

God Protects His Anointed

1 Samuel 19

People of God, there are two truths that every Christian must come to grips with. The first is that everyone who desires to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12). But the second truth is that God promises to deliver us from our enemies—He protects us from those who rise up against us and who would seek our life (Psalm 59:1). And this is what we learn in 1 Samuel 19.

David is a godly man. He walks wisely, showing himself to be a man of the Word. The Lord prospers him and gives him success in battle and favor in the eyes of the people. But Saul is consumed by jealous rage and envy. Saul is out to kill David. And why? Because he is like Cain. As the apostle John would later write, "Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous" (1 John 3:12). Saul projects his own self-hatred onto David and tries to kill him. He was of the evil one.

But the Lord protects David in multiple ways throughout this passage. David is helped by his own shrewdness as he hides himself in a secret place. David is protected by an act of diplomacy on the part of Jonathan, who persuades his father Saul—at least temporarily—not to murder David. David is further protected by an act of holy deception by

his wife Michal. And ultimately David is protected by a strange and divine act of the Spirit of the Lord.

David is a man whom God has chosen to be king, and no scheme of man formed against David will be allowed to prosper until God's appointed time. No weapon formed against him will succeed. David is a man protected by the Lord God Almighty. And the Church too is protected because we are in Christ, who has the power of an indestructible life. Whenever we are persecuted—even when we are murdered and killed—we are comforted in this: that we are more than conquerors through Christ who loved us, for nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Mask Comes Off

In the previous chapter of 1 Samuel, Saul attempted to kill David, but his murderous intentions were disguised. First they were disguised by his madness. When he hurled his spear at David—twice—trying to pin him to the wall, people assumed Saul was simply having another episode. "He's crazy. He doesn't know what he's doing when he gets like that."

Then Saul devised a more cunning plan: he tried to have David killed by proxy, using the Philistines as his weapon

of choice. He sent David into battle, demanding a deadly bride-price for his daughter's hand in marriage. But not only did David survive, he triumphed and won Michal as his bride by doubling the count from 100 to 200 Philistine foreskins.

And I am sure, moms and dads, that last week's sermon probably led to some interesting discussions with your children about what exactly a foreskin is. So... you're welcome.

Chapter 18 closes with David winning battle after battle against the Philistines, achieving more success than all of Saul's officers combined, until his name became highly esteemed throughout Israel. But as Saul watches David win victory after victory, he continues to grow in envy and hatred. Now Saul's efforts to kill David become public and intentional.

The text tells us:

Now Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David; but Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted greatly in David. So Jonathan told David, saying, "My father Saul seeks to kill you. Therefore please be on your guard until morning, and stay in a secret place and hide. And I will go out and stand beside

my father in the field where you are, and I will speak with my father about you. Then what I observe, I will tell you."

Thus Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father, and said to him, "Let not the king sin against his servant, against David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his works have been very good toward you. For he took his life in his hands and killed the Philistine, and the Lord brought about a great deliverance for all Israel. You saw it and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood, to kill David without a cause?"

So Saul heeded the voice of Jonathan, and Saul swore, "As the Lord lives, he shall not be killed." Then Jonathan called David, and Jonathan told him all these things. So Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as in times past.

He commanded Jonathan his son and all his servants to kill David. The pretense is over. The mask is off. Saul's "erratic behavior" was never madness—it was murder, plain and simple. David is now essentially a wanted man. There are wanted posters being put up around Gibeah with David's face on them.

Protection Through a Faithful Friend

Jonathan had the most to gain from David's death. The fact that Saul told Jonathan this shows that Saul believed he could get his son to act out of jealousy for his own

position as prince. But Jonathan loved David as his own soul—he delighted in David. He truly delighted in him, unlike when Saul's men told David that the king "delighted" in him in chapter 18. That was just a ruse to get David to lower his guard. But Jonathan's love for David was genuine and deep.

Instead of making a political maneuver that would solidify his position by removing his rival, Jonathan warned David that Saul wanted him dead. He told David to hide nearby—not so David could eavesdrop, but so Jonathan could return quickly with news without arousing Saul's suspicion that he was in league with David.

Jonathan then went to his father and spoke well of David, pleading for his life. His appeal was built on three compelling arguments:

First, David has committed no sin against you deserving of death. He has done you no wrong.

Second, David's actions have greatly benefited you. He risked his life to kill Goliath—literally took his life in his hand and struck down the Philistine. And the Lord won a great victory for all Israel. You saw it and rejoiced.

Third—and here Jonathan invokes the most serious consequence—if you kill David, you will sin against

innocent blood by killing him without cause? This is to bring bloodguilt upon yourself and the land. Under the Law, the land could not be cleansed of innocent blood except by the blood of the one who shed it (Numbers 35:33-34). To kill an innocent man was to defile yourself and the nation before God (Deuteronomy 21:8-9).

Remarkably, Saul listened to Jonathan. He even took an oath before the Lord: "As surely as the Lord lives, David shall not be put to death."

This satisfied Jonathan. He hurried to tell David the good news and brought him back into Saul's presence as before, to serve the king and play the harp for him. For now, peace returns to the palace—but it is a fragile peace. Saul's spear is still resting within arm's reach.

God protected David through the intercession of a faithful friend. But it was not yet David's time to die.

The Spear and the Harp

The story continues:

"And there was war again; and David went out and fought with the Philistines, and struck them with a mighty blow, and they fled from him. Now the distressing spirit from the Lord came upon Saul as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand. And David

was playing music with his hand. Then Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he slipped away from Saul's presence; and he drove the spear into the wall. So David fled and escaped that night."

David is invited back into Saul's court and back into military service. And David's success continued while in service to Saul. Every time he went out to battle, the Lord was with him and the enemy fled before him.

The author is doing something important here. Remember why Israel wanted a king in the first place: they wanted someone to go out before them and fight their battles. Yet Saul no longer goes out to fight. He stays home while David not only wins battles but wins hearts.

And the more David's victories multiplied, the darker Saul's heart grew in jealousy against him. Saul's envious eye turned into a murderous spear in his hand. He was still a warrior, but he had chosen the wrong enemy. Instead of fighting the Philistines, he fought David. He turned his own house into a battlefield, clutching a spear meant for Israel's foes and aiming it instead at God's anointed.

Notice the contrast: in Saul's hand was a spear; in David's hand, a harp. Saul raised his hand in wrath; David raised his in worship. One sought to kill; the other sought to

soothe. David suffered not for wrongdoing, but for righteousness.

But Saul's hatred was deeper than envy—it was hatred of goodness itself. He saw in David what he lacked in himself. David's faith, courage, and purity exposed Saul's corruption. And instead of repenting, Saul reached for the spear. That's what sin does—it lashes out against the light that exposes the darkness.

Yet once again, God protected David. The spear missed its mark and buried itself in the wall. David slipped away and escaped into the night. It was not yet David's time.

And in that, we begin to see the shadow of Christ. For our Lord, too, was hated for His goodness. Like David, He was struck down not for evil but for doing good. As Isaiah said, "I gave my back to those who strike... we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted." Men wanted to pin the Son of David to a cross—but not yet. Not until His appointed hour had come.

Protection Through Holy Deception

"Saul also sent messengers to David's house to watch him and to kill him in the morning. And Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, 'If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed.' So Michal let David down through a window. And he

went and fled and escaped. And Michal took an image and laid it in the bed, put a cover of goats' hair for his head, and covered it with clothes. So when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, 'He is sick.'"

In the first episode, Saul tried to kill David, but Jonathan protected him. Now in this episode, Saul's servants try to kill David, but Michal protects him through an act of holy deception.

It was on this very night—with armed men surrounding his house, waiting to kill him at dawn—that David wrote Psalm 59. Listen to what he prayed in that desperate hour:

"Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; protect me from those who rise up against me. Deliver me from evildoers and save me from those who are after my blood. See how they lie in wait for me! Fierce men conspire against me for no offense or sin of mine, O Lord. I have done no wrong, yet they are ready to attack me."

David knew he was innocent. He knew Saul's rage was unjust. And in his terror, he cried out to God for deliverance. But notice how the Psalm ends—not in despair, but in confident praise:

"But I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble. You are

my strength, I sing praise to you; you, God, are my fortress, my God on whom I can rely."

David went to bed that night not knowing how God would deliver him. He didn't know Michal would let him down through the window. He didn't know about the idol in the bed or the deception that would buy him time. All he knew was that God was his fortress, his refuge, his strength. And when morning came, God had indeed delivered him—and David sang.

This scene recalls the story of Rahab in the book of Joshua, when the harlot of Jericho hid the Israelite spies on her roof and sent the king's men on a false trail while lowering the spies safely out through her window for a safe escape.

In much the same way, Michal protects David through deception. She lets David out the window, then tells Saul's messengers that David is sick in bed. She even laid a household idol in the bed—yes, she had one, which shows the spiritual compromise even in David's household—covering its head with goats' hair to resemble her husband resting under the covers. While the soldiers waste their time reporting back to the king, David makes a clean getaway.

This act of holy deception by a woman is a theme that repeats throughout the Bible. The serpent deceived the woman and led her into sin, and now the woman in her fight against the seed of the serpent engages in acts of deception to protect the Seed.

Sarah protected Abraham from Pharaoh's designs. The Hebrew midwives deceived Pharaoh's servants to protect the baby boys. Jael deceived Sisera in Judges 4, luring him into her tent and giving him warm milk under the guise of protection, but then crushing his head with a tent peg when he least expected it.

This is all part of the larger pattern—the woman deceiving the serpent to protect the seed.

"Then Saul sent the messengers back to see David, saying, 'Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may kill him.' And when the messengers had come in, there was the image in the bed, with a cover of goats' hair for his head. Then Saul said to Michal, 'Why have you deceived me like this, and sent my enemy away, so that he has escaped?' And Michal answered Saul, 'He said to me, "Let me go! Why should I kill you?"'"

The deceiver does not like being deceived. He doesn't like the taste of his own medicine.

Notice that Saul paints himself as the victim: "Why have you deceived me? You let my enemy go." This is what the wicked always do—they cry out in pain as they strike you. Be aware of this behavior. Those with narcissistic patterns will accuse you, blame you, and play the victim when they are the victimizers. They feign persecution when they are the persecutors.

So now we have two instances of members of Saul's family—his son Jonathan and his daughter Michal—siding with David against their father Saul. God's protection of David comes even from within Saul's own household. And still, it was not David's time to die.

The Spirit Strikes Down the Persecutor

"Then David fled and escaped, and went to Samuel at Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and stayed in Naioth. Now it was told Saul, saying, 'Take note, David is at Naioth in Ramah!' Then Saul sent messengers to take David. And when they saw the group of prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as leader over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. And when Saul was told, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. Then Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also. Then he also went to Ramah... Then the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went

on and prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah. And he also stripped off his clothes and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they say, 'Is Saul also among the prophets?'"

David fled to Samuel at Ramah and told him everything Saul had done. Samuel took him in, and the two stayed together at Naioth, the dwelling place of the school of the prophets. Samuel was operating a kind of prophetic school where he was raising up men to preach the word of God and lead Israel in worship through song and music—which is what I believe is meant by "prophesying" here.

When Saul heard that David was hiding in Ramah, he sent men to capture him. But when they arrived and saw Samuel leading a band of prophets in worship, the Spirit of God came upon them, and they too began to prophesy. Saul sent more men, but the same thing happened. He sent a third group, and they also began to prophesy instead of arresting David.

Finally, Saul went to Ramah himself. If you want something done correctly, you've got to do it yourself. But as Saul approached to seize David, the Spirit of the Lord seized Saul. In a greater way than his servants, the Spirit overpowered him. Saul began to prophesy just like the

others, but then he stripped off his royal garments and lay on the ground all day and night under the power of God.

Once again, David escaped. It was not yet David's time.

Is Saul Among the Prophets?

This episode is the bookend to Saul's rise, recording his fall and the tragic arc of his spiritual life. The parallels are striking—and devastating.

When Saul was first anointed, Samuel told him he would meet a band of prophets coming down from the high place. The Spirit of God would rush upon him, and he would prophesy with them, being "turned into another man." This was the moment of divine empowerment—the Spirit came upon Saul to equip him for kingship. These were the signs that God was with him (1 Samuel 10:7).

When he prophesied in chapter 10, the people responded in wonder and praise to God, saying, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" This was a mark of grace: an ordinary man transformed by the power of God, lifted into prophetic fellowship, and anointed to lead Israel in righteousness.

But years later in chapter 19, that same phrase is repeated—but now it reverses and undoes what the first event signified. This time the Spirit comes upon Saul, not for

blessing, but for judgment. Not to empower, but to render him powerless. He prophesies, but not as one who worships willingly—rather, as if against his will, overcome by the Spirit. The Lord strips off his royal garments. He falls to the ground and lies naked day and night, humiliated, overcome by the Spirit of God.

The stripping of his garments signifies the stripping of the Spirit's anointing for his office as king. The same Spirit who once anointed him now disarms and exposes him. The people once again say, "Is Saul among the prophets?" But instead of wonder and praise at the work of God, this time it is pure mockery and ridicule.

The king has become an anti-king. He was a christ, an anointed one. But now he is an anti-christ, stripped of his anointing. The trajectory of Saul's story is plain to see. The stripping of Saul's royal garments foreshadows his death in battle when they strip him of his armor and cut off his head (1 Samuel 31:8-9). Saul rejected the Lord and went further by persecuting His anointed one. And God would not allow him to touch David. It was not David's time.

Until His Hour Had Come

And here, people of God, we must lift our eyes from David to see the greater David—Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the true Anointed One of God.

For our Lord, too, was hated for His goodness. Like David, He was opposed not for evil but for doing good. Men sought to kill Him, but again and again, God protected Him—until the appointed hour.

Listen to how the Gospel of John records it:

"They tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come" (John 7:30).

"They picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds" (John 8:59).

"Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp" (John 10:39).

In Luke's Gospel, we read that an angry mob tried to throw Jesus off a cliff, *"but he walked right through the crowd and went on his way" (Luke 4:30).*

Time and again, His enemies tried to kill Him. Time and again, God protected Him. It was not yet His hour.

But then—when the appointed hour came, the hour the Father had ordained from eternity—Jesus did not slip away. He did not hide. He set His face like flint toward Jerusalem. He walked deliberately into the hands of those who hated Him. And when Judas came with the soldiers to the garden, Jesus did not flee. He stepped forward and identified Himself: "I am he."

Saul tried to pin David to the wall with a spear, but the spear missed and David escaped. But men pinned the Son of David to a cross, and He did not escape. He willingly laid down His life.

And when they did, our hatred of God's anointed was laid bare. Yet the miracle of grace is this: the guilt we cast upon Christ became the very means of our salvation. He took our sin, and we received His righteousness. The spear thrust into His side became the wound that heals our souls. The nails that pinned Him to the cross secured our redemption.

David was protected until his appointed time to be king. Christ was protected until His appointed time to be king, which was manifested most clearly when he was lifted up on the cross.

Safe in His Hands

People of God, what do we learn from 1 Samuel 19?

We learn that the Lord protects His anointed ones. He protected David. And He protected our Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, we who are in Christ, share in this same protection. We have been united to the One who conquered death. We belong to the King whose kingdom cannot be shaken.

This means that whether God delivers us *from* our persecutors, or delivers us *through* persecution into His glorious presence, we cannot be separated from His love. Sometimes He protects us by closing the mouths of lions. Sometimes He protects us by walking with us through the fire. And sometimes He protects us by receiving us into glory through martyrdom. But in every case, we are safe—eternally, gloriously, invincibly safe—in the hands of the God who raises the dead.

The same God who would not let Saul's spear pierce David, who would not let the angry mob throw Jesus from the cliff, who raised Christ from the dead on the third day—this same God now watches over you.

And when your appointed hour comes—whether for deliverance or for glory—you are held fast in the hands of the God who keeps His promises, who protects His own.

As the Heidelberg Catechism says: *He also preserves me in such a way that without the will of my heavenly Father not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation. God works all things together for the good of those who love Him.*

As Romans 8 says:

³¹ *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."*

³⁷ *Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*