

Friends

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Preacher: Paul Barker

- [0 : 0 0] As Vaughan said at the beginning of the service, we're beginning a new sermon series tonight, tonight and the next three Sunday nights on the last chapters of 1 Samuel.
- I think over the last two years, I've preached two separate short series on 1 Samuel, the first few chapters maybe two or three years ago, chapters 1 to 7 if I remember rightly, and then last year, I think, chapters 8 through to 14 or 15.
- So tonight, and for the next three, we're sort of having a very sweeping view over the last, I think, 14 chapters. We won't be able to deal with every detail, of course, or even every chapter, but to give us a feel for the end of this book of 1 Samuel.
- So I encourage you to keep open the Bibles at page 229, where we've just heard the beginning of chapter 18 read, but tonight is through chapters 18 to 20, all three chapters.
- So let's pray. God our Father, you've caused all of Holy Scripture to be written to make us wise for salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- [1 : 0 8] So we pray tonight that your powerful word would fulfill your purpose for us and in us by your word.
- We pray this for Jesus' sake. Amen. Archie Thompson didn't play for Australia this week.
- In the sport that matters, football, against Qatar on Wednesday night, World Cup qualifier, Archie Thompson was left out of the team. This is soccer, for those who call it that by that name.
- And it was a very important game in Brisbane, and we won 4-0. So it was probably the right choice that Archie Thompson wasn't selected. Maybe we would have won 7-0 if he was, but we didn't need him.
- He wrote in the paper today about what it felt like to be left out. He's in the squad, but he was left off the bench and out of the team for Wednesday night's game. How does it feel to watch your team, that you're part of the squad, play and win and you're not there?
- [2 : 1 3] And he said it was tough to watch, though it's hard to be disappointed if you're winning. Now that's quite strong and gracious words in a way.
- How would you feel if you were left out of the team? You thought you were perhaps good enough to be in the team. That's the implication of what he wrote in the paper this morning.
- But you're left out. There would be part of you that would hope that maybe the team would win, but the player or players you thought you were better than would play badly.
- I imagine. It's almost a natural reaction. A little bit of anger, resentment, jealousy.
- Gore Vidal, the author, wrote, Whenever a friend succeeds, a little something in me dies. Often that's the way, isn't it?
- [3 : 1 8] A friend succeeds, somebody does well, But it means that we didn't. They might have beaten us in a competition, a race or an examination or something like that.
- And we say, you know, well done. It's great that you got the place at the university or you got the prize. But underneath there might be that little bitter taste of envy, resentment.

They got the prize, I didn't. Somebody wins means that we didn't. For many of us, many times in our life, when a friend succeeds, a little something in us dies.

How riddled our hearts are with pride, selfishness, jealousy or envy.

Cain, the brother of Abel, sons of the first couple, Adam and Eve. He was like that. He was actually warned by God.

[4 : 27] Sin is crouching at your door, but you must master it. It wants to master you. Back in Genesis chapter 4. And Saul, the first king of Israel, could easily have received the same yellow card from God.

Sin is crouching at your door. Its desire is for you, but you must master it. Cain didn't and got the red card out of Eden.

What about Saul? The same for him, as we'll see in these chapters tonight and beyond. Saul was Israel's first king, chosen when the people of God demanded of Samuel, the prophet and judge at the time, a king like the nations.

Back earlier in this same book, 1 Samuel chapters 8 to 12. He was a king like the nations. Handsome, strong, a military, a mighty man, in effect.

But also, a king like the nations, a king of fearful pride and tragic envy. A king who guarded his reputation jealously from others, just like the kings of the nations.

[5 : 47] King Saul was a failure from the first, partly because the wrong request had come. It was a rejection of God and a replacement of God by a human king like the nations.

And he failed repeatedly, in particular, as we saw a year or so ago, in chapters 13, 14, and 15. Maybe winning battles, but dealing with it so disobediently from God, offering a sacrifice and not killing the enemy king as he was under command to do.

And Saul, in effect, stood at the end of chapter 15 under condemnation from God for his persistent disobedience. A king like the nations.

And in chapter 16, God raises up, and indeed through Samuel anoints, a king after his own heart. In contrast to Saul, who is not after God's heart.

His heart is not like God's. David is that one. Chosen by God, anointed by God, and then with David's great first military victory.

[6 : 58] Not leading a huge army into battle, but slaying a giant. Goliath in the valley of Elah with a simple smooth stone from the river.

Chapter 17, the most famous event, actually, in the whole of the book of Samuel is David killing Goliath in chapter 17. So today's passage picks up in the aftermath of that shining light of David's success.

David killing Goliath is a bit like somebody on debut in the Boxing Day test taking five wickets. A new star has risen, a new hero. His name will be etched in the Australian dressing room at the MCG.

They'll talk about him like they've talked about Brett Lee and Shane Warne and others. Is this the next one to get three, four, five hundred wickets? How great is he going to be? Hail David, the conquering hero.

And the crowds loved him. He was indeed a hero. David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him. And as a result, Saul set him over the army.

[8 : 10] Very quick rise from being a shepherd boy with a little sling who didn't like the armor to being now the commander of the whole of the army of the people of God of Israel.

Saul sent him over the army and all the people, even the servants of Saul, approved. He's the new national hero.

And how the people rejoiced as they were coming home from another victorious battle. When David returned from killing the Philistine, the women came out of all the towns of Israel singing and dancing to meet King Saul with tambourines, with songs of joy and with musical instruments.

And this is the song they sang. Saul has killed his thousands. David has killed his ten thousands.

Hail David, the conquering hero. And we might expect that Saul would rejoice. He's the king. His army's victorious. His enemy is defeated.

[9 : 13] His servant David has won the battle. But no. Whenever a friend succeeds, a little something inside dies.

Saul was very angry. For this saying displeased him. He said, They have ascribed to David ten thousands.

And to me, they have ascribed thousands. Only thousands. What more can he have but the kingdom?

So Saul eyed David from that day on with the green eyes of envy. Jealousy is cruel as the grave.

wrote Solomon a few generations later in the book of songs. Saul is in terminal decline.

[10 : 19] Green with envy and if I can mix metaphors, red with rage. He's dying on the inside because of his jealousy of David's success.

The sin of Saul, his pride, envy, selfishness, jealousy, all mixed up together is highlighted in these chapters. It's highlighted in particular by contrast.

There is a stark contrast between Saul and others, notably his son Jonathan in these chapters. Jonathan himself was a former national hero.

He took a bag of wickets back in chapter 14. Well, at least a few Philistine skulls. He was the hero of the Philistines back then in chapter 14. The son of Saul.

The one you would assume would be the next king. The one who indeed had a lot to lose by David's rising ascendancy. And yet remarkably and at huge personal cost, we find in Jonathan a person whose heart is vastly different from Saul's heart.

[11 : 33] We find in Jonathan somebody who is humble, committed, honest, loving. One who rejoices in a friend's success and doesn't die on the inside.

When David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan, son of Saul, was bound to the soul of David. and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

And then in verses 3 and 4, Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as his own soul. Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing and gave it to David and his armor and even his sword and his bow and his belt.

Jonathan in effect is abdicating as the crown prince of Israel, the one to whom the kingship would come on the death of his father Saul.

He's handing over his royal robe and his royal armor and his sword to David. It's a mark of saying, you will be the next king, not me.

[12 : 45] It's a remarkable act for somebody for whom presumably he could expect to be king. He himself remember was a hero. He himself is no weakling.

but rather one who sees the anointed one of God and submits to him in an act of loving and selfless service in effect.

Jonathan's love for David is a covenant love. It's a committed love. He's bound himself to David as a friend.

We ought not to read into this anything homoerotic. There's nothing scandalous in this at all. Indeed, throughout this chapter and indeed earlier, others loved David as well.

Saul loved David back in chapter 16. The love that's expressed here is the love of friends. It's a commitment to David, to friendship, to loyalty, regardless of the cost and regardless of the danger that comes.

[13 : 56] And it is a deliberate contrast in the way the story is told with his father Saul, who is jealous, proud, selfish, and envious.

Saul had earlier loved David back in chapter 16, verse 21. It didn't last very long. It's not a covenant love. It's not a long-lasting, enduring, or steadfast love like Jonathan's is.

Later in this same chapter, verse 16, we're told, all Israel and Judah loved David. And Saul's daughter, one of his daughters, Michal, who later marries David, she also, we're told in verse 20, loved David.

So there's nothing scandalous in Jonathan's love for him. He's not alone in that love. It's an expression of the adulation and acknowledgement of the hero status of David in a way.

that God has used him to bring victories and they are rejoicing in those victories. Jonathan's love, as we'll see, is modeled on God's steadfast love.

[15 : 04] It's modeled on the character of God. Now this account in these chapters, indeed in this book, is not simply the intrigue, love, and sort of machinations of a soap opera.

Although it's got lots of those ingredients, jealousy and love and murder and so on. Rather, God is a key actor in this story, if you like, the hero ultimately in the story.

Indeed, if we'd gone back to chapter 17, which I did preach a year or so ago, I think, it's clear that David's victory is attributed to God. He comes out in the name of the Lord.

God. So it's not simply David the human hero, but David the servant of God who is the hero, humanly speaking. And Jonathan's commitment to David is modeled on God's commitment to his people.

The same language is used, covenant language, hesed is the Hebrew word for steadfast love, other words for love as well, all of which are part of the vocabulary of the character and behavior of God to his people as well.

[16 : 15] The covenant language will climax in the second book of Samuel when God makes a covenant with David in 2 Samuel chapter 7. We also see that idea expressed in this chapter a few times.

We're told three times that God was with David. So in chapter 18 verse 12, Saul was afraid of David because Yahweh was with him.

And then a little bit further down in verse 14, David had success in all his undertakings for Yahweh, the Lord that is, the name of God, was with him. And again near the end of the chapter in verse 28, when Saul realized that Yahweh the Lord was with David and that Saul's daughter Michal loved him, Saul was still more afraid.

Three times we're told Yahweh was with David, the Lord is with David, that's why he's successful. It's not merely a story at the human level. God was with David.

And three times in this chapter, beginning, middle and end, we're told David had success. Verse 5, David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him.

[17 : 26] In the middle, verse 15, when Saul saw that he had great success, he stood in awe of him. And then in the last verse of the chapter, verse 30, God is at work here.

God is with David. David fights in the Lord's name. David has victory in the Lord's name. God is in the pride, jealousy, and envy of Saul is in opposition to the work of God.

Yes, it operates at a merely human level. He's envious of his army commanders' adulation and public acclaim. But actually he's opposed to God being with David.

Saul's envy and pride, his murderous plots as we see, are despite the fact that Saul knows very well that Yahweh is with David. So his opposition to David is opposition to God.

Saul is placing him further and further into the enemy camp, the enemy of God's camp, in his opposition and anger at David. But also we see, way back in chapter 2, the very beginning of this book, the mother of Samuel the prophet singing a song before Samuel's birth.

[19 : 02] And in effect saying that God is the one who brings down the proud and lifts up the lowly. And that's what's going on here. Not just in this chapter and not just in tonight's three chapters but in the whole of the rest of this book, God is bringing down that proud Saul and lifting up humble David.

As we'll see bits tonight and in the weeks that follow. Well, blinded by his sin, in chapter 18, Saul secretly plots against David.

In verses 10 and 11, as we heard in the reading, twice he tries to pin David to the wall with his spear. maybe even to spear David and kill him. And he failed.

Twice, we're told at the end of verse 11, David eluded him. This action of Saul is attributed, notice in verse 10, to an evil spirit from God.

Not the spirit of God, that's a good spirit, but rather an evil spirit, but still from God. God is sovereign here. We might think, how could God who is good send a spirit who is evil on Saul, a king whom God, in fact, had anointed earlier?

[20 : 19] Now, I'm not going to explore the sort of issues theologically of that, but God is the one who's in effect led Saul into this evil path.

Not because God is evil, but because Saul has resisted God and opposed God, and in effect, like Pharaoh in the opposition to Moses, God in a way is hardening Saul's heart against him.

Here it's in the language of sending him an evil spirit that leads him to try to murder David secretly, but David eludes him. Saul then, in verse 13, sends David out from the palace back into the battlefield.

Behind this is probably a thinking that if David stays on the battlefield far away, one, he's out of sight and out of mind, and two, he's in danger from the Philistines and eventually surely he's going to be killed.

But David has more and more success because God is with him. In spite, probably, Saul says to David, you can have my daughter Merab as your wife, and then he goes and marries off Merab to someone else.

[21 : 34] Now there's no suggestion really that Merab loves David or vice versa, but when the threat of Goliath was there in chapter 17, Saul had promised his daughter's hand in marriage to the one who would kill Goliath.

David, in one sense, was entitled to take Saul's daughter as his wife. Maybe Saul playing games withdraws her and sends her away to be married to someone else.

What it shows us is the fickleness of Saul's word. What he says he doesn't do, and that happens again we'll see later, in contrast again to Jonathan whose word always he keeps.

Having said that though, Mishal, the daughter of Saul, does love David. And Saul is pleased, but underneath his pleasure is evil design.

normally the husband or groom would pay a dowry to the family of the bride. David's poor.

[22 : 40] What is the dowry that Saul demands of him? In verse 25, Saul says to David, thus shall you say to David, the king desires no marriage present except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines.

Now that's a rather revolting dowry. And for those of you who may be thinking one day of getting married, or those of you who perhaps are fathers of potential brides, I doubt that you're going to opt for this sort of dowry.

A hundred foreskins of the Philistines. Let me explain a little bit. The Philistines were uncircumcised.

Part of the covenant that God had made with Abram and Abram's descendants was circumcision. Cut away the foreskin. And when David kills Goliath, and in the earlier battles with the Philistines, they are the uncircumcised.

So to cut away the foreskin is not just a sort of odd or bizarre thing to ask at one level. It's the defeat of an enemy who is Gentile and pagan and opposed to the covenant people of God.

[23 : 58] That's part of what's behind it. But of course, what's Saul's intent? A hundred Philistine foreskins. Surely, surely David in trying to get a hundred will be killed.

It's a secret evil plot. Of course, God's with David. He gets success and he brings them back before the time that's allotted even, as we read in the verses that follow.

By chapter's end, Saul, this man who's green with envy, is quite isolated. The people of Israel and Judah love David.

Wherever David goes, he has success. Jonathan, Saul's own son, is loyal to David. And Saul's daughter, Mishaël, loves David and is married to him at the end.

David's fame at the end of the chapter is very great. And the secret evil plots of this chapter by Saul are thwarted. David evades the spear.

[25 : 05] David has success in battle. David is still alive. So what happens next is that Saul now goes public in his obsession to kill David.

At his equivalent of a cabinet meeting, Saul spoke with his son Jonathan and with all his servants about killing David. It's now public, or at least within the inner circle of the government of Saul.

He wants Saul dead. You can imagine it in a gripping drama or movie or book, can't you? The leader of a place sitting down with all his advisors says, I want him dead.

And eager to please the king, you can imagine them all scurrying off to try and be the one who kills this enemy of the king. It reminds me of Henry II who said, who will rid me of this turbulent priest?

And as a result, one of his henchmen killed the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas of Becket, seven or eight hundred years ago. Again, there's this sharp contrast.

[26 : 14] Chapter 19 begins with Saul speaking these words to Jonathan and to his other advisors and servants, I want David dead, but, verse 1 goes on to say, Saul's son Jonathan took great delight in David.

You see, the way this story is told, Saul and Jonathan keep clashing by way of contrast. And the contrast is spotlighting the sin of David and at the same time spotlighting the integrity of Jonathan.

They are black and white, chalk and cheese, deliberate contrast to show us the moral option, if you like, and to invite us to follow the moral example of Jonathan and not Saul.

Well, in this chapter, four times David is under threat and four times delivered. Firstly, this threat of Saul against David is at least temporarily reprieved by Jonathan's intervention with his father, in verses 1 to 7.

The end of that little section in verses 6 and 7, Saul says to Jonathan, heeding his word, he swears, in fact, an oath, as the Lord lives, David shall not be put to death.

[27 : 35] Saul's word is never consistent, always changing his mind, unlike Jonathan. So, verse 7, Jonathan called David, related all these things to him, Jonathan then brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as before.

The threat of verse 1 is alleviated by Jonathan's intervention with his father, but it's short-lived. In verses 8 to 10, another spear-throwing exercise, a repeat really of what happened in chapter 18.

The language that's used though, and the context of this spear-throwing exercise is interesting. In verse 8, there was war, and David went out to fight the Philistines. He launched a heavy attack on them, so that they fled before him.

Now Saul throws the spear again at David, and Saul in verse 10, 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.

David struck the Philistines, and they fled. Saul struck the spear into the wall, and David fled. the use of those language double up, the struck and flee, again shows a contrast.

[28 : 54] David's defeating the enemies of God's people and the enemies of God. People we know from earlier in this book are pagan worshippers, and they flee. But Saul in his evil blindness is seeking to strike the servant, the winner of God's victories, and he is forced to flee.

It's the complete opposite of what you expect. Again, it's showing a very sharp contrast between what is right and what is wrong. Again, David is spared, though. He eludes the spear.

Thirdly, David, when he flees, goes to his wife's house, or his house with his wife, Mishal, and she says, in effect, Saul's army is going to come and get you.

You've got to flee from here. And she puts into his bed some idols, gods to worship, whether or not she uses them to worship, does in fact show the decline of Saul's family, at least, religiously.

But it's a delaying tactic. By putting them in, by telling the men who come, who are the henchmen of the king, who are tracking down David, he's sick in bed, it's delaying, it's a delaying tactic, so that David's got time to flee.

[30 : 10] We read in verses 13 onwards, she took an idol, laid it on the bed, she put a net of goat's hair on its head, covered it with clothes. When Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, he's sick.

Then Saul sent the messengers to see David for themselves. So you can imagine the messengers go there, they go back to Saul, now they come back, all the time David's getting further away. And the messengers the second time say, bring him, Saul to them says, bring him up to me in the bed that I may kill him.

A so-called sick man, although of course he's not. Saul has just said back in verse 6, I will not kill him. Then he threw spears. And now he says quite publicly, I'm going to kill him.

And of course he's gone. He's gone out the window. It's interesting that this wife of David, daughter of Saul, isn't quite as strong as Jonathan to her father.

She says in verse 17, when Saul asks her, why have you deceived me like this and let my enemy go so that he's escaped? She says, he said to me, let me go, why should I kill you?

[31 : 25] That is, she doesn't actually give an honest answer. It was actually her initiative for David to flee. David is actually under her instruction in fleeing. David is never the one who's retaliating against the king.

But Mishael sort of backs away from taking responsibility for that. Unlike Jonathan, who's actually quite courageous and bold to his father in various interventions with his father in these chapters.

The fourth episode, David has fled to Samuel, the old prophet, at Ramah, maybe to seek refuge there.

Saul's messengers, of course, find him. The first lot come and under God's influence become prophesying under the influence of God's spirit, it seems.

Second lot comes, same things happen. Third lot, the same thing happens. It's as though they're coming close to David to get him and then God is directly intervening and they're prophesying.

[32 : 28] They're just changed as they get close to David. So Saul himself comes and the same thing happens to him. In verses 23 and 24, Saul went there towards Naath in Ramah and the spirit of God came upon him.

As he was going, he fell into a prophetic frenzy until he came to Naath in Ramah. He too stripped off his clothes and he too fell into a frenzy before Samuel. He lay naked all that day and all that night.

Therefore, it said, is Saul also among the prophets? Four times David's life is under threat in this chapter. Now it's the public plot of Saul to kill him and four times delivered.

Delivered by Jonathan's intervention, delivered by evading the spears, delivered by his wife, the daughter of Saul's plot or cunning and deception, and then fourthly, much more directly, from God himself.

This chain of deliverance is showing that God's hand is at work, but in various means. people's ingenuity, in David's own evasion, and fourthly, God's direct intervention on the men of Saul and then Saul himself.

[33 : 40] All of this shows the faithfulness of God to David, of God to David. God who anointed David back in chapter 16 is standing by his anointed one.

God is faithful, again in contrast to the fickleness of Saul, who says one thing does another changes his mind yet again, throughout these chapters time and time again.

But also, though it's not in this chapter, we have to see here deliverance as an answer to prayer. David, wrote Psalm 59.

We're told that he wrote it when Saul ordered David's house to be watched in order to kill him. The very event of this chapter. And David wrote, Deliver me from my enemies, O my God.

Protect me from those who rise up against me. Deliver me from those who work evil, from the bloodthirsty save me. Even now they lie in wait for my life. The mighty stir up strife against me for no transgression or sin of mine, O Lord.

[34 : 57] For no fault of mine they run and make ready. Rouse yourself, come to my help and see. O my strength, I will watch for you, for you, O God, are my fortress.

My God in his steadfast love will meet me. My God will let me look in triumph on my enemies. And the psalm ends, but I will sing of your might.

I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning. For you have been a fortress for me 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. When we pray in the Lord's prayer, deliver us from evil, it may be that our expectation is a quiet life.

David prayed for deliverance from evil in that Psalm 59. It didn't mean that he was free from strife or attack. We'll see in the next chapter and the next three weeks that the attacks of Saul were rather relentless.

[36 : 12] David is under attack from Saul's evil for several more chapters in this book, but God remains steadfastly faithful, utterly and ultimately reliable and loyal to his word to David.

It doesn't mean times are easy, but God's word stands. The whole length of this narrative, which we'll only see in sweeping fashion these weeks ahead, demonstrates the sovereign faithfulness of God to David, to God's people, and as an example for God's faithfulness to us.

David in that prayer in Psalm 59 focuses on the steadfast love of God to him, God's hesed love to him. God's key attribute, in fact, in the Old Testament, God's love.

God's love is that very love. Way back in the book of Exodus, Yahweh, Yahweh, the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

It's to that God that David has appealed, and David finds refuge. But this narrative also commends implicitly moral virtues for our own character and behavior.

[37 : 40] In particular, as I've said, the contrast between Saul and Jonathan, his son, make that evident. Jonathan's love, his hesed love, his covenant love to David, is actually modeled on God's love to God's people.

But Jonathan's example is commending us to practice the same sort of love in our relationships with each other, in particular amongst the family of God's people.

Most strongly, chapter 20 picks this up. In chapter 20, verse 8, David says to Jonathan, therefore deal kindly with your servant, literally show steadfast love to your servant, for you have brought your servant into a sacred covenant with you.

But if there's guilt in me, kill me yourself. Why should you bring me to your father? David is urging Jonathan in the context of this covenant love relationship between the two of them.

And Jonathan responds in the next paragraph, chapter 20, verse 12 onwards. By the Lord, the God of Israel, when I have sounded out my father about this time tomorrow or on the third day, if he is well disposed toward David, shall I not then send and disclose it to you?

[39 : 07] But if my father intends to do you harm, the Lord do so to Jonathan and more also, if I do not disclose it to you and send you away so that you may go in safety.

may the Lord be with you as he has been with my father. If I'm still alive, show me the faithful love of the Lord.

But if I die, never cut off your faithful love from my house, even if the Lord were to cut off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.

Thus Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, may the Lord seek out the enemies of David. Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him, for he loved him as he loved his own life.

Both men are pledging themselves to each other in covenant love as God has pledged himself to his people in covenant steadfast love.

[40 : 12] Later on in 2 Samuel 9 when David is king and Jonathan is dead, David keeps this command, this request, he looks after with covenant love the descendants of Saul and Jonathan.

In fact, in Jonathan's words here to David, may the Lord be with you as he has been with my father, imply again that Jonathan expects the kingship to be transferred from Saul to David.

Covenant love is costly. Jonathan exemplifies that. ultimately in effect he dies for it.

Jonathan is forsaking his claim to the crown here in his love for David. Jonathan in fact risks his life for David. Later on the spear of Saul his father is heading towards Jonathan because of his allegiance to David.

Covenant love brings with it strength of moral character. Saul's anger in verse 30 is against Jonathan his son. 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?

- [41 : 30] For as long as the son of Jesse lives upon the earth neither you nor your kingdom shall be established. Now send and bring him to me for he shall surely die. And Jonathan does not balk in responding to his father.

Why should he be put to death? What has he done? And Saul through the spirit him and Jonathan flees from his own father. Family bonds are strong but there is to be a covenant love relationship amongst the people of God that ought to be stronger.

Jonathan goes out and warns David in the field that his father's anger is unabated. And his father is after David's life. And at the end of this chapter they embrace with tears and say goodbye for the last time.

Go in peace Jonathan says to David in verse 42. Go in peace. peace. Not the peace of tranquility that eastern mysticism and religion tries to cultivate.

Go in peace amid the threat to your life. Go in peace while you're on the run. In peace but in turmoil.

- [42 : 57] peace in peace in peace in peace in peace from God. Is not the sort of peace and calm and tranquility of an easy unthreatened life.

But peace amidst turmoil. Peace in the midst of suffering. When Paul writes in Romans 5 therefore we have peace with God. In verse 3 he goes on to say we suffer.

Peace is not overturned by suffering or tumult or threats or the face of evil against us. But in the midst of it a peace of knowing where we stand with almighty God.

Jonathan is extending the blessing of God's peace to David his friend. He knows that he is God's anointed one and he extends to him peace while David is on the run.

Jonathan's character is I think in these chapters deliberately striking and challenging. It is a deliberate clear contrast to the character of his father.

- [44 : 18] And whilst narrative doesn't always set up a person as be like this person but not like that person, the contrast here drives us to see that.

It is teaching us something about how we live and behave, about how we relate to people, especially within the covenant people of God. We are to be people of steadfast loyal love, people whose word counts, whose word stands, not like Saul, but like Jonathan, who at great risk and at great cost, in danger of his own life, maintains his covenant loyalty and love to David, puts himself at risk.

How often though our words are rather empty. I remember years ago when I was at university, guys at university were saying, I promise I will always be your friend.

Within two years he made no contact with me, never heard from him again, have no idea. At one level I'm not personally troubled by that, I don't see a psychotherapist every week to try and get myself out of the turmoil of that, but it taught me a lesson when I was 20 or so.

We have to be as God's people, like God, that our word we hold fast. If we promise and pledge something, we keep to it, even if that's costly.

- [45 : 56] How tempting it is sometimes to back down from our word, to evade a previous promise, because we don't want to be embarrassed or ashamed. We recognize that the person to whom we've made a promise is somehow under threat and therefore we'd be under threat.

But Jonathan shows us what we're to be like with our words, our behavior, and our character. It's not merely at a human level here. It's modeling our character on God's steadfast love, a loyal love, a long-lasting love, a God who says one thing and keeps it regardless through thick and thin.

Not like Saul who says one thing, changes his mind, says another, changes his mind again. How many people are like that? Not God, and it ought not to be like God's people.

There's a real challenge to us here to be people of integrity, people of steadfast love, costly love, but also people of humility, people who unlike Gore Vidal who says a friend's success means something in me dies.

Jonathan is David's friend. David's success does not mean something in Jonathan dies. It could well do because Jonathan could be the next king, but no, in humble service of God's anointed one, he's not seeking his own glory or stature or power.

[47 : 27] He's seeking God's will actually, and he's rejoicing with sincerity and integrity in the success of his friend. What a challenge to our own selfishness, to our pride, envy.

The example of Jonathan, not perfect, there's a perfect one yet to come, descended from David, but a challenge to us to model our character on the character of Almighty God.

It was to David's steadfast love, it was to God's steadfast love that David prayed and relied in that psalm when his life was under threat. A steadfast love that was humanly exemplified by his best friend, the son of the king, Jonathan.

May we be people of steadfast love amongst the people of God, like Jonathan, and modelled on God himself.

Amen. The most photos and