

Our Hope of Deliverance

1 Samuel 19

“But I will sing of your strength. I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning. For you have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of distress.”

Psalm 59:16

Introduction: We all have been in a situation where we are out of control, had no answers, and needed to be delivered. At that point, we find out who we truly trust and whether we truly believe in a sovereign, powerful God or if he is simply a token deity, something that is there for our comfort but with no real sway over the universe.

The other night we watched a documentary (ok, watched and nodded in and out) about an avalanche at Alpine Meadows in 1982, a ski resort over the ridge of Squaw Valley by Lake Tahoe. After ‘controlling’ major avalanche’s by creating small ones every day by throwing bombs and shooting artillery shells into the mountain (no joke!), the mountain was hit with a storm that dumped over 90 inches of snow on top of the base of 87 inches in only 4 days, creating a massive sheet of snow that tumbled down the hill, covering the parking lot and decimating several buildings. Eight people were instantly buried, and what followed was a harried, controlled chaos of trying to find and dig out any survivors. Hoping for deliverance somewhere, some gave up hope all together, some relied on their own effort, and others simply said “when Mother Nature decides to do this, there is not much we can do”. They claimed to trust in a miracle, even though most did not believe in a God who does the miraculous. After several days, they found one young woman alive, buried in a small void, sniffed out by rescue dogs. For most of the group, the finding was amazing, but not worshipful, since the **means of deliverance eclipsed the source of deliverance**.

What we trust in matters, and how we interpret life is of utmost importance. When our very own Jim Avery had an unexpected and unwarranted (he’s healthy, non-smoking, young, good looking, etc.) heart attack a few weeks ago, it was delightful to hear how he and Nicole walked through the ordeal. They recognized right away that had Nicole gone to Kaiser instead of Simi, or if they waited longer, or if the blockage had been a couple of inches lower, the outcome would have been dramatically different. Yes, they had to get Jim to the hospital, yes the hospital executed the surgical plan flawlessly, and yes a life giving shunt was put in, but they understood where deliverance came from: **God saw fit to orchestrate all the events for His glory and their good**, giving Jim more days here and more energy than he’s had in months. God held each detail in His hand, brought them through, and continues to walk with them. He delivered them, because that is His nature.

We don’t often classify God as a *deliverer*, but that is absolutely how Scripture presents Him. Remember back in Exodus as His people were preserved during famine in Egypt, multiplying in strength and numbers, only to be put into affliction and slavery by the same Egyptians who viewed them as a threat. After 400 years (Genesis 15:13) of slavery, God **delivered on His promise to Abram: Then the LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, ⁸ and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey”** (Exodus 3:7-8).

The hope of salvation for every sinner is the hope of **deliverance**, since no amount of silver and gold can help us on the day of God’s wrath (Ezek. 7:19). Our sin held sway, kept us in bondage and destined us for

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eternal wrath. But we were saved by the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins **to deliver us from the present evil age**, according to the will of our God and Father (Gal. 1:3), the Son of Man **delivered up to be crucified** (Matt. 26:2), **delivered up** according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23), He has **delivered us** from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Col. 1:12-13) One day in the future, as it is written, “**The Deliverer** will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob”; “and this will be my covenant with them **when I take away their sins**” (Romans 11:26), and we in the church who believe and have been redeemed wait for Jesus who will **deliver us** from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:10).

The fact that God is a **deliverer** gives believers a sure foundation to stand on and a lens to see through. It's why the Psalms often come back to the fact that God can be called on in our distress, since he is our **rock, fortress, refuge, and deliverer** (Ps. 18:2, 6), and believe that when the righteous cry for help, the LORD **hears and delivers them out of all their troubles** (Ps. 34:17). It is also why Paul, when imprisoned and facing possible death could say that through the prayers of the saints and the Spirit of Jesus Christ, his situation would turn out for **his deliverance**, whether it meant his release from prison or to depart to be with Christ, which was far better, since he had already been delivered out of sin into eternal life. He could thus cling to the truth: *to live is Christ, to die, gain!* (Phil 1:19-21).

So this morning we will consider **four specific episodes in the life of David where God provided instructive, diverse, and creative ways of deliverance**, so that we can come to a greater understanding and trust in the God who delivers. As Dale Davis said, “*I do not need to share David's experiences – it is enough to know David's God*”.

Episode #1 – Jonathan's Wise Counsel (1-7)

*And Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, **that they should kill David**. But Jonathan, Saul's son, **delighted much in David**. 2 And Jonathan told David, “Saul my father seeks to kill you. Therefore, be on your guard in the morning. Stay in a secret place and hide yourself. 3 And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak to my father about you. And if I learn anything I will tell you.” 4 **And Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul** his father and said to him, “Let not the king sin against his servant David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his deeds have brought good to you. 5 For he took his life in his hand and he struck down the Philistine, and the Lord worked a great salvation for all Israel. You saw it, and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by killing David without cause?” 6 **And Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan. Saul swore, “As the Lord lives, he shall not be put to death.”** 7 And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan reported to him all these things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as before.*

God uses diverse means to deliver and protect His people, and the story of David here is no different. Saul's envy had reached critical mass, as David's sustained success and beloved status with the people of Israel, His own family, and God himself had driven Saul down the garbage disposal. No longer was he willing to veil his attacks on David in secretive ways. Now he is bold and forthright. He declares to ALL of his servants and Jonathan that it was time to **kill David**. NOTE: We see this digressive nature of sin in our own culture. What was once seen culturally and unhealthy and to be done in the shadows, from

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abortion, to homosexuality, to transgenderism, to terrorist violence which is now celebrated on social media!, sin that is done in secret but left unchecked will always be done eventually in the light. Here is where Jonathan's love for David was both tested and displayed. He *delighted in David*, seeing God work in his life and knowing God was with him. Jonathan gave us a **game plan of how to present a rational, moral, and theological argument** to someone irrational, immoral, and rebellious. Having told David to hide himself until he could talk to his hot-headed but determined father, Jonathan went to work. **First**, he talked positively about David. When someone is in an echo chamber and has only heard one perspective or one side over and over, they get jaded and narrowed (see: *politics in general*). So Jonathan provided a **counter argument**. **Second**, he brought a dose of rationality to a party of irrational thought. "Dad, David really has not sinned against you, so don't engage in a weird *quid pro quo*. He's only done good for you, so don't sin against him." No one was giving Saul such counsel, so it was fresh air in a room without oxygen. **Third**, he called Saul to *remember* that just a short time before, Saul himself rejoiced at the work of God through David with Goliath. This would simply be spilling *innocent blood* without cause, bringing inevitable condemnation from God. Amazingly, Saul **listened** to the voice of Jonathan and made a seemingly sincere but short lived vow to cease pursuing David's death, which allowed David back in his presence and service.

This episode showed once again the downward spiral of depravity. It's basically an illustration of **Romans 1**, where we see that a consequence of **unrepentant sin is a proliferation of irrational sin!** One of the questions we should ask about Saul is "**why, oh why, did Saul continue down a path of stubborn sin when he knew the truth?! He not only was irrational, but was willing to draw others into his blatant sin of murdering someone who was undeserving.**" The answer is the doctrine of the depravity of sin. Sin never stays neutral or static, and is either dealt with at the cross or continues to grow, morph, and deceive. Romans 1 shows the clear DIGRESSION, where once a person stubbornly holds onto false worldview by **suppressing the truth** (1:18) in unrighteousness, the corkscrew is initiated. Foolishness is exchanged for wisdom, worship of God for worship of the creation, and God giving us over to our lusts. These lustful desires move from *normal and acceptable sins* to *dishonorable ones*, like exchanging natural sexual relations for unnatural. But this is not the endgame. God gives us over to all kinds of evil, only restrained by our imagination, and when the suppression of the truth fully blooms, has to rid itself of those who do not approve. This is why any sinner is capable of all kind of heinous sin, since sin is built to grow.

Now it is here in the story that could have been a sweet story of deliverance for Saul. Jonathan broke through the darkness to illicit a temporary rational response. Saul had an opportunity to **recognize his sinful desires** (even before the actions) and turn back to the Lord. But first, he had to humble himself, admit his sin in light of the glory of God and ask for forgiveness. Jonathan appealed to **common grace**, but Saul's response was not salvific. We must all remember that true repentance creates a new creation, not a temporary change. Sin had created a spiritual inconsistency, making a promise one minute only to break it the next.

Episode #2 – Saul's Bad Aim (8-10)

⁸ *And there was war again. And David went out and fought with the Philistines and struck them with a great blow, so that they fled before him.* ⁹ *Then a harmful spirit from the LORD came upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand. And David was playing the lyre.* ¹⁰ ***And Saul 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 and escaped that night.***

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A few things to notice in this episode. **First**, we remember that Saul was still under divine judgement and was oppressed by a *harmful spirit from the Lord*. God was both judging Saul and breaking him down. **Second**, sins like jealousy and envy do not go away easily, and without true repentance or by only taking halfhearted measures, they will always rear their ugly head. David's continued success was the continual burr in his saddle, and when that was mixed with the harmful spirit, his true heart came out. **Third**, his anger was always just below the surface, only taking a trigger to set it off. But notice that it was NOT THE TRIGGER that was the problem, it was his heart. Often we'll hear that the solution to our responses reactions is to get rid of certain triggers, but here it is clear, the solution was a new heart brought on by repentance, not simply getting rid of David.

Gordon Keddie wrote in his commentary, "*Saul was living a lie. That is why he could so easily make pious vows and contradict them almost in the same breath. Without a saving change, a sinner is a mess...he hardly knows himself. And even though he knows that God will judge wickedness, he goes on doing it, as if he had a death-wish and encourages others along the same fatal road.*"¹

This is why Jonathan's appeal to Saul, while wise and rational, fail to truly restrain sin. Only the gospel call of faith and repentance can bring about total and lasting change: "*the power of sin so infects the mind that men and women are suicidally irrational in their pursuit of wealth, power, lust, or hatred.*"²

God delivered David through the wise words of a sinner's son and through the irrational anger of a man who couldn't throw straight. He offers deliverance to all sinners, and that is through the work of Jesus alone through the complete message of the gospel.

Episode #3 – Michal's Duplicitous Plan (11-17)

Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him, that he might kill him in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, told him, "If you do not escape with your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed." ¹² So Michal let David down through the window, and he fled away and escaped.

To say Michal is a complex character is putting it mildly. Michal, Saul's daughter loved David (1 Sam. 18:20), but it is clear she was also a snare for him (v. 21), even going so far as despising him when he danced in worship before the Lord (2 Sam. 6:16). Here in a cross between the *Escape from Alcatraz* and Rahab letting down the spies in Jericho, she sought to protect her husband from the evil plans of her father by helping David escape and tricking the messengers of Saul. Two revelations about Michal in this passage, however. 1) She used a **household idol**, most likely a *teraphim*, which had the shape and dimensions of a person to dress like David and trick the pursuers that he was sick in bed. Household idols were clearly against Gods Law and betrayed Michal's heart and whom she worshipped. 2) She was **duplicitous**, not just deceiving the pursuers to give David time, but when confronted by Saul, she threw David under the bus by saying he threatened to kill her if she did not (v. 17). God delivers even through the less-than-pure intentions of people, and is willing to use creative means to accomplish His purposes with His people.

¹ Gordon J. Keddie, *Dawn of a Kingdom: The Message of 1st Samuel*, p. 185

² Richard Phillips, *Reformed Expository Commentary*, p. 385.

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It was during this episode that David wrote Psalm 59, which is instructive to God's purposes and nature. It gives us insight into David's mind and heart as he was being pursued in his house by Saul's henchmen: To the choirmaster: according to Do Not Destroy. A Miktam of David, **when Saul sent men to watch his house in order to kill him.**

¹ **Deliver me** from my enemies, O my God; **protect me** from those who rise up against me;

² **deliver me** from those who work evil, and **save me** from bloodthirsty men

David believed that God would deliver him because He COULD! David knew that God was the **source of His deliverance**, and he did not rely on the means, whether his own intelligence or someone else's. David knew that his enemies had no real power or effectiveness if God did not allow it:

Each evening they come back, howling like dogs and prowling about the city.

⁷ *There they are, bellowing with their mouths with swords in their lips— for "Who," they think, "will hear us?"*

⁸ *But you, O LORD, laugh at them; you hold all the nations in derision.*

⁹ *O my Strength, I will watch for you, for you, O God, are my fortress.*

¹⁰ *My God in his steadfast love will meet me; God will let me look in triumph on my enemies*

Episode #4 – The Holy Spirit's Direct Intervention (18-24)

Then Saul sent messengers to take David, and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as head over them, **the Spirit of God** came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. ²¹ When it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they also prophesied. And Saul sent messengers again the **third time**, and they also prophesied. ²² Then he himself went to Ramah and came to the great well that is in Secu. And he asked, "Where are Samuel and David?" And one said, "Behold, they are at Naioth in Ramah." ²³ And he went there to Naioth in Ramah. And **the Spirit of God** came upon him also, and as he went **he prophesied** until he came to Naioth in Ramah. ²⁴ **And he too stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel and lay naked all that day and all that night.** Thus it is said, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

This culminates in an admittedly strange scene that leaves some details blank. After escaping from his house and pursuers, David went to be with Samuel at Ramah, a move that made sense. Samuel still had pull in the area and possibly influence over Saul, and David did not have too many people he could trust. There are several interesting facets to this episode. 1) Samuel is NOT the one that protects David, even though that would have been expected in the scene. 2) **Three times**, as Saul's messengers came to arrest David and bring him back to Saul, they showed up and began to **prophecy because the Spirit of God came on them.** What was this prophecy? No idea. But it was clear that as they did it, they were unable to accomplish their mission of bringing David in. 3) Saul got fed up with the ineptitude of his soldiers that he said, "*If you need something important done, I guess you have to do it yourself*", and he personally went to Ramah, only to have the same Spirit come upon him and he began to prophecy, stripping off his clothes and laying naked all day and into the night! Yikes!

What are we to make of this scene? God delivered David through a variety of means, but at this point, it was through the direct means of the Spirit's intervention, much like He did with Balaam in Numbers 23. God will intervene in Providential and sovereign ways when needed, since He has the power to do it. He can deliver us medically, physically, and circumstantially if He sees fit. The One who preserves and

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secures our salvation (1 Pet. 1:3-5) is the same one that can deliver us from anything and anyone, based on His purposes and ends.

Conclusion: What is our hope of deliverance in a strong and protective God?

- *We can be confident that God will keep me until whatever He has ordained for me to be or to do is accomplished* – God delivers us, but not according to our plan or timing. He will keep us in tension, in trial, and in dependency until we have learned all the lessons He has for us. And when that is done, we have the confidence that He will keep us and save us eternally through the power of Jesus Christ and the resurrection.
- *“Sometimes the clearest evidence that God has not deserted us is not that we are successively past our trial but that we are still on our feet in the middle of it”* (Dale Davis, p. 200).
- The fact that God IS a deliverer is reason to sing and worship. See Psalm 59:16-17:

*But I will sing **of your strength**;
I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning.
For you have been to me **a fortress**
and a refuge in the day of **my distress**.
¹⁷ O my Strength, I will sing praises to you,
for you, O God, are my **fortress**,
the God who shows me **steadfast love***