

## 23. When we thought things could not get any worse...

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We know a few people around us who do their work so thoroughly that we don't have to wonder if it is going to get done properly or not. Our God is more than that. When He grinds His millstone of trials in our lives, He grinds it so exceedingly fine. God wants us to be completely broken before Him. Then He will start His wondrous work in our lives.

In chapter 19, as we studied that God systematically removed David's 3 emotional and spiritual crutches – his position in king Saul's court, his wife, and his mentor Samuel from him. The purpose of this removal was for David to solely depend on God, no one else and nothing else. We also should learn a lesson from this vigorous training for David. God wants us to depend on Him alone.

In chapter 20 and 21, we find David still holding onto two more crutches. The first one in chapter 20 is his connection to his friend Jonathan and the second one is relying on himself in chapter 21. Again, because of His love for David, God removes these connections from David and makes him be completely isolated and hit rock bottom. It is a painful and agonizing experience for David and some of us know exactly what David was going through here in chapter 20.

Many people might wonder why it is necessary for God to remove all the crutches from us. God cannot use us fully when we are depending on others more than God. It can start idolatry and false worship as we have learned in the previous study.

### A. CRUTCH NO. 4 – REMOVAL OF FRIENDSHIP

*1 Samuel 20:1-3 Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and went and said to Jonathan, "What have I done? What is my iniquity, and what is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life?" 2 So Jonathan said to him, "By no means! You shall not die! Indeed, my father will do nothing either great or small without first telling me. And why should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so!" 3 Then David took an oath again, and said, "Your father certainly knows that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said, 'Do not let Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved.' But truly, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death."*

Who has an interpretation of this section for me?

David's speech to Jonathan in 20:1 showed self-centeredness and impatience. How much better it would have been had these two friends prayed together instead of hatching their scheme.

Why did Jonathan seem slow to believe that his father still wanted to kill David? Even though Saul was a raging maniac, he still was the father of Jonathan.

"A step between me and death," this reveals David's discouragement. When a person is very discouraged, it is not unusual to not see the faithfulness of God. As a matter of fact, because we don't remember His faithfulness, we get discouraged.

Somehow we tend to think and hope that we would have long lives. No one knows our future and no one knows how long a person is going to live on this earth. Those who don't have hope and eternal life in Christ because they are not born-again

Christians would go to great efforts to make their lives longer medically. Even though their lengths of life are already set by God, they think that they can extend it.

In God's sight, there is no such a thing as, "He died too soon." No one would die one minute later or one minute earlier than what the Lord designated for each of us. It is by His sovereign will we have our lives in particular lengths of life. It is not important how long we live, but it is important how faithfully we live in Christ Jesus.

## **B. A SCHEME BY DAVID AND JONATHAN**

*1 Samuel 20:4-8 So Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you yourself desire, I will do it for you." 5 And David said to Jonathan, "Indeed tomorrow is the New Moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king to eat. But let me go, that I may hide in the field until the third day at evening. 6 If your father misses me at all, then say, 'David earnestly asked permission of me that he might run over to Bethlehem, his city, for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.' 7 If he says thus: 'It is well,' your servant will be safe. But if he is very angry, then be sure that evil is determined by him. 8 Therefore you shall deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the Lord with you. Nevertheless, if there is iniquity in me, kill me yourself, for why should you bring me to your father?" 9 But Jonathan said, "Far be it from you! For if I knew certainly that evil was determined by my father to come upon you, then would I not tell you?" 10 Then David said to Jonathan, "Who will tell me, or what if your father answers you roughly?" 11 And Jonathan said to David, "Come, and let us go out into the field." So both of them went out into the field. 12 Then Jonathan said to David: "The Lord God of Israel is witness! When I have sounded out my father sometime tomorrow, or the third day, and indeed there is good toward David, and I do not send to you and tell you, 13 may the Lord do so and much more to Jonathan. But if it pleases my father to do you evil, then I will report it to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. And the Lord be with you as He has been with my father. 14 And you shall not only show me the kindness of the Lord while I still live, that I may not die; 15 but you shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever, no, not when the Lord has cut off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth." 16 So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "Let the Lord require it at the hand of David's enemies." 17 Now Jonathan again caused David to vow, because he loved him; for he loved him as he loved his own soul.*

What kind of interpretation are you getting from this paragraph?

Chapter 19 through 21 do not record any positive look, because in them we see the man of faith faltering and failing in his faith. Instead of waiting to seek the Lord's will, David flees in fear and tries to "scheme" his way out of his problems. Note the lies he tells in chapters 20 and 21.

Sometimes we are so depressed and anxious due to the surrounding situations, we become irrational and unreasonable. David even was suspecting the loyalty of Jonathan's heart by saying, "Kill me yourself" in v8.

Jonathan was standing in front of a possible fugitive-to-be, and asking him to treat himself and his family well when David becomes a king of Israel. That is faith in God and acceptance and obedience to His will for David to be the next king of Israel instead of himself.

*1 Samuel 20:18-19 Then Jonathan said to David, "Tomorrow is the New Moon; and you will be missed, because your seat will be empty. 19 And when you have stayed three days, go down quickly and come to the place where you hid on the day of the deed; and remain by the stone Ezel.* "Ezel" means "departure." This is the place that separates David's life from the court of king Saul to the life of a fugitive. His life would no longer be the same again.

*1 Samuel 20:20-27 Then I will shoot three arrows to the side, as though I shot at a target; 21 and there I will send a lad, saying, 'Go, find the arrows.' If I expressly say to him, 'Look, the arrows are on this side of you; get them and come'-then, as the Lord lives, there is safety for you and no harm. 22 But if I say thus to the young man, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you'-go your way, for the Lord has sent you away. 23 And as for the matter which you and I have spoken of, indeed the Lord be between you and me forever." 24 Then David hid in the field. And when the New Moon had come, the king sat down to eat the feast. 25 Now the king sat on his seat, as at other times, on a seat by the wall. And Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, but David's place was empty. 26 Nevertheless Saul did not say anything that day, for he thought, "Something has happened to him; he is unclean, surely he is unclean." 27 And it happened the next day, the second day of the month, that David's place was empty. And Saul said to Jonathan his son, "Why has the son of Jesse not come to eat, either yesterday or today?"*

According to Mosaic Law, if a person is unclean ceremonially, he must not participate in any religious events for a day. So Saul was expecting David to be on the second day of the New Moon feast.

*1 Samuel 20:28-34 So Jonathan answered Saul, "David earnestly asked permission of me to go to Bethlehem. 29 And he said, 'Please let me go, for our family has a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has commanded me to be there. And now, if I have found favor in your eyes, please let me get away and see my brothers.' Therefore he has not come to the king's table." 30 Then Saul's anger was aroused against Jonathan, and he said to him, "You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness? 31 For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, you shall not be established, nor your kingdom. Now therefore, send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die." 32 And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said to him, "Why should he be killed? What has he done?" 33 Then Saul cast a spear at him to kill him, by which Jonathan knew that it was determined by his father to kill David. 34 So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and ate no food the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David, because his father had treated him shamefully.*

If Saul's wife was present at the table, she would give him that look – only wives can give to their husbands – with one cocked eyebrow and glaring at him from the corner of her eyes for what he said in v30 and 31.

Saul was indeed bent on evil, and David is not safe anymore. Ironically, Saul said he wanted to kill David to preserve Jonathan's dynasty. But the next moment, he hurled a spear at his own son, incensed at Jonathan's loyalty to his innocent friend.

Enraged Saul could care less about his own son's life just to get David. Jonathan was slow in understanding his father's intention for David, but he got the point after his own father threw him a spear. When God abandons a person and the devil takes over, there is no end to the wickedness that results.

## C. THE TIME FOR DEPARTURE

*1 Samuel 20:35-42 And so it was, in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad was with him. 36 Then he said to his lad, "Now run, find the arrows which I shoot." As the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. 37 When the lad had come to the place where the arrow was which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried out after the lad and said, "Is not the arrow beyond you?" 38 And Jonathan cried out after the lad, "Make haste, hurry, do not delay!" So Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows and came back to his master. 39 But the lad did not know anything. Only Jonathan and David knew of the matter. 40 Then Jonathan gave his weapons to his lad, and said to him, "Go, carry them to the city." 41 As soon as the lad had gone, David arose from a place toward the south, fell on his face to the ground, and bowed down three times. And they kissed one another; and they wept together, but David more so. 42 Then Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, since we have both sworn in the name of the Lord, saying, 'May the Lord be between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants, forever.' " So he arose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city.*

What is your interpretation of this?

For three days and nights in the field, David was hoping that everything would turn out OK after Jonathan talks with his father Saul. I am sure that it was a long three days and nights in the field. David was talking to himself, "Jonathan is going to come and tell me that everything is going to be OK. I am gonna go home back to my wife, Michal, back to my job. King Saul just had bad days. I will play music for him. Everything will be OK."

Finally, it was the time for a long-awaited answer. As he expected, Jonathan came out with a boy as he promised.

From his hiding place, David was watching Jonathan pulling his bow. He was thinking, "Wow, Jonathan was pulling it back an awful lot. I tell ya, he is such a joker. With friends like that, who needs enemies?" While David was hoping for the best, the arrow flew and passed by the area way behind.

All of sudden, it dawned to David and his heart sank. He looked at the arrow and he looked at Jonathan. Jonathan's eyes meet David's. Without a word, they both knew what this meant. With a sick feeling in his stomach, David arose from behind the stone Ezel.

Both were valiant warriors but also men of tender hearts. They embraced and wept and left each other. David never got to see Jonathan again other than one more time before his death on the battlefield. This was perhaps David's most painful loss – separation from his closest friend.

David couldn't understand why God who was with him when his sheep were attacked by lions and bears and when he faced the giant Goliath, would let him go through this difficulty. He was crying and talking to God at the same time, "Why God, why are you doing this to me? I just want to serve You and just want to love You." It seems that heaven's gate is shut and there is no answer. But God watches over David as he was running away from Saul into the wilderness. His wilderness training just has begun.

Don't we feel the same way as David goes through this time of difficulty? We all can relate with him one way or another. It seems like it cannot possibly go worse than now, we just realize that something worse happens. Did God lose His control? Did God forget about me? "What are you doing, God? Why don't You do something?" From His throne of Grace, God answers to us, "I am doing something, My child. I am teaching you and training you and molding you into the image of My Son, Jesus. It will hurt you awhile. But you will be alright because I am with you always."

Satan loves to try to pamper us with temporal comforts. God loves to strip them away so we'll find ultimate comfort in Him alone. God may well give you more than you can handle this week. But if He does, He'll also give you Himself.

#### **D. APPLICATIONS**

**1) We do not dictate how long our trials and tests would last. God does it in His sovereign and infinite wisdom.**

If we fight against God instead of being submissive and learn from Him, we simply prolong the time of trials and tests.

**2) God will remove anything from our hearts that takes our reliance other than Him.**

It will cause us pain and uncomfortableness. But through that pain, He teaches us to depend on Him. Let God empty us out that He may save us from becoming spiritually stale, and lead us ever onward. He is always calling us to pass beyond the thing we know into the unknown.

A throne is God's purpose for us; a cross is God's path for us; faith is God's plan for us.

**3) God wants us to completely rely on Him, not on our own strength.**

*2 Corinthians 12:9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

**4) If we trust Him, God promises His peace in our hearts. But He does not necessarily promise a change of the circumstances.**

*John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*