

Storm Clouds

The Singer, Part 4

1 Samuel 19-20

Gary Richmond authored several devotional books, made up of observations and then biblical applications from his time working at the Los Angeles Zoo.

On one afternoon, all the staff received the exciting news that one of their female giraffes was about to deliver. He and everyone else rushed to an area that had been reserved for such an occasion.

This was such a unique experience, nearly all the staff showed up. Gary happened to be standing next to an old, experienced zookeeper who'd spent years in the wilds of Africa, witnessing these events first hand.

As they stood there watching, Gary wrote that he was absolutely amazed, because female giraffe deliver standing up. Which means, the newborn giraffe has several feet to fall in a rather rude awakening. He said, we all watched with amazement as that sack of newborn legs and bones fell six feet to the ground below and just lay there, sort of wobbly headed, looking rather dazed in his new environment.

He said, "We all kind of stood there in sympathy for the poor little guy as he looked around with those big brown eyes and wet eye lashes."

The mother was watching her newborn, for just a few minutes and then, to Gary's shock, she delivered a kick that literally bowled the baby over. Gary said, "Hey, something's wrong; we got to get in there and protect that newborn." The old zookeeper took him by the sleeve and said, "No . . . wait . . . this is the way of the wild . . . you see, Gary, that baby giraffe needs to learn how to stand up almost immediately . . . it's his only recourse against predators . . . it needs to be able to run as soon as possible."

So, Richmond wrote, we all held our breath as this baby giraffe stretched out its front legs, swaying from side to side; then finally, it pushed up with its back legs and stood up, swaying from side to side. And there it tottered, with its head stretched out and down for balance. And we all cheered.

Suddenly, the mother delivered another kick that sent this baby giraffe sprawling to the ground. Gary said, "I've seen enough – we've got to get in there."

And that wizened old zookeeper caught Richmond by the arm and said, "No. I was expecting that too . . . you see, this mother wants her newborn to remember how it got up."

The Apostle Paul made reference to his trials . . . trials that seemed to never let up.

If you open your Bibles to 2 Corinthians 4 you're given a rare, transparent, emotional, inside look at Paul's personal testimony as he carries about the gospel of Christ's death and resurrection.

He writes to the Corinthians, here in *verse 8*, ***We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; knocked down, but not destroyed.***

Each verb is freighted with emotion and courage and faith and trust.

- ***We are afflicted*** – that word refers to being subjected to incredible pressure on every side;
- ***but not crushed*** – literally boxed in or broken apart;
- ***we are perplexed*** – a word that refers to being at your wits end – aren't you glad Paul didn't have it all figured out either?

Can you imagine getting a missionary prayer letter from Paul – hey, how’s Paul doing – I dunno, he says here he’s been at his wits end. He says he hasn’t been able to figure out his ministry . . . maybe we ought to rethink his missionary support!

- Notice, ***we are perplexed but not driven to despair*** – literally, not destroyed by despondency;
- ***we are persecuted*** – literally hunted down;
- ***but not forsaken*** – that is, not abandoned;
- ***we are knocked down*** – a word used in Paul’s day for a wrestler being thrown;
- ***but not destroyed*** or defeated.¹

Let me read this again by expanding these verbs;

- ***We are subjected to severe pressure, but not broken apart;***
- ***we are at our wits end, but not entirely despondent;***
- ***we are being hunted down like animals, but we know we haven’t been abandoned in our flight;***
- ***we have been thrown to the mat, but we have not been pinned in defeat.***

Evidently, God, who brought Paul, and us, us to life, wants us to stand – and He wants us to remember how.

If you want an Old Testament testimony of every one of these verbs, you can find all of them in ***I Samuel chapters 19 and 20.***

This is the personal testimony of Israel’s famous singer – and future king, David.

Now if you’ve been with us thus far, the plot has begun to thicken.

Just the first sentence spells dark storm clouds gathering – more than ever before; notice ***verse 1 of I Samuel 19. And Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David.***

Keep in mind, up to this point, Saul has tried to kill David by manipulating the setting – by putting him in charge of a small unit of soldiers and commanding they march against the Philistines. By getting the message to him that if David really wants to marry his daughter Michal, he needs to kill 100 Philistines and bring undeniable evidence that he’s done so.

On two occasions, Saul takes his spear and throws it at David, right in the middle of a harp concert – and people, including David, assumed that Saul couldn’t help these maniacal fits and spells.

But all along, Saul is hoping to see that David gets killed . . . somehow . . . but David just won’t die.

So now the mask comes off – any pretense is put away; Saul puts out a clear order that he wants David dead.

Jonathan’s response is two-fold.

1. First, he warns David.

Notice verse 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 hid yourself.

For just a moment, try to slip into David’s sandals. You haven’t done anything wrong. You’ve obeyed orders, kept your nose clean; acted courageously for the glory of God, played your harp whenever the King called; led men into battle without any experience and yet won nothing but victory for your nation and greater security for the kingdom.

But the King is acting strange . . . he doesn’t keep his promises . . . and he throws spears . . . but he probably didn’t mean anything by it – it’s just his maddening episodes.

Then, all of a sudden, you get word that the King wants to lop off your head; the king’s own son warns you to go play hide and seek only it’s for real and you can only hope your hiding place is a good one.

During this exact period in his life, David begins scratching out his anguish and his fears in what we call ***Psalms 59.*** (You ought to jot that reference down somewhere in the margin of I Samuel 19). ***Psalms 59 opens with David saying, Deliver me from my enemies, O my God; protect me from those who rise up against me; deliver me from those who work evil and save me from bloodthirsty men.***

He’s not hiding from bloodthirsty men because he’s done something wrong, but because he’s actually done everything well.

He’s not hiding in some damp cave because he’s missed the will of God; he’s hiding for his life because he’s in the center of God’s will.

This is when you throw up your hands and say, “Good night, somebody get in there and help him out . . . life is just not fair.”

He's trying to do the right thing and it isn't paying off.

I mean looks, Saul is on the throne and David is shivering in some cave somewhere, hiding for his life.

David scribbles out in *Psalm 59:3*, "***The powerful are against me and not because of my sin, O Lord.***"

I haven't done anything wrong!

And while David is having that kind of conversation with the Lord – which we've all had at some point or another;

2. The second thing Jonathan does is confront his father, King Saul.

Notice verse 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. 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?"

Once again, Jonathan comes off the pages of scripture as an incredible study in character and integrity and courage.

Did you notice how many times he refers to his father's actions as sin? Three times!

This isn't a bad choice . . . a low self-image . . . a poor choice . . . an indiscretion . . . a moral lapse in judgment . . . Jonathan says, "Hey Dad, why in the world are you wanting to *sin*?"

Oh for that kind of courage today.

The truth is, David fought an evil Goliath one day, Jonathan lived with one every day.

And he doesn't pull any punches, does he?

Learn from this that nothing less than a clear statement will make headway. ***Notice***, Saul evidently feels the conviction of this encounter – ***verse 6. And Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan; Saul promised, As the Lord lives, he shall not be put to death.***

Saul had a way of forgetting his promises, but for now, David is able to come out of hiding.

But the pattern repeats itself once again. ***Verses 8-10*** show yet another successful military campaign led by David; another deep, convicting, violent episode by Saul; another close shave with a spear

and David, ***verse 10b records – David fled and escaped that night.*** And this time it's for good.

If you're keeping a list – there are at least 4 treasures that David will lose throughout these next verses.

1. If you noticed, David just lost his position

And with that his standing before the people – his leadership over the army – his position in the King's palace – his financial future . . . and that's just the beginning.

2. He going to effectively lose his wife.

In the next paragraph, David races home after eluding Saul's spear throwing tantrum, but Michal, his wife, warns him – ***verse 11b. "If you do not escape with your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed."***

In other words, she knew her father well enough; and she knew this was the end of David's days in the King's court.

Look at verse 12, So Michal let David down through the window, and he fled away and escaped.

By the way, if you study their relationship at, things will never be the same. For one thing, Michal doesn't have a heart for God – and it becomes evident.

She's evidently kept an idol in the house. ***Verse 13*** tells us she put in on the bed and put a goats hair around the head and clothes on its body to make it look like David was sick in bed.

The first question that comes to mind is what is Michal doing with an image – an statue – the Hebrew word is teraphim – it's a household idol believed to bring good luck.ⁱⁱ

David had only recently married Michal – it may have come as a surprise to find out she wasn't entirely, wholeheartedly dedicated to the God of Israel.

We're not told, but it was more than likely a grievous surprise for David to learn that when Michal moved in, she moved her idols in with her.

Saul orders his messengers to go get David, ***in verse 15***, and if he can't get out of bed, bring the entire bed with you so I can kill him . . . only then do they discover the charade.

What happens next will be more devastating to David than Michal's good luck charms . . . notice how she responds to her father – *verse 17. Saul said to Michal, "Why have you deceived me thus and let my enemy go, so that he escaped."*

Instead of challenging his sin like her brother did – instead of defending her husband's integrity and innocence, she responds, *17b. "He said to me, "Let me go, Why should I kill you?"*

In other words, "What choice did I have Daddy, he said he was going to kill me if I didn't trick you and give him a heads start!" She effectively agrees that David is the enemy her father says he is and then adds even more insults to David's name.

By the way, if you track their relationship through scripture, you'll learn that things were never the same between them.

David has effectively lost his job and his wife.

Maybe for you a different version of these same storm clouds have gathered – maybe recently. The sky was clear and the sun was out and then, from nowhere, storm clouds blotted out the sun.

Maybe it's been a while, but you're still haunted by the unfairness; the injustice; the dishonesty; the betrayal; the lies, the manipulation; the sin against you.

Maybe you live in this town – in that apartment or condominium because in an emotional manner of speaking – you fled here . . . you escaped . . . you started over.

Slip into this scene long enough to recognize that for David, his heart must have been broken; I see anger, but also tears splashing down on his suitcase as he packs in a hurry and with no time at all to say a decent goodbye.

David is going to run for at least a dozen more years. He'll be on the run, for having done the right thing.

In *verses 18 through chapter 20 and verse 1*, David first runs to the only person who really understands him.

He doesn't run home . . . he doesn't run to his father or his mother or his brothers.

He runs to find Samuel.

Can you just hear the agony and pathos in these words – *notice verse 18. Now David fled and escaped, and he came to Samuel at Ramah and told him all the Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and lived at Naiioth.*

The old prophet will understand.

Isn't it true – haven't you found out the blessing of telling another believer – a friend – how you feel.

How sweet it is to tell some spiritual mentor, some older battle savvy, life experienced saint how you've been mistreated and misused and mistrusted.

It's actually a dangerous thing to open up isn't it? Paul opened up and with transparency told the believers in Corinth how despondent and stressed he was – he told them he felt like some champion wrestler had thrown him on the mat.

The believers really didn't know how to handle Paul's report – in fact, some of them would only try and discredit him.

But Samuel was safe.

I can imagine that when they reunited, David poured out his heart and old Samuel listened, well into the night.

In fact, they decide to share an apartment. *Verse 18 tells us they went and lived at Naiioth.*

An archeological dig at Naiioth found ancient remnants of what we would call condominiums, houses built back to back, side to side, top to bottom.ⁱⁱⁱ

Many believe these condominiums housed a number of the prophets of God, also under the leadership of Samuel.^{iv}

David can finally catch his breath.

Now, if I can summarize the next paragraph, Saul finds out where Samuel and David are living and sends his palace guard to arrest David. And when they arrive, God's Spirit puts His word in their mouth and palace guards become preachers and prophets.

Saul sends three groups of men out and they come back ordained into the ministry and without David.

So Saul effectively says, "If you want something done right you just got to do it yourself." And in *verse 23*, He shows up and God's Spirit overwhelms him and he preaches a sermon that lasts 24 hours.

And he also takes off all his royal clothing in the process – symbolizing, many believe, that he really isn't God's chosen King anymore.

While Saul is preaching, this gives David time to run again. *Verse 1 of chapter 20 informs us that David once again fled.*

But don't miss the agony in that phrase . . . David had finally found a place to rest. He'd found a kindred spirit; people who loved God as much as he did.

He'd gotten back up on his feet . . . and then, wham. He's been kicked to the ground again.

In fact, in this instance, **David loses another treasure.**

3. He loses his spiritual mentor and leader.

If there was ever a moment when David was perplexed – at his wit's end; thrown to the mat; squeezed with incredible pressure; feeling like a hunted animal – it's now . . . because he is.

Somehow, we're not told, he finds Jonathan and his despair and confusion and pain come gushing out. *Verse 1b. What have I done? What is my guilt? And what is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life?* Verse 2, Jonathan basically says, "My father wouldn't kill you without telling me. In other words, Jonathan tries to give David reassurance, but it's blind optimism and it really doesn't help. *Notice the last line of verse 3 – "Come on Jonathan, truly, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death."*

I am a hunted man and one wrong step could lead to my death!

What takes place throughout the remainder of **chapter 20** is a plan to convince Jonathan of his father's lasting decision.

Jonathan was able to change his father's mind once before, but now he won't try. All he'll do is try and discern his father's true intentions.

And it doesn't take long.

Saul assumed that David had left Samuel and returned to the palace. Maybe Saul was impressed with his 24 hour sermon and certainly that should have fooled everyone, including David that I'm on God's side after all.

In *verse 26*, David misses the second meal at the dinner table, and Saul starts asking questions. And Jonathan delays . . . denies

By the way, the Bible doesn't condone Jonathan's response.

Just because the Bible records something, doesn't mean the Bible recommends it.

Saul knows better anyway and in *verse 30* – Saul erupts, and says to Jonathan, *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?*

In other words, all the trouble your mother went through to bring you into the world was one big waste.

Basically, Saul tells Jonathan his life isn't worth a nickel and in *verse 33, Saul hurled his spear at Jonathan to strike him. So Jonathan knew that his father was determined to put David to death.*

Jonathan had been willing to give his father the benefit of the doubt – to believe the best – to stand up for his friend – to attempt every way possible to bring about some kind of resolution.

Isn't it encouraging to know that in a home where his father hated what was right and hated God, there could be a son who loved what was right and loved God too.

Like Father, like son isn't written in stone. The power of God is amazing . . . perhaps you've fled your past and you are refusing to imitate it, for the glory of God.

Take Jonathan as a courageous example.

Years ago, my wife and I listened to a cassette tape while traveling – it was the testimony of Charles Stanley, the pastor in Atlanta. He was raised in an abusive, hostile home. His father had died while he was young – and his only memories of a father came from his stepfather – a brutal man, given to incredibly violent fits of anger. Stanley recalled being chased around the dining room table by his stepfather who held a knife in his hand. As Charles grew older, the shouting and the threats from his stepfather were returned with his own anger . . . their arguments would turn into fist fights . . . until Charles finally left home for good.

The last paragraph of **chapter 20** finds Jonathan and David weeping together over their incredible, heartbreaking misfortune.

Apart from one brief meeting year's later, these two godly, respectful, honorable men would never experience the enjoyment of serving together in the kingdom.

4. He lost his closest friend.

The *last verse of chapter 20* basically informs us that Jonathan went back to a life in the palace and David went back to a life on the run . . . the life of a fugitive and an outlaw.

Frankly, the intensity of the pressure on David over the course of these few verses are difficult – if not impossible – to measure.

These are desperate days for a young man who hadn't really done anything wrong but obey God.

Let me make a couple of observations from these two chapters that are still true to this very day.

Perhaps you're finding them to be true in your own walk with Jesus Christ.

- **First, desperate times have a way of redefining our sources of strength**

Frankly, we tend to think and hope horizontally. We tend to lean on the wrong thing . . . the wrong person . . . the wrong direction.

One author wrote, "There's nothing wrong with leaning, if you lean ultimately and completely on the Lord."^v

Hudson Taylor, missionary to China 100 years ago, would write, "The issue at hand is not so much the pressure, but that it presses me closer to Christ."

When the pressures on, are we driven to the telephone and to our friends, or to the scriptures and to the Lord?

David would write in *Psalms 59*, a song forged in the fire of these days we've just surveyed, "***You – O God – have been to me a fortress and a refuge in the day of my distress.***"

That sounds like the Apostle Paul – *I feel like I'm being hunted like an animal, but I know that I have not been abandoned.*

When the storm clouds gather, and the rain begins to fall, we quickly discover that every roof will leak, except the roof of our Sovereign shelter and refuge.

- **Secondly, desperate times have a way of rewriting our list of priorities**

When all the toys are stripped away, we discover what really matters. When life doesn't play fair, we discover what really matters in life.

In fact, Paul finishes his transparent, personal comments to the Corinthians by saying, "***So we do not lose heart.***"

I love that . . . wait, you're hunted like an animal, thrown to the mat by some professional wrestler, kicked to the ground and squeezed by the pressures of life – and . . . ***we do not lose heart.***

How? Paul answers, ***For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are***

unseen. For the things that are seen are temporary, but the things that are unseen are eternal (1 Corinthians 4:16-18)

In other words, sure, look around you . . . people throw spears – you've got the scars to prove it; life doesn't play fair; you seem to lose more than you ever get to keep.

But this isn't all there is . . . this isn't the end . . . those problems temporary afflictions . . . just wait . . . God will one day make everything right . . . God will make everything fit together . . . God will make everything brand new.

David includes in *Psalms 59* that mark of prophetic vision as he looks forward . . . and keep in mind that as he writes, none of his circumstances changed . . . he's still being hunted and hounded and accused and threatened.

In fact, in a matter of days, he'll be hiding in a cave.

Yet he's looking ahead . . . he writes, "***But you, O Lord, laugh at them (my enemies); you hold all the nations in derision. O my Strength, I will watch for You; for You, O God, are my fortress. Now get this – My God in his steadfast love will meet me; God will let me look in triumph on my enemies.***

In other words, God will do what's right and bet . . . and I will eventually experience the scales of justice in perfect balance; His purposes will finally and completely be fulfilled . . .

Maybe not tomorrow . . . maybe not next year . . . but one day.

Ken Dodge, who pastors out west repeated a story one of his church members had shared . . . this man's eight-year-old son, Franky had looked forward for weeks to this particular Saturday because his father had promised to take him fishing if the weather was suitable.

There hadn't been any rain for weeks and as Saturday dawned, wouldn't you know it, it was raining heavily and it appeared that it would continue raining all day long.

Franky wandered around the house, peering out the windows and grumbling. His parents heard him complain, "Seems like the Lord would know that it would have been better to have the rain yesterday than today," . . . "It just isn't right," he would mutter over and over.

About three o'clock in the afternoon, the rain stopped and the sun came out. There were still a few

hours for fishing; they loaded the gear up and were off to the lake.

Whether it was the rain or something else, the fish were biting; when Franky and his dad returned home they had a full string of fish to prepare for supper. At supper, Franky was asked to pray.

He did – and then concluded his prayer by making this innocent, yet profound admission, “And, Lord, I know I was upset earlier today . . . it was because I couldn't see far enough ahead.”

No matter how old you are in life or in the Lord . . . that about sums up our problem. We have trouble seeing far enough ahead.

The truth is, it's easier for some than for others. Some of you are going to have to see all the way past this life, into heaven.

Are you willing to wait? And trust? And obey?

Only total surrender frees your heart to sing David's song composed in his hideout. Only trust in the fortress of your God allows you to sing of God's love and protection, when everything around you seems to say just the opposite.

But here's the song of faith . . . and trust . . . and praise:

- *We were subjected to severe pressure, but not broken apart;*
- *we were at our wits end at times, but not entirely despondent;*
- *we felt like we were being hunted down like animals, but we know we were not abandoned in our distress;*
- *we have been thrown to the mat, but we have not been pinned down permanently in defeat.*

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 1/26/2014 by Stephen Davey.

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i Fritz Rienecker/Cleon Rogers, Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament (Regency, 1976), p. 463

ii J. Carl Laney, First & Second Samuel (Moody Press, 1982), p. 63

iii Charles R. Swindoll, David: A Man of Passion & Destiny (Word Publishing, 1997), p. 63

iv Expositor's Bible Commentary: Volume 3, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Zondervan, 1992), p.716

v Swindoll, p. 70