

1 Samuel 21

- Jonathan and David are now allies against Jonathan's father, Saul
 - They are joined by two covenants
 - In the first covenant, Jonathan pledged to give his throne to David
 - He made this promise unconditionally to David because he recognized David had the Lord's anointing
 - Which told us Jonathan was a man who recognized and respected the movement of the Lord
 - The Lord moved Jonathan's heart to enter into this covenant, to ensure David would have the legal right within Israel to receive the throne
 - Secondly, Jonathan and David jointly entered into a parity covenant last week
 - In this covenant, both men agreed to protect each other
 - Jonathan agreed to protect David from his father Saul
 - While David agreed to protect Jonathan's descendants after taking the throne
 - Jonathan knew that David would have to destroy his enemies to hold the throne
 - Nevertheless, he didn't want David to count Jonathan's descendants among his enemies
 - The Lord's purpose in this covenant was two-fold
 - He provided to David a man in Jonathan who would blunt Saul's attack and ensure David's survival
 - Secondly, he creates a vivid picture of David's prefiguring of Christ at his second coming
 - That is all who are in covenant with the Lord will have the right to dine at the king's table, just as Mephibosheth did

- Now we return to the story just as Jonathan and David have agreed to the covenant and are about to enact the plan to rescue David

1Sam. 20:24 So David hid in the field; and when the new moon came, the king sat down to eat food.

1Sam. 20:25 The king sat on his seat as usual, the seat by the wall; then Jonathan rose up and Abner sat down by Saul's side, but David's place was empty.

1Sam. 20:26 Nevertheless Saul did not speak anything that day, for he thought, "It is an accident, he is not clean, surely he is not clean."

1Sam. 20:27 It came about the next day, the second day of the new moon, that David's place was empty; so Saul said to Jonathan his son, "Why has the son of Jesse not come to the meal, either yesterday or today?"

1Sam. 20:28 Jonathan then answered Saul, "David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem,

1Sam. 20:29 for he said, 'Please let me go, since our family has a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has commanded me to attend. And now, if I have found favor in your sight, please let me get away that I may see my brothers.' For this reason he has not come to the king's table."

- Jonathan leaves David in the field and joins Saul at the new moon festival as the plan expected
 - Around the king's table, the honored guests had assigned seats
 - We see that Saul sat in the most honored place
 - He is at the head of the table and against the wall
 - Remember, people reclined on cushions on the ground leaning on the left elbow
 - Saul's left side was against the wall, meaning he was positioned at the far left end of the table, which is the most honored place
 - Abner was the next most honored position next to Saul
 - David had an assigned place as well, and his place was empty
 - So his absence was immediately noticeable
 - But Saul didn't say anything in the room
 - Instead, he just thought to himself that David was gone because he had become unclean somehow
 - It's clear that Saul is hoping his guess is true

- For if it were, then Saul could have expected David to return the next day after having washed ritually
- But the next day David still isn't there
 - New months were timed by lunar events
 - And the precise moment of a lunar event can be hard to detect, especially if it occurs in the daylight hours
 - So these feasts were two day events to ensure the exact moment was captured
 - On this second day, Saul is enraged because he knows that David is avoiding the dinner and foiling his plan to kill him
 - He asks Jonathan where David has gone
 - In v.27 he refers to David as "the son of Jesse" rather than by name
 - This is a mild insult of David, showing Saul's contempt for him
 - Then Jonathan tells the lie that he and David prepared
 - For the second time a member of Saul's family lies to Saul to protect David
 - While we can agree that a lie is always sin, we must also say that these lies are the product of Saul's own sin
 - Saul, the father in the family, is acting unreasonably and rashly in sinning against the Lord's anointed
 - And his sin is leading his children to sin in response as an attempt to right their father's wrong for David's sake
 - So say what you will about Michal's and Jonathan's choice to lie, but it would never have happened had Saul done the right thing
 - This fact is at the core of Paul's admonition that fathers not exasperate their children

Col. 3:21 Fathers, do not **exasperate** your children, so that they will not lose heart.

Eph. 6:4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

- The Greek word for exasperate means to stir up to anger
- So in both verses Paul is advising fathers not to drive their children into rebellious anger
- What drives a child there? Strict rules? Stern discipline? No, not if applied consistently and fairly in love
 - Children generally grow up respecting this kind of treatment
 - But Paul says children will grow angry and resentful when they receive unfair, unloving treatment
 - They will become exasperated by parents who set hypocritical examples demanding perfect obedience while sinning themselves
 - Or who receive unnecessarily harsh penalties for common mistakes
 - Saul is bringing his children into anger – righteous anger – and leading them to rebel to protect the innocent
 - Not all childhood rebellion is good or right, of course
 - But in some cases, that rebellion is the product of parenting choices that stir up anger and resentment
 - I think it's fair to conclude that Saul's children were backed into a corner by their father until they had little choice but to lie
- Jonathan's answer provokes Saul

1Sam. 20:30 Then Saul's anger burned against Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you are choosing the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?"

1Sam. 20:31 "For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Therefore now, send and bring him to me, for he must surely die."

1Sam. 20:32 But Jonathan answered Saul his father and said to him, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?"

1Sam. 20:33 Then Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him down; so Jonathan knew that his father had decided to put David to death.

1Sam. 20:34 Then Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did not eat food on the second day of the new moon, for he was grieved over David because his father had dishonored him.

- Saul has listened to Jonathan's explanation for David's absence, but it wasn't convincing
 - The story was probably too perfect and I doubt Jonathan was a good liar
 - So Saul erupts at Jonathan
 - He calls Jonathan a "son of a perverse woman" referring to Jonathan's mother
 - Both then as now, it was a low blow to refer to a person's mother in this way
 - In fact, the translation of these words varies significantly depending on your translation
 - The Today's English Version translates it "You bastard!"
 - The New English Translation notes that Saul should be understood to have said "You son of a bitch"
 - Then Saul says Jonathan's friendship with David was to Jonathan's shame
 - In Saul's view it was to Jonathan's shame because it would result in Jonathan losing the throne
 - For an heir to not receive what he was owed is a shame
 - But of course that inheritance was promised to another and Jonathan knew it
 - Finally, he says that Jonathan's actions are to the shame of his mother's nakedness
 - Saul is referring to the moment of birth when a woman was exposed like no other time
 - And that shame of nakedness was wasted if Jonathan's life didn't amount to becoming king
 - Saul is being the ultimate hypocrite in defending the honor of Jonathan's mother, having just insulted her
- Obviously, all this strong language is an indication of the deteriorating nature of Saul's heart

- Saul sees Jonathan as a traitor to his own family
 - He knows Jonathan is David's closest friend, so he assumes Jonathan is hiding David
 - Then Saul explains the obvious that if David lives, Jonathan won't have the throne
- In that phrase Saul reveals everything that's going on in his heart
 - He has one goal on his mind
 - Holding on to the throne
 - He wants this despite having heard from the Lord through Samuel that the throne has been taken away and given to David
 - And he wants to get his way so badly that he even wants to ensure his children hold the throne after him
- He's not interested in obeying the Lord's will, but of course Saul's goal is complete folly
 - God's will cannot be frustrated
 - Saul is guaranteed to lose that fight
 - Meanwhile, because he's resisting the will of the Lord, he's risking much more than the throne
- So Saul demands Jonathan present David to him so David could be put to death to ensure Jonathan's inheritance, but of course Jonathan refuses
 - Jonathan asks why the innocent must die
 - It's not only a refusal to obey Saul
 - But it's also an indictment of the king's judgment
 - For this Saul throws a spear at Jonathan as well
 - Thankfully for Jonathan, Saul missed
 - Ironically, Saul told Jonathan that David would prevent him from receiving the throne, but it was Saul who almost brought about that end for Jonathan by his murderous heart
 - This moment makes clear who the real threat to David and Jonathan is: Saul

- And with that Jonathan now knows that Saul's desire to kill David cannot be changed
- Saul is determined to see David as a threat that can only be corrected with David's death
- So Jonathan leaves the meal without eating and in disgust at his father's treatment of the Lord's anointed
 - Jonathan has a different heart
 - His desire was that God's plan might succeed and he was directed at ensuring it would
 - He wanted God's desires to win out more than he wanted his own personal interests to win out
 - That's the heart of someone who loves the Lord
 - They want what God wants
- Then in a tender scene Jonathan fulfills his covenant promise to David

1Sam. 20:35 Now it came about in the morning that Jonathan went out into the field for the appointment with David, and a little lad was with him.

1Sam. 20:36 He said to his lad, "Run, find now the arrows which I am about to shoot." As the lad was running, he shot an arrow past him.

1Sam. 20:37 When the lad reached the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan called after the lad and said, "Is not the arrow beyond you?"

1Sam. 20:38 And Jonathan called after the lad, "Hurry, be quick, do not stay!" And Jonathan's lad picked up the arrow and came to his master.

1Sam. 20:39 But the lad was not aware of anything; only Jonathan and David knew about the matter.

1Sam. 20:40 Then Jonathan gave his weapons to his lad and said to him, "Go, bring them to the city."

1Sam. 20:41 When the lad was gone, David rose from the south side and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed three times. And they kissed each other and wept together, but David wept the more.

1Sam. 20:42 Jonathan said to David, "Go in safety, inasmuch as we have sworn to each other in the name of the Lord, saying, 'The Lord will be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever.'" Then he rose and departed, while Jonathan went into the city.

- David has spent a couple of nights in the field waiting for Jonathan's return

- When he does come back, he executes the warning plan as they agreed
 - He shoots arrows over David and calls for the boy to retrieve them
 - The boy was quite young, probably chosen by Jonathan to ensure the boy wouldn't ask any questions of the matter
- Eventually Jonathan sends the boy away to give him and David a chance to say goodbye
 - The original plan had been for David to leave on the basis of the arrows alone
 - But Jonathan finds a way for a face-to-face goodbye
- David fell to his face and gave Jonathan, the king's son, the proper respect
 - They kiss and wept in recognition that their earthly friendship was coming to an ending
 - Saul's determination to kill David made it impossible for them to be together from this point forward
 - But their covenant would be everlasting, as they repeat the vows here
- Jonathan has chosen to favor his supposed enemy over his father, and he did so in confidence because he was in covenant with David
 - That covenant did away with the enmity between Jonathan and David
 - And it created enmity between Jonathan and Saul
- In that sense, Jonathan becomes a picture of every believer, while David is again a picture of Christ
 - As Paul says:

[Eph. 2:1](#) And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, [Eph. 2:2](#) in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

- Like every unbeliever, Jonathan was initially a part of a household that was an enemy of God's anointed

James 4:4 You adulteresses, do you not know that **friendship** with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

- But after entering into a covenant, Jonathan became an enemy of his former master and a friend to his new king
 - Just as we must turn our backs on the world to enter into a covenant with Christ

1John 5:5 Who is the one who **overcomes** the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

- And after that we have a life-long friendship with the King
- This is the last time these two see each other alive, but as we saw last week David keeps his promise to Jonathan's household
 - Over the next ten chapters, David will be in flight from Saul
 - He will grow increasingly stronger
 - His maturity will grow in leaps and bounds
 - His tactics will graduate from deception to dependence on the Lord
 - Meanwhile, Saul will grow weaker and weaker
 - His paranoia grows
 - His mental state deteriorates
 - Eventually he's consulting the occult for help
 - So as David depends more and more on the Lord, Saul moves to making appeals of the enemy
 - Here again, David pictures Christ's willingness to suffer deprivation before ascending to His throne
 - He was willing to wait for the Father to promote him into a promised position without seeking it before the appointed time
- First, David flees to someone he hopes will facilitate his escape, Ahimelech the priest

[1Sam. 21:1](#) Then David came to Nob to Ahimelech the priest; and Ahimelech came trembling to meet David and said to him, "Why are you alone and no one with you?"

[1Sam. 21:2](#) David said to Ahimelech the priest, "The king has commissioned me with a matter and has said to me, 'Let no one know anything about the matter on which I am sending you and with which I have commissioned you; and I have directed the young men to a certain place.'

[1Sam. 21:3](#) "Now therefore, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever can be found."

[1Sam. 21:4](#) The priest answered David and said, "There is no ordinary bread on hand, but there is consecrated bread; if only the young men have kept themselves from women."

[1Sam. 21:5](#) David answered the priest and said to him, "Surely women have been kept from us as previously when I set out and the vessels of the young men were holy, though it was an ordinary journey; how much more then today will their vessels be holy?"

[1Sam. 21:6](#) So the priest gave him consecrated bread; for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence which was removed from before the Lord, in order to put hot bread in its place when it was taken away.

- Nob is a town on the present day Mt Scopus and housed a compound of priests
 - Since the high priest, Ahimelech, was living here, we must assume the tabernacle had been moved to this place at some point
 - As Saul's general, David was a man to be feared
 - So as David approaches the priest, Ahimelech wonders if David has been sent on a mission to harm him
 - So he trembles at the sight of David approaching by himself
 - By this time, David has collected some men to follow him, as the text indicates
 - But David tells the priest a lie that Saul has sent him on a secret mission
 - Here again, at the outset of David's flight he is demonstrating his spiritual immaturity
 - He's of the mind that he must bend the rules to ensure the outcome he wants, forgetting that God can move mountains
 - If he obeyed the Lord and trusted the Lord to respond properly, great things would happen
 - It appears that David and his men have been hiding for some time, to the point that they're quite hungry

- Hungry enough to invent this ruse to get food from the priest
- He asks for five loaves of bread
- The priest replies that the only bread available in Nob was the showbread from the tabernacle
- In the Law, the tabernacle had loaves of bread placed in the Holy Place every Sabbath
 - After the week, the old bread was removed and given to the priest to eat
 - Only the priests were supposed to eat this bread according to the instructions of God in the Law
 - But now David appeals to the priest for mercy to give him food to sustain him in the work he was doing in obedience to God
 - The priest stipulated that David and his men must not be ritually unclean, but otherwise he was willing to break the rules to grant his request
 - Why were the priests willing to go against the Law in this case?
 - Even more puzzling, Jesus declares in the Gospels that their actions were justified

[Matt. 12:1](#) At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat.

[Matt. 12:2](#) But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath."

[Matt. 12:3](#) But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions,

[Matt. 12:4](#) how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?

[Matt. 12:5](#) "Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent?"

- Jesus refers to this situation when He defends the disciples eating heads of grain on the Sabbath
 - In Jesus' situation it is even easier to understand
 - The disciples weren't doing anything the law prohibited

- But the Pharisees had contrived excessive rules governing behavior
- So they had outlawed eating grain in this way on the Sabbath
- To refute their self-made laws, Jesus asks them to explain how David could have been allowed to eat the showbread?
 - Which Jesus Himself said was unlawful
 - And He goes a step further and reminds them that the priests did work in the temple on the Sabbath but were innocent
- Jesus is explaining that obedience to the Lord is never sin
 - When the priests served in the tabernacle, they were obeying the law also
 - Yet that obedience appeared to come into conflict with other laws concerning the Sabbath
 - But all law comes from the Law Giver, and all law was given to men to reveal their unrighteousness
 - So when when two laws are in opposition, the higher law prevails
- Jesus sums this up by declaring that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath
 - Honoring the Lord is higher than honoring His Sabbath, so always give preference to Jesus over the a Law given to men
 - Likewise, honoring the Lord's anointed, David, was a higher goal than honoring the showbread or priesthood requirements of the Law
 - Since Jesus is Lord of the showbread and Lord of the priests
 - This was further evidence that David's anointing as king was evident to many in Israel including this priest
- But all was not well in Nob

1Sam. 21:7 Now one of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the Lord; and his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's shepherds.

- Samuel includes this reference to a spy of Saul so he can set up the events of Chapter 22

- This man must have been on an errand to Nob for the king
- While he's there, he sees David arrive and will later report what he saw
- The fact that he's identified as an Edomite is intended to tell us that Saul has men in his employment who are not of Israel and not pleasing to God
 - This man will later become a harsh lesson to David that he must trust the Lord during this time
 - He can't take matters into his own hands without devastating consequences
 - It will take David a little longer to appreciate this lesson

1Sam. 21:8 David said to Ahimelech, "Now is there not a spear or a sword on hand? For I brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's matter was urgent."

1Sam. 21:9 Then the priest said, "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah, behold, it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod; if you would take it for yourself, take it. For there is no other except it here." And David said, "There is none like it; give it to me."

- After spotting Doeg, David turns back to the king and asks for a weapon, maybe a sword
 - The priest mentions Goliath's sword, which has been stored here
 - David remembers it and asks for it knowing it's special
 - So David has relied on lies and now he intended to rely on weapons to save himself
 - Finally, he decides to rely on his enemy

1Sam. 21:10 Then David arose and fled that day from Saul, and went to Achish king of Gath.

1Sam. 21:11 But the servants of Achish said to him, "Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of this one as they danced, saying,

'Saul has slain his thousands,
And David his ten thousands?'"

1Sam. 21:12 David took these words to heart and greatly feared Achish king of Gath.

1Sam. 21:13 So he disguised his sanity before them, and acted insanely in their hands, and scribbled on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva run down into his beard.

[1Sam. 21:14](#) Then Achish said to his servants, "Behold, you see the man behaving as a madman. Why do you bring him to me?"

[1Sam. 21:15](#) "Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this one to act the madman in my presence? Shall this one come into my house?"

- David's next stop was a city of the Philistines, Gath
 - We might assume that David chose to go to a Philistine city because of the old adage, "An enemy of my enemy is my friend"
 - Perhaps he thought he would be embraced as a fellow enemy of Saul
 - Or maybe he just thought he would blend into Philistine society and be forgotten
 - Apparently, the Philistines hadn't heard that saying
 - They take one look at David in the city and ask why is he here?
 - Chuck Swindoll once remarked that David's attempt to be inconspicuous in Gath was like Dolly Parton trying to blend in within a convent
 - The people even repeat the famous song of David remarking on his amazing ability to kill Philistines
 - Obviously, David realizes that he's found out and he worries for his life
 - The Philistines would have naturally assumed David was there as a spy or in preparing for an attack
 - Even more worrisome for David, they seem to know David is the king of the land
 - On the one hand, it's a confirmation that the word of David's anointing is everywhere
 - But on the other hand, it reflects the great danger David is in right now
 - Nothing would please the Philistines more than killing the king of their enemy
- So in a spur of the moment idea, David decides to act like an insane person, hoping the people would take pity on him or lose interest in him

- He adopts erratic behavior, writes nonsense on the doors of the city gate and drools on himself
 - Today, this kind of behavior might get you elected
 - But in that day, it was a useful defense
 - The king assumes that the insane David has come to Gath because Saul sent him there to be a burden
 - So he decides to ignore him, since he won't be of any use
- In the meantime, David has made a fool of himself before the enemy of Israel
 - It saves his life but it diminishes him
 - This is the second time David has used deception to save himself in this chapter, and each time has a negative consequence for him
- All in all, David has tried deception, weapons and now foolishness to save himself from Saul
 - Obviously, none of these instruments are the solution to his trouble
 - He's demonstrating more immaturity
 - But he's about to embark on a ten-year journey of spiritual maturity
 - And he's very much an example to all believers in this regard
- We all start somewhere
 - Abraham started as Abram, Israel started as Jacob
 - These men began as someone with limited abilities to hear, follow and trust in the Lord
 - Certainly, they trusted in the Lord so as to be declared righteous
 - But they weren't accustomed to following him especially in times of distress
 - Abraham went to Egypt, Jacob lied to his father and now David has employed similar tactics

- But each man experienced his own trials and testing
 - Abraham took Isaac to the mountain
 - Jacob wrestled with the Lord
 - And David is going to spend 10 years in the wilderness
 - And these experiences will grow him into a man ready to assume leadership in the kingdom
- Remember that the times we experience the greatest pressures are opportunities to become more Christ like
 - And when you discover yourself resorting to less-than faithful means to prevail in your circumstances, you'll understand why the Lord felt you needed the trial
 - When you trust in Him entirely to deliverance, then you will have passed your trial