins writing songs when he's in these situations. On the back of your bulletin I copied a list of the passages in 1 & 2 Samuel and the references to the Psalms. In my Bible, I just wrote a small note through 1 Samuel of the Psalm indicating the psalm references. We probably won't do this for every one of these in 1 Samuel, but **turn over to Psalm 59**.

Not in Hebrew text: ESV: Deliver me from my enemies / NIV: - / NASB: Prayer for deliverance from enemies / NKJV: Assured Judgement of the Wicked. Those headings aren't part of the Hebrew text.

But the introduction stuff is. So the whole: "To the choirmaster; according to Do Not Destroy: A Mitkam of David, when Saul sent men to watch his house in order to kill him." That is breathed out by God as Holy Scripture just as much as Genesis 1:1. Don't skip over that stuff when you're reading. Those are sacred, inerrant words from God.

And what we learn is that God wants us to sing about the time when David was hiding in his house from Saul's men. The psalms are the hymnal of Israel - and I would argue we should sing psalms as well. Not exclusively but they're good to incorporate. **Read 1-4**

Isn't that what Jonathan was saying to Saul? David didn't do anything wrong here. **Read 5-7**

It may be that David knew these guys were there because they had been there night after night. David was being stalked by Saul and knew it. He'll say that again a little later, but let's keep reading. **Read 8**

By the way, when God laughs, it's not a good thing. He's not chuckling at jokes, he's scoffing at his enemies because he will utterly destroy them in his wrath for their sin. **Read 8-13**

You know what he's asking? Don't kill them just yet, let them dangle a little and feel the weight of your wrath and those around might remember. Stretch out your judgement like you stretched out judgment on Pharaoh. How often do we pray like that? "God make my enemies suffer a lot before you kill them so people will remember just how holy and righteous you are and that you rule over the earth." **Read 14-17**

He's in that house surrounded by Saul's men and his hope, his trust, is that God is his strength. God has steadfast love for him, God will judge and punish the nations, and that God is his refuge and his fortress.

A mighty fortress is our God,  
A bulwark - a massive castle - never failing.  
Our helper he amid the flood,  
Of mortal ills prevailing.

This is what's going on in David's mind and heart back in **1 Sam. 19**. He's not a scared, flighty weakling when he runs away. There is a legitimate place for those who trust completely in the sovereignty of God to rightly run to save their own life.

### 3) Unconventional Deliverance - The Spirit. **Read 18-24**

What in the world just happened there? David runs away to Ramah, a few miles away, to where Samuel is. It appears that Samuel had sort of a school for prophets, a place where men were specially filled with the Spirit of God. There are other places in the Bible where we see that as well.

Saul finds out where David is and sends 3 waves of troops to go get him. But each time the group of troops comes to Naioth the troops start prophesying along with the prophets!

Naioth is probably not the name of the town - a Naioth was a type of communal village either for shepherds or prophets. Naioths were scattered all throughout Israel. Here it's a small village of prophets that seem to have lived with Samuel. So when the troops reach the village they start prophesying along with the prophets. I think this probably means they were singing and praising God.

If you remember, from chapter **10:9-13**, this is the second time this has happened. **Turn** back there for a minute. **Read**

What seems to have happened is that initially this was a blessing. God poured out his Spirit on Saul and, while surprising, it was a blessing that Saul was singing the praise of God in the power of the Spirit. But back in 19, it seems as though this is an ironic turn of God's judgment. **Read 19:23-24**

This sounds somewhat silly, but this is really God stopping Saul in his murderous tracks and compelling him by his own Spirit to praise him and in doing so God saves David's life.

This is utter humiliation of Saul by the way. Nakedness in Israel was considered a great shame, like it is today. Can you imagine a president running around naked in front of the White House singing hymns all day and night? It's something like what we read out of **Daniel 4:28-37** where God basically turns Nebuchadnezzar into a beast who eats grass like an ox for 7 years until he finally learns that the Most High rules over all the Kingdoms of the earth.

In the same way, God is humbling Saul through utter shame and embarrassment. Don't mess with the Spirit God.

What do we do with all of this? We remember humbly that God doesn't always deliver us out of every bit of persecution. David will spend the next several years on the run. And we also remember that when God does deliver us out he doesn't always do it in the neat and clean way we might think he would. He often uses

unconventional means to deliver his people. And even in those situations we can praise him for his grace in sparing us.

**Pray**