

**Caught in the Throes of Providence: *David Experiences a Temporary Reprieve***

Call to Worship: Psalm 131

Hymn #26- *Our God, Our Help in Ages Past*

1st Scripture: Romans 8:1-25.

Hymn #27- *Great is Thy Faithfulness*

2nd Scripture: 1 Samuel 19:1-10

Hymn #50- *Praise to the Lord*

**Introduction:**

Every time Saul seeks to destroy David; every time he devises a plan to set David up for the kill, God takes the wicked plans of Saul and uses them as His very means of prospering and exalting David. Now, while David is ignorant of the deep level of hatred and bitter envy that Saul has toward him, and while he would still like to think the best of the king, an increased awareness of what is really going on, is beginning to hit him, and that awareness will be virtually full blown by the time we come to the end of our text for this morning. At the end of chapter 18, in verse 29, we were told, "So Saul became David's enemy continually." The manifestation of this cruel and unjust reality, must sooner or later ring loudly in the soul of David, especially as spears continue to be hurled at him, and he is forced to become a fugitive. But, needless to say, in our immediate text, Jonathan informs David of his father's wicked intentions, and steps in to deliver him, even gaining David a very short reprieve, from his father's cruel oppression. And all in all, as we have seen all along, even in David's ignorance, *God* was perfectly aware of all that was going on; indeed, he ordained it, and by means of Saul's wicked intentions, God greatly esteemed David in the eyes of all Israel.

This morning, we will find David caught in the throes of providence, as he moves from a state of fear and unrest, into a short reprieve of comfort and rest, and then back into a state of fear and unrest. And as we ponder this scene, I believe that we will find great comfort during our own, often fluctuating trials, as we come to better understand how the God who was with David through the "ups and downs" of divine providence, is also always with us. In other words, brethren, those times when it seems as if God doesn't care, or as if He is treating your life like a useless yo-yo, are times of great providential significance, when God is working in great ways to build your faith, strength and character, in Him. Be assured that when God keeps

dipping you up and down into the waters of affliction, He is merely training your lungs to breathe His grace, so that you will lose more of you, and gain more of Christ in you. Why does God bring all of the sharp left and right turns into our lives...there is one very simple, and yet hard to grasp answer...He loves us! Though our surrounding circumstances might be different, our path of sanctification is not unlike David's at all.

## **I. Caught in the Throes of Divine Providence**

The Philistines don't seem to be getting the job done. In fact, David is prospering further, in his military victories over them. And so, Saul will now bring his wicked plans into his own backyard, a place where he can more than likely find success, as David would be unprepared and not expecting it. Saul now charges his son, Jonathan, along with all of his servants, to do the dirty work of killing David for him. Now David's primary threat would come *not* from the battlefield, but from his own safe haven and home. But, what Saul didn't realize was that God had knitted the heart of his own son, Jonathan, to David. Again, the divine irony is profound, as Jonathan, the expected rightful successor to the throne, covets not the royal position that his father idolizes. The regenerate heart takes careful consideration of the glory of God and the good of others. Don't be surprised, brethren, when we find a friend living within the confines of an enemy's gates. Moses found a friend; indeed a mother, in Pharaoh's daughter, and here, David found a friend, indeed a beloved brother in Saul's son.

Jonathan, who delighted in David, goes and informs David of the wicked intentions of his father, King Saul [Read verses 1-3]. Jonathan tells David to hide in a secret place, in the field, until the morning, and to watch his back, as the king's servants were now after him. And then, in the morning, Jonathan would go out with his father, near the field, in an attempt to convince his father to turn away from committing such a heinous crime against the righteous David, who had done no wrong. Following this, he would report the results of his meeting to David.

Now brethren, before we fast forward to the next morning, let's just pause right at the end of this scene for a moment. David has just been told that the king, his now "father-in-law," wants to have him killed, and that he must hide until morning, to avoid certain death that night. What is going on in the mind of David, for the duration of this night? Do you think he got any

sleep that night? I would venture to say not. He has to be balling through a whole lot of confusion right now. "What did I do wrong? I mean, I thought all was well now. The wedding went perfect; the king seemed to be happy; I am zealous to avenge him against his enemies; why is he doing this?" And brethren, though the text does not open up all of David's thoughts and actions from that evening, we can most certainly assume, that the blessed hymn writer; the beloved psalmist, spent some quality time pouring out his heart before God that night. Indeed, David invested in tearful pleadings, concerning the great wrong and the prevailing threat that had come upon him that night. Now, keep this reality on the back burner for a few moments, because a major application is going to spring out of it, by the time we come to the end of our text for this morning. Suffice it to say for now that David lost much sleep that night, and he spent significant time in prayer, pleading his cause before the throne of grace.

Jonathan then meets with his father the next morning, and attempts to reason with him, concerning his evil intentions against David. He defends David, both by reminding Saul that David has done no wrong, and furthermore, that David has done much good on the king's behalf as well. He reminds him of the great risk David had taken, against his own life, when he fought against and defeated the giant, Goliath, and how this led to the Lord granting Israel a great victory over the Philistines; a victory, over which, Saul had greatly rejoiced at the time. How then could the king sin against David in this way, by killing him without a cause? And so, Jonathan, the king's son, seeks to reason *with* and appeal *to* the hardened conscience of his father, and for a short time, he actually prevails. Notice, what we are told in verses 6-7.

Saul then swears that he would not have David killed, Jonathan goes and tells David the great news, and David is once again welcomed into the presence of Saul, as he was in time's past. David is at ease; his worries are over, and to be sure, he offers praise and thanksgiving to God, for answering his prayers. David had poured out his heart to God the night before, and God had changed the king's heart, restoring David's favor with the king. Can you imagine the joy shared by David and Jonathan, in those moments following Saul's vow to relent from harming David? Did they give each other the ancient version of our modern day "high five?" Probably. Surely, they shared tears of joy and offered great praise and thanksgiving to God for this wonderful providence...at the least, we can most certainly make that assumption. But, as God would have it, brethren, this joy would be short lived, and David's favor with the king, would come in the

form of a very short reprieve. For, not too long after this, Saul, under the influence of the distressing spirit, moves back in the direction of pursuing David's life, and that, with greater intensity. [Read verses 8-10].

Indeed, the agony that our Lord faced in the Garden of Gethsemane was met with a brief period of respite, as angels came to minister to our Lord, but only to prepare Him for the hellish agony of the cross. And, what ought we to make of the God of David, and the God of the Christ, and our God, when He seems to answer our prayers with a short reprieve; a moment's relief, only to cast us back into the difficult and painful throes of divine providence? David is victorious in battle once again, on behalf of the king, and what thanks does he get? The king's envy and suspicion are aroused yet again; the overbearing weight of self-interest and self-focus crashes down upon the seared conscience of Saul, and with the help of the distressing spirit, he finds himself, once again, casting his spear at David, as David is playing the harp, attempting to alleviate Saul from the agony produced by the distressing spirit. And David runs for his life, back into the providential throes of fear and unrest.

And what is David thinking at this point? What do his prayers sound like that night? How could one describe the utter shattering of his expectations of ever sustaining a good and healthy relationship with his father-in-law, the king. What does he do with his wife, at this point? Brethren, at the least, it behooves us to stop and to spend time pondering the historical reality; the slow movement of the clock's hands during such events like this. In doing so, we will strengthen our perseverance and resolve within the historical context of our own trials, sufferings and afflictions. These Scriptural, historical events happened in time and space. They did not pass by quickly, in moving sentences, from one paragraph to the next. We have to open this up, and think, of David, of Saul, of God...of us! David is living and breathing and thinking and praying, right here in this recorded text, even as we do today. His hopes and expectations were dashed as ours are. He was caught in the throes of providence and had to learn how to trust God right there. He had to plant his feet in the soil of Proverbs 3:5-6, even as we do. "But Lord, I have done no wrong. But Lord, I have sought to be faithful and to honor You in all things. But Lord, I prayed, Jonathan prayed; you answered and worked this all out...why has it now come back to this? Lord, do you take joy in whirling my emotions around? Do you delight in my pain and confusion? Why Lord, why? I thought you heard me? I rejoiced in the miraculous change

of heart that you had given to the king? But now this! Well, maybe I was wrong...maybe I don't even know You? Maybe you do not even love me; maybe you are, in fact, against me? Maybe my sins are not truly forgiven...but wait, where else will I go. Even now, just maybe something will come of this." "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart, and lean not on you own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths." I must stay put, and continue to serve God; I must continue to hope in God, confident that I will yet again praise Him!"

And brethren, when we follow the rest of David's life, in the face of this great time of difficulty and confusion, and far, far more to come; when we come to the completed tapestry of David's life, we will find that all of these things; every dip and turn; every ascent and descent, every joy and sorrow, every time of reprieve and every time of trial, will all have served to the betterment of David, and even more so, unto the glory of God!

## **II. Conclusive Thoughts**

We have all had that experience, brethren, haven't we? The trial comes upon us very powerfully, we are pleading for healing, for help, for peace...for God to somehow put us back together, but it seems to only get worse. And then, an answer comes! And we are full of praise and thanksgiving! God grants us rest...but wait, only for a short time, before things pick up again, and we are back in the throes of a very painful providence. Why does He do it? Why does God bob us up and down like a floating buoy, as it were? Is He toying with our emotions? Doesn't He care about us? Why did He give us that mirage of hope; that short reprieve, only to dunk us right back under the water again? David could relate...and so could every child of God, for that matter. And there is a significant answer to the "Why" questions here, brethren.

Turn with me to Philippians 4:10-14. What has happened to the Apostle Paul here? He is speaking about some type of distress that he was suffering, and in which, the Philippians had shared, by showing heartfelt concern for the Apostle, during this time of suffering. They were not given the opportunity to help Paul with his suffering, but their concern had gotten back to Paul, and he appreciated it. Paul could have used help, they were not in the position (probably locally) to do so, but they ached for the Apostle, as it were, and sincerely wished that they could

have been there for him. Paul appreciated their sharing of his burden in this way, and their desire to help, but he moves on to say, that his appreciation of them was not out of an agony to have his personal need met, but rather because he cherished seeing the fruit of their spiritual growth exhibited in their outward love and concern for others. In fact, and here is the point I am trying to get to, brethren, Paul could handle the lack of having his physical needs met, because he had *learned* a very valuable lesson throughout his Christian walk. Paul had learned to be content at all times...a valuable lesson, which God aims to teach all of His children! Notice, Paul was a bobbing buoy himself. [Read again verses 11-13].

Now brethren, here is the answer to our "why" questions; What is God doing by bobbing us up and down in various trials; leading us to all manner of unexpected sharp right and left turns; giving and taking away and giving and taking away? He is leading us to learn to be content *in Him*. He is unlatching our firm grip on everything in this world, so that we might find our ultimate joy and peace in Christ! He wants us to see all things; all that He provides for us, as temporary instruments, not to be clung to with all of our might, but rather to be used for His glory; to have and to dispense according to His design; to hold and to let go, when He so wills. Paul had to learn the hard way; through a process of having and not having, of receiving and letting go, that Christ alone was to be his all and all. Paul *learned* this, brethren. How? By suffering; by being caught in the throes of divine providence, not knowing what will or will not be...tomorrow, but finding all security, rest, assurance and stability in Christ! Hence, he can say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!" You see, brethren, being able to "do all things through Christ," has nothing to do with the way many people apply this text. It has everything to do with persevering with or without; accepting from God what He gives and what He takes away; learning to be content at all times, and saying with Job, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord!"

We don't naturally trust God to care and provide for us. We don't naturally grasp the fact that true and lasting joy comes *not* in what God gives to us, but rather in God *Himself*. The throes of providence carry us beyond the natural tendencies of our flesh, and into the true humanity, for which we were designed! And it is there that true joy is found; and it is there that true character is built; and it is there that our light shines the brightest, in the midst of a dark, lost, idol grasping world; and it is there that God is glorified in and by us, *His* creatures!

Close with Romans 5:1-5 and James 1:2-4.

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Hebrews 5:1-11