

THERE IS BUT A STEP BETWEEN ME AND DEATH

1 SAMUEL 18:1 – 20:3

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~ Each day in the world, we see lives cut short; heart attacks, deadly violence and freak accidents take those who probably expected to live many more years. One thing we all need to realize is that our death is just a heartbeat away. Well, David himself will utter the title for this report in our Spiritual Safari as we really focus on the man who was after God's own heart. We have seen David anointed as God's chosen man, he won battle after battle for Israel, and the people all loved him – but – his life was in perilous danger every moment. Through it all, we see the hand of God protecting David.

In our previous report, David slew Goliath. We didn't spend a whole lot of type on that particular account, because it is such a familiar story and there are several other incredible spiritual lessons in that section of Scripture. Let's just say the giant represents the world, and Saul represents Satan; and David is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ; representing Him and believers who are in Christ. David treated Goliath as the enemy he was. Today, we are told not to love the world, nor the things that are in the world; we are in the world, but we are not of the world. We are to use all temporal and material things exclusively for God's glory.

We could have made a very distinctive comparison between David and Samson; but we didn't. Briefly, Samson treated the Philistines as his friend – he even married one. David will have no part of coddling the enemy – David is prepared to kill them all. The cosmos, or world system, is the enemy of the believer in this present age and world. That does *NOT* mean the people of the world, but it does mean their theories, philosophies and faithlessness. Only David's faithfulness enabled him to go out and meet the giant on the giant's terms and, from here forward, David will occupy the position of a public figure. We're told faith is the victory that overcometh the world. This is the same situation that Joshua met at Jericho. We saw very definitely that Joshua discovered the battle was the Lord's battle. Joshua found out God does not use the weapons of this world. The only

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method Joshua used at Jericho was the one God had taught him; and it was highly unusual, to say the least. As believers, we need to fully recognize this principle.

Well, in this report we have Jonathan, Saul's son, an outstanding man, become close friends with David. They were much alike as men. There is nothing quite like the love of a man for a woman; except for the love of two men knit together in the Lord for the cause of Christ. When two men see a mirror of each other in themselves, these are the types of men God can and will use for a mighty purpose. That's precisely what made Saul so jealous of David; and the applause of the people for David's victories caused Saul to simply come unglued. Remember, Saul had already wanted to kill his own son Jonathan, over the most trivial matter – the honey incident in chapter fourteen. So, at this time in which we are studying, Saul has become completely unhinged in his sick mind; and is totally given over to Satan for destruction of the flesh....

XVIII

1 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

~ David had been a peasant boy herding sheep when Samuel came calling; so, when he came to the palace, he didn't have the right clothes. They say clothes make the man. I think Jonathan outfitted David with one of his many changes of garments, and probably shared his entire wardrobe with David. I seriously doubt Saul would have given David anything he needed to live properly in palace life. Of course, it was a very generous thing for Jonathan to do. Saul's intent was to let David linger in shame and feel totally out of place in the castle. I'm sure Saul was disgusted by Jonathan....

4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

5 And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

~ We hear a whole lot about “charisma” today - and David had it. That was the one thing that made David acceptable to the public. David is much greater than we will be able to develop on safari because it’s impossible to encapsulate his depth and dignity. God was looking at David’s heart, while the people were looking at an exterior appearance, again. David was good inside and out. He is going to commit some horrendous sins, and we’ll examine them very carefully when we get to them, and the Lord will provide an explanation that will be completely satisfactory to the true believer. The man or woman who plays church, and dabbles in religion, will not find God’s explanation for David’s sins satisfactory, I assure you of that....

6 And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick.

7 And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

8 And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?

~ Well, old man Saul was exactly correct because David will get the kingdom, also. Of course, this is just pure hatred and jealousy on Saul’s part. The people accepted David, and they applauded his efforts; and that made Saul come apart at the seams. From here on out, we’ll see Saul make

attempt after attempt on David's life. David now knows that Saul is not his friend. As we read on, we see a dramatic scene take place in the palace as David plays a harp to sooth a savage beast in Saul; and Saul wants to kill that which is pleasing his soul. The contradictions do not run deeper in the middle of the night than this. I can just see David playing for Saul, and Saul tapping his fingers on his spear. Saul is eyeing David, and David is eyeing the javelin. I think David suddenly hit a sour note; and the atmosphere in the room a grew tense....

9 And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

10 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul's hand.

11 And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice.

12 And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul.

13 Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.

14 And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him.

15 Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him.

16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.

~ See, after two attempted murders by Saul, we see David take French leave. Saul is afraid of what David can do now; but placing David over the army was something that couldn't have been avoided, either – the people loved David too much. David lived amongst his people, and he identified

with them and walked in their shoes. He was one of them. He wasn't some powerful recluse of an army captain holed-up behind a security detail in the back of the palace. David was a good, fair and honest man with the people. He didn't have to hide. Naturally, in the meantime, Saul is plotting to trap David....

17 So Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD'S battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him.

18 And David said unto Saul, Who am I? and what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son in law to the king?

19 But it came to pass at the time when Merab Saul's daughter should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife.

20 And Michal Saul's daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him.

~ I don't think David ever really loved this woman too much. She may have loved him in a hero-smitten way; and I'm sure she liked being married to a popular politician, for a while - but we'll see Michal quickly begins to hate David. David had a lot of wives, which was a very bad start. This is definitely not going to be a quality marriage. The only reason Saul made good on his word to give David a daughter was to trap David and recruit family as accomplices to murder. Saul had already broken his word with the first daughter. I think Merab was the Hollywood starlet type and Michal – well, not so much. That is the situation David, God's man, was dealing with at this time.

Even so, David was a tremendous asset to Saul. David was extremely loyal, as we shall see; and he was good with the people. David was a great military leader, and both the army and people still regarded Saul as king. We never see any coup de'état attempt; in fact, we'll see extreme loyalty from David maintained, even as David is made to flee for his life. As we

read on, we'll see Saul's underlings try to tell him not to kill David, but Saul can't help himself. Pride and jealousy are eating him – and he is full of hate for David. That makes this and the next chapter extremely disturbing....

21 And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son in law in the one of the twain.

22 And Saul commanded his servants, saying, Commune with David secretly, and say, Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee: now therefore be the king's son in law.

23 And Saul's servants spake those words in the ears of David. And David said, Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son in law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed?

24 And the servants of Saul told him, saying, On this manner spake David.

25 And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth not any dowry, but an hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.

26 And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son in law: and the days were not expired.

27 Wherefore David arose and went, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son in law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife.

28 And Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal Saul's daughter loved him.

29 And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually.

30 Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by.

XIX

1 And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.

2 But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself:

3 And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee.

4 And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good:

5 For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?

6 And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain.

7 And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past.

8 And there was war again: and David went out, and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled from him.

9 And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with his hand.

10 And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night.

11 Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal David's wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to night, to morrow thou shalt be slain.

12 So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped.

13 And Michal took an image, and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth.

14 And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He is sick.

15 And Saul sent the messengers again to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him.

~ So, David is back in the palace; but he isn't dumb, and he is fully aware his life is still in danger. When Saul had his hand on a spear, David understood he could be killed at any moment. Once again, the situation became tense; this time – too tense. David now knows there's no way he can stay in the palace and continue to serve Saul any longer. Still, he is married to Saul's daughter. She knows the reality of what's happening, too; and she is still on his side at this time. However, when confronted by Saul about helping David escape, Michal has no trouble lying to save her own skin....

16 And when the messengers were come in, behold, there was an image in the bed, with a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster.

17 And Saul said unto Michal, Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped? And Michal answered Saul, He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?

18 So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth.

~ David is now officially on the run. He tells Samuel all of these things because Samuel's life was now in danger, too. Saul knew Samuel had anointed David king of Israel. Samuel clearly told Saul the kingdom was to be taken from him; and Saul now sees things playing out very fast and very badly right in front of his eyes. So, Saul stooped to openly attempting to murder David; and from here on, he will hunt him like a wild animal. That's going to continue until Saul's death. Through it all, as we read on, the Spirit of God Personally protects and leads David, and protects Samuel while controlling the hearts and minds of His chosen people, the nation Israel....

19 And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah.

20 And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied.

21 And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also.

22 Then went he also to Ramah, and came to a great well that is in Sechu: and he asked and said, Where are Samuel and David? And one said, Behold, they be at Naioth in Ramah.

23 And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah.

24 And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets?

XX

1 And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?

2 And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so.

3 And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death.

~ That is quite a statement this leg of our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God closes this report out with. There is but a single step between us and our grave, too. It doesn't make any difference who you are, or where you are, you could be no more at any moment of any day. The account in chapter twenty is self-explanatory as Jonathan communicates secretly with David by the shooting of arrows. Jonathan honestly felt Saul wouldn't kill David in cold blood; but I suggest you read this chapter through. I'm sure Jonathan was deeply disturbed at how Saul acts out; even more so than with all of the previous madness Saul has displayed in his life. This must have literally unnerved Jonathan. Saul knows Jonathan and David are friends. Saul also knew his daughter had deceived him. Things couldn't be more messed up than this in Saul's kingdom or in his family.

David has done nothing wrong; and, actually, he has helped Saul become stronger. This is what happens when the wrong king is put in power. Interestingly, God knew all about Saul from the beginning, but He is allowing this to unfold this way for a very definite purpose. I think David

began to have some real questions for God in his mind at this time, too. I know I would have.

Saul wasn't God's choice to be king over His people. God gave them the desire of their soul to have him as king, just as He had done with Moses and Israel in the wilderness. But remember, when God granted their requests for meat in the wilderness, He also sent leanness to their souls. God provided manna, but the children of Israel wanted something else. So, God gave it to them; but sent leanness to their souls. I don't want to be that person, friends. It amounts to not trusting God to give us what is best.

If Israel had trusted the Lord in the wilderness with the manna; and if they had recognized that whatever God gave them was the best possible thing for them, then they would have been able to discover true satisfaction in their hearts and lives. They could have had joy and peace, and everything would have been quite different. Instead, they insisted on what God did not want for them, because they decided their way was better. The rest is history. Friends, you will never have peace in your life until you accept what God has planned for you.

So many Christians today are way out in front of the Lord. They do whatever they want to do, and then ask God to bless it in their selfish hurried prayer. That's another recipe for a Christian Tragedy, friends. Most people beg God for this, that and some other thing constantly; instead of resting quietly and allowing God to work out their lives. Don't get me wrong – it's wonderful when God answers prayers – but not always. We've seen that time and again on this safari. If you beg God enough for something, He just might give it to you; even though it would be the worst possible thing you could have. Since we are merely a heartbeat away from death at any moment, this could be a real problem in our eternal existence. I do not want to go into eternity outside of the direct will of God or outside of trusting Him with every step my camels took on this trip through the desert called my life.

I knew of a very rich man in Palm Beach, Florida who gave his children literally everything they ever wanted. They drove German luxury cars and Italian sports cars to school. His children hate him today – they won't even

Speak to him for whatever reason. So many people are making every arrangement for this life now, but no arrangement for their next life whatsoever. Israel should never have desired Saul as their king because he wasn't God's man. But they did. And Saul is the reason for all the problems in Israel at this time in which we are studying; David had to have been very puzzled wondering why in the world things were happening in his life the way they were ~