

CHAPTER 19

Immediately after David's marriage, which one would have hoped would secure him Saul's affection, we find his troubles coming upon him faster than ever and Saul's enmity to him the cause of all. His death was vowed, and four fair escapes of his from the hurtful sword of Saul we have an account of in this chapter: the first by the prudent mediation of Jonathan (v. 1-7), the second by his own quickness (v. 8-10), the third by Michal's fidelity (v. 11-17), the fourth by Samuel's protection, and a change, for the present, wrought upon Saul (v. 18-24). Thus God has many ways of preserving his people. Providence is never at a loss.

<D190>1 SAMUEL 19:1-7

JONATHAN'S INTERCESSION FOR DAVID

Saul and Jonathan appear here in their different characters, with reference to David.

I. Never was enemy so unreasonably cruel as Saul. He spoke to his son and all his servants *that they should kill David*, v. 1. His projects to take him off had failed, and therefore he proclaims him an out-law, and charges all about him, upon their allegiance, to take the first opportunity to kill David. It is strange that he was not ashamed thus to avow his malice when he could give no reason for it, and that knowing all his servants loved David (for so he had said himself, <D182>1 Samuel 18:22), he was not afraid of provoking them to rebel by this bloody order. Either malice was not then so politic, or justice was not so corrupted as it has been since, or else Saul would have had him indicted, and have suborned witnesses to swear treason against him, and so have had him taken off, as Naboth was, by colour of law. But there is least danger from this undisguised malice. It was strange that he who knew how well Jonathan loved him should expect him to kill him; but he thought that because he was heir to the crown he must needs be as envious at David as himself was. And Providence ordered it thus that he might befriend David's safety.

II. Never was friend so surprisingly kind as Jonathan. *A friend in need is a friend indeed.* Such a one Jonathan was to David. He not only continued to delight much in him, though David's glory eclipsed his, but bravely appeared for him now that the stream ran so strongly against him.

1. He took care for his present security by letting him know his danger (v. 2): "*Take heed to thyself, and keep out of harm's way.*" Jonathan knew not but that some of the servants might be either so obsequious to Saul or so envious at David as to put the orders in execution which Saul had given, if they could light on David.

2. He took pains to pacify his father and reconcile him to David. The next morning he ventured to commune with him concerning David (v. 3), not that night, perhaps because he observed Saul to be drunk and not fit to be spoken to, or because he hoped that, when he had slept upon it, he would himself revoke the order, or because he could not have an opportunity of speaking to him till morning.

(1.) His intercession for David was very prudent. It was managed with a great deal of the meekness of wisdom; and he showed himself faithful to his friends by speaking good of him, though he was in danger of incurring his father's displeasure by it — a rare instance of valuable friendship! He pleads,

[1.] The good services David had done to the public, and particularly to Saul: *His work has been to thee-ward very good*, v. 4. Witness the relief he had given him against his distemper with his harp, and his bold encounter with Goliath, that memorable action, which did, in effect, save Saul's life and kingdom. He appeals to himself concerning his: *Thou thyself sawest it, and didst rejoice.* In that and other instances it appeared that David was a favourite of heaven and a friend to Israel, as well as a good servant to Saul, for by him *the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel*; so that to order him to be slain was not only base ingratitude to so good a servant, but a great affront to God and a great injury to the public.

[2.] He pleads his innocency. Though he had formerly done many good offices, yet, if he had now been chargeable with any crimes, it would have been another matter; but *he has not sinned against thee* (v. 1), his *blood is innocent* (v. 5), and, if he be slain, it is without cause. And Jonathan had therefore reason to protest against it because he could not entail any thing upon his family more pernicious than the guilt of innocent blood.

(2.) His intercession, being thus prudent, was prevalent. God inclined the heart of Saul to hearken to the voice of Jonathan. Note, We must be willing to hear reason, and to take all reproofs and good advice even from our inferiors, parents from their own children. How forcible are right words! Saul was, for the present, so far convinced of the unreasonableness of his enmity to David that,

[1.] He recalled the bloody warrant for his execution (v. 6): *As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain.* Whether Saul swore here with due solemnity or no does not appear; perhaps he did, and the matter was of such moment as to deserve it and of such uncertainty as to need it. But at other times Saul swore rashly and profanely, which made the sincerity of this oath justly questionable; for it may be feared that those who can so far jest with an oath as to make a by-word of it, and prostitute it to a trifle, have not such a due sense of the obligation of it but that, to serve a turn, they will prostitute it to a lie. Some suspect that Saul said and swore this with a malicious design to bring David within his reach again, intending to take the first opportunity to slay him. But, as bad as Saul was, we can scarcely think so ill of him; and therefore we suppose that he spoke as he thought for the present, but the convictions soon wore off and his corruptions prevailed and triumphed over them.

[2.] He renewed the grant of his place at court. Jonathan brought him to Saul, and *he was in his presence as in times past* (v. 7), hoping that now the storm was over, and that his friend Jonathan would be instrumental to keep his father always in this good mind.

1 SAMUEL 19:8-10

DAVID ESCAPES FROM SAUL

Here

I. David continues his good services to his king and country. Though Saul had requited him evil for good, and even his usefulness was the very thing for which Saul envied him, yet he did not therefore retire in sullenness and decline public service. Those that are ill paid for doing good, yet must not be *weary of well doing*, remembering what a bountiful benefactor our

heavenly Father is, even to the froward and unthankful. Notwithstanding the many affronts Saul had given to David, yet we find him,

1. As bold as ever in using his sword for the service of his country, v. 8. The war broke out again with the Philistines, which gave David occasion again to signalize himself. It was a great deal of bravery that he charged them; and he came off victorious, slaying many and putting the rest to flight.

2. As cheerful as ever in using his harp for the service of the prince. When Saul was disturbed with his former fits of melancholy *David played with his hand*, v. 9. He might have pleaded that this was a piece of service now below him; but a humble man will think nothing below him by which he may do good. He might have objected the danger he was in the last time he performed this service for Saul, ^{<09810>}1 Samuel 18:10. But he had learned to render good for evil, and to trust God with his safety in the way of his duty. See how David was affected when his enemy was sick (^{<09813>}Psalm 35:13, 14), which perhaps refers to Saul's sickness.

II. Saul continues his malice against David. He that but the other day had sworn by his Maker that David *should not be slain* now endeavors to slay him himself. So implacable, so incurable, is the enmity of the serpent against that of the woman, so deceitful and desperately wicked is the heart of man without the grace of God, ^{<2479>}Jeremiah 17:9. The fresh honours David had won in this last war with the Philistines, instead of extinguishing Saul's ill-will to him, and confirming his reconciliation, revived his envy and exasperated him yet more. And, when he indulged this wicked passion, no marvel that *the evil spirit came upon him* (v. 9), for when we *let the sun go down upon our wrath we give place to the devil* (^{<4026>}Ephesians 4:26, 27), we make room for him and invite him. Discomposures of mind, though helped forward by the agency of Satan, commonly owe their origin to men's own sins and follies. Saul's fear and jealousy made him a torment to himself, so that he could not sit in his house without a javelin in his hand, pretending it was for his preservation, but designing it for David's destruction; for he endeavored to nail him to the wall, running at him so violently that he struck the *javelin into the wall* (v. 10), so strong was the devil in him, so strong his own rage and passion. Perhaps he thought that, if he killed David now, he would be excusable before God and man, as being *non compos mentis* — *not in his right mind*, and that it would be

imputed to his distraction. But God cannot be deceived by pretences, whatever men may be.

III. God continues his care of David and still watches over him for good. Saul missed his blow. David was too quick for him and fled, and by a kind providence escaped that night. To these preservations, among others, David often refers in his Psalms, when he speaks of God's being his shield and buckler, his rock and fortress, and delivering his *soul from death*.

<091> 1 SAMUEL 19:11-17

DAVID ESCAPES FROM SAUL

Here is,

I. Saul's further design of mischief to David. When David had escaped the javelin, supposing he went straight to his own house, as indeed he did, Saul sent some of his guards after him to lay wait at the door of his house, and to assassinate him in the morning as soon as he stirred out, v. 11. Josephus says the design was to seize him and to hurry him before a court of justice that was ordered to condemn him and put him to death as a traitor; but we are here told it was a shorter way they were to take with him: they were ordered to *slay him*. Well might David complain that his enemies were *bloody men*, as he did in the psalm which he penned at this time, and upon this occasion (Psalm 59), when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him. See 5:2, 3, and 7. He complains that *swords were in their lips*.

II. David's wonderful deliverance out of this danger. Michal was the instrument of it, whom Saul gave him to be a snare to him, but she proved to be his protector and helper. Often is the devil out-shot with his own bow. How Michal came to know the danger her husband was in does not appear; perhaps she had notice sent her from court, or rather was herself aware of the soldiers about the house, when they were going to bed, though they kept so still and silent that they said, *Who dost hear?* which David takes notice of, <597> Psalm 59:7. She, knowing her father's great indignation at David, soon suspected the design, and bestirred herself for her husband's safety.

1. She got David out of the danger. She told him how imminent the peril was (v. 11): *To-morrow thou wilt be slain*. As Josephus paraphrases it, she told him that if the sun saw him there next morning it would never see him more; and then put him in a way of escape. David himself was better versed in the art of fighting than of flying, and had it been lawful it would have been easy for him to have cleared his house, by dint of sword, from those that haunted it; but *Michal let him down through a window* (v. 12), all the doors being guarded; and so he *fled and escaped*. And now it was that, either in his own closet before he went or in the hiding-place to which he fled, he penned that fifty-ninth Psalm, which shows that, in his fright and hurry, his mind was composed, and, in this great danger, his faith was strong and fixed on God; and, whereas the plot was to slay him *in the morning*, he speaks there with the greatest assurance (v. 16), *I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning*.

2. She practised a deception upon Saul and those whom he employed to be the instruments of his cruelty. When the doors of the house were opened in the morning, and David did not appear, the messengers would search the house for him, and did so. But Michal told them he was sick in bed (v. 14), and, if they would not believe her, they might see, for (v. 13) she had put a wooden image in the bed, and wrapped it up close and warm as if it had been David asleep, not in a condition to be spoken to; the goats' hair about the image was to resemble David's hair, the better to impose upon them. Michal can by no means be justified in telling a lie, and covering it thus with a cheat. God's truth needed not her lie. But she intended hereby to keep Saul in suspense for a while, that David might have some time to secure himself, not doubting but those messengers would pursue him if they found he had gone. The messengers had so much humanity as not to offer him any disturbance when they heard he was sick; for to those that are in this misery pity should be shown; but Saul, when he heard it, gave positive orders that he should be brought to him sick or well: *Bring him to me in the bed, that I may slay him*, v. 15. It was base and barbarous thus to triumph over a sick man; and to vow the death of one who for aught that he knew was dying by the hand of nature. So earnestly did he thirst after his blood, and so greedy was his revenge, that he could not be pleased to see him dead, unless he himself was the death of him; though awhile ago he had said, *Let not my hand be upon him*. Thus when men lay the reins on the neck of their passions they grow more and more outrageous. When the messengers were sent again, the cheat was discovered, v. 16. But by this

time it was to be hoped that David was safe, and therefore Michal was not then much concerned at the discovery. Saul chid her for helping David to escape (v. 17): *Why hast thou deceived me so?* What a base spirit was Saul of, to expect that, because Michal was his daughter, she must therefore betray her own husband to him unjustly. Ought she not to forsake and forget her father and her father's house, to cleave to her husband? Those that themselves will be held by no bonds of reason or religion are ready to think that others should as easily break those bonds. In answer to Saul's chiding, Michal is not so careful of her husband's reputation as she had been of his person, when she makes this her excuse: *He said, Let me go, why should I kill thee?* As her insinuating that she would have hindered his flight was false (it was she that put him upon it and furthered it), so it was an unjust unworthy reflection upon him to suggest that he threatened to kill her if she would not let him go, and might confirm Saul in his rage against him. David was far from being so barbarous a man and so imperious a husband, so brutish in his resolves and so haughty in his menaces, as she here represented him. But David suffered both from friends and foes, and so did the son of David.

~~0918~~ 1 SAMUEL 19:18-24

SAUL PROPHECIES BEFORE SAMUEL

Here is,

I. David's place of refuge. Having got away in the night from his own house, he fled not to Bethlehem to his relations, nor to any of the cities of Israel that had caressed and cried him up, to make an interest in them for his own preservation; but he ran straight to Samuel and *told him all that Saul had done to him*, v. 18.

1. Because Samuel was the man that had given him assurance of the crown, and his faith in that assurance now beginning to fail, and he being ready to say in his haste (or *in his flight*, as some read it, ~~3851~~ Psalm 116:11), *All men are liars* (“not only Saul that promised me my life, but Samuel himself that promised me the throne”), whither should he go but to Samuel, for such encouragements, in this day of distress, as would support his faith? In flying to Samuel he made God his refuge, trusting in the *shadow of his wings*; where else can a good man think himself safe?

2. Because Samuel, as a prophet, was best able to advise him what to do in this day of his distress. In the psalm he penned the night before he had lifted up his prayer to God, and now he takes the first opportunity of waiting upon Samuel to receive direction and instruction from God. If we expect answers of peace to our prayers, we must have our ears open to God's word.

3. Because with Samuel there was a college of prophets with whom he might join in praising God, and the pleasure of this exercise would be the greatest relief imaginable to him in his present distress. He met with little rest or satisfaction in Saul's court, and therefore went to seek it in Samuel's church. And, doubtless, what little pleasure is to be had in this world those have it that live a life of communion with God; to this David retired in the time of trouble, ^{<1274>}Psalm 27:4-6.

II. David's protection in this place: *He and Samuel went and dwelt (or lodged) in Naioth*, where the school of the prophets was, in Ramah, as in a privileged place, for the Philistines themselves would not disturb that meeting, ^{<9100>}1 Samuel 10:10. But Saul, having notice of it by some of his spies (v. 19), sent officers to seize David, v. 20. When they did not bring him he sent more; when they returned not he sent the third time (v. 21), and, hearing no tidings of these, he went himself, v. 22. So impatient was he in his thirst after David's blood, so restless to compass his design against him, that, though baffled by one providence after another, he could not perceive that David was under the special protection of Heaven. It was below the king to go himself on such an errand as this; but persecutors will stoop to any thing, and stick at nothing, to gratify their malice. Saul lays aside all public business to hunt David. How was David delivered, now that he was just ready to fall (like his own lamb formerly) into the mouth of the lions? Not as he delivered his lamb, by slaying the lion, or, as Elijah was delivered, by consuming the messengers with *fire from heaven*, but by turning the lions for the present into lambs.

1. When the messengers came into the congregation where David was among the prophets *the Spirit of God* came upon them, and *they prophesied*, that is, they joined with the rest in praising God. Instead of seizing David, they themselves were seized. And thus,

(1.) God secured David; for either they were put into such an ecstasy by the spirit of prophecy that they could not think of any thing else, and so

forgot their errand and never minded David, or they were by it put, for the present, into so good a frame that they could not entertain the thought of doing so bad a thing.

2. He put an honour upon the sons of the prophets and the communion of saints, and showed how he can, when he pleases, strike an awe upon the worst of men, by the tokens of his presence in the assemblies of the faithful, and force them to acknowledge that *God is with them of a truth*, ~~<4141>~~ 1 Corinthians 14:24, 25. See also the benefit of religious societies, and what good impressions may be made by them on minds that seemed unapt to receive such impressions. And where may the influences of the Spirit be expected but in the congregations of the saints?

(3.) He magnified his power over the spirits of men. He that made the heart and tongue can manage both to serve his own purposes. Balaam prophesied the happiness of Israel, whom he would have cursed; and some of the Jewish writers think these messengers prophesied the advancement of David to the throne of Israel.

2. Saul himself was likewise seized with the spirit of prophecy before he came to the place. One would have thought that so bad a man as he was in no danger of being turned into a prophet; yet, when God will take this way of protecting David, even Saul had no sooner come (as bishop Hall expresses it) within smell of the smoke of Naioth but he prophesies, as his messengers did, v. 23. He stripped off his royal robe and warlike habiliments, because they were either too fine or too heavy for this service, and fell into a trance as it should seem, or into a rapture, which continued all that day and night. The saints at Damascus were delivered from the range of the New-Testament Saul by a change wrought on his spirit, but of another nature from this. This was only amazing, but that sanctifying — this for a day, that for ever. Note, Many have great gifts and yet no grace, prophesy in Christ's name and yet are disowned by him, ~~<4172>~~ Matthew 7:22, 23. Now the proverb recurs, *Is Saul among the prophets?* See ~~<4902>~~ 1 Samuel 10:12. Then it was different from what it had been, but now *contrary*. He is rejected of God, and actuated by an evil spirit, and yet among the prophets.