

• *Saul's hostility continues*

Saul's hostility continues<sup>□1</sup> but everyone around him feels differently. Saul's bitterness results from his not being able to be renewed to repentance

□1 19:1

• *Stages of testing – sometimes the intensity is more than we ever would have thought*

David must have felt that he had had more than enough troubles and testings. But sometimes God puts us through one level of trouble only as the first stage to putting us through something more intense than we ever thought we would be put through. The hostility towards David was to reach heights that he never dreamed he would face at that time when Samuel was pouring oil over his head and telling him he would be king. Jeremiah put it like this: *'If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses?'* <sup>□1</sup>.

□1 Jeremiah 12:5

• *Jesus likewise learned obedience through suffering*

So David is now plunged into intense and bitter hostility from Saul and has to live that way for several years. When God has plans to use us he will train us accordingly. If his plan for us requires immense ability to withstand troubles, he will toughen us to one degree after another until we are able to survive even amidst intense troubles. It happened to Jesus. He *'learned obedience through the things he suffered'* <sup>□1</sup>. This does not mean that Jesus was ever disobedient, but the Father put ever-increasing pressure upon him.

□1 Hebrews 5:8

**1. God can give us friends and supporters who will help sustain us**

God taught David that he is able to sustain us amidst the greatest trials. (1) **He can give us friends and supporters who will help sustain us.** Jonathan's attachment to David is strong and he is a good friend to David in trouble. He reveals the way things are<sup>□1</sup>, passes on more information from his father<sup>□2</sup>, intercedes for him<sup>□3</sup>, gets his father to take an oath concerning the safety of David<sup>□4</sup> and restores him to the father's presence<sup>□5</sup>. The resemblances between Jonathan and Jesus are noticeable. When we are in trouble, there may be someone who is like Jesus towards us, favouring us and helping us.

□1 19:2  
□2 19:3  
□3 19:4-5  
□4 19:6  
□5 19:7

• *Jonathan like Jesus*

• *Michal's help*

Michal, David's wife, is also a sympathiser. On another occasion when David has been successful in war<sup>□1</sup> and God hands Saul over to a spirit of jealousy<sup>□2</sup>, David narrowly escapes with his life<sup>□3</sup>. Saul wants to kill him, but without any publicity since David is a popular figure<sup>□4</sup>. Michal helps David escape<sup>□5</sup>, and takes evasive action to give David time to get well away<sup>□6</sup>, pretending that she had no choice in the matter<sup>□7</sup>, but slandering David in the process.

□1 19:8  
□2 19:9  
□3 19:10  
□4 19:11  
□5 19:12-13  
□6 19:14-16  
□7 19:17

• *David – a fugitive – escapes to Ramah*

So a new phase in David's life begins. It must have been hard for him. With everything that happened before; his anointing by Samuel, his rise to fame and popularity, how had it had come to this, that he was now nothing but a fugitive? He escapes to Ramah where the elderly Samuel is in retirement. The two of them go to Naioth<sup>□1</sup>.

□1 19:18

**2. God can give miraculous deliverances**

God not only gives friends; (2) **He can give miraculous deliverances.** Saul hears about David's stay with Samuel<sup>□1</sup>, and sends soldiers to take David<sup>□2</sup>. But they are overwhelmed by the Spirit and 'prophesy'. (The word 'prophesy' in Samuel often means 'fall into incoherent ecstasy'.) What happens to the soldiers makes it impossible for them to arrest David. It happens three times<sup>□3</sup> and then to Saul himself<sup>□4</sup>. When the attacks are intensified the help from God is intensified also.

□1 19:19  
□2 19:20  
□3 19:20-21  
□4 19:22-24

• A higher stage of trouble and tribulation

• David and Jonathan part as David 'suffers the loss of all things.'

• These things – close friends and family were taken from him

### 3. God stays with us through deprivation, weakness and failure

• Even tougher training

After a while even these supports and encouragements are taken away from David. David is now forced into a higher stage of trouble and tribulation. It comes about in a way that makes it quite clear that David is not running from trouble. That would not have done him any good. We have to stay where we are until God makes it quite clear that we are to move elsewhere. David's new life is forced upon him. David and Jonathan hold a conference. David runs only after consultation with a wise friend. Jonathan is a 'brother born for adversity'<sup>1</sup>. David places his case before Jonathan and takes counsel. The question is: is there any chance of David ever being able to come back to the palace? A way is devised to find out<sup>2</sup>. David misses a royal dinner, and through Jonathan will discover Saul's reaction. But the news is bad. Saul is worse than ever<sup>3</sup>. David and Jonathan meet in secret as arranged and reluctantly say their farewells to each other. They will never live together in the palace again<sup>4</sup>. Jonathan has been a good friend, loyal, practical, self-effacing. But they have to part and David 'suffers the loss of all things.' He takes one step further down the dark road of sufferings. Almost everything is taken from him. He has no family life, no friends close at hand. His reputation is shattered under the slander of Saul. His youthful romance with Michal is finished, for she is not in touch with him. Her last words were words of slander<sup>5</sup>.

Anyone much used by God is likely to have to 'suffer the loss of all things.' Even close friends and family might be taken away in one way or another. It was not that David **voluntarily** gave up these things that might sustain him. They were **taken** from him.

What David is learning is (3) that **God stays with us through deprivation, weakness and failure**. For the next few chapters of the story, David is not at his best. Not only does he suffer the loss of all things, he himself does not respond well to the deprivation. We can sympathize. Who could stand up to such viciousness and injustice? David shows signs of panic and self-concern, energetically pleading his innocence, loudly bemoaning his danger<sup>1</sup>, developing a foolish piece of offended righteousness<sup>2</sup>. But no self-pity has any effect on God. God has some tougher training still, but God will stay with him despite everything. It looked as if the kingship was lost for ever. But it was on its way, and David was still undergoing training for his life's work.

1 Proverbs 17:17

2 20:1-23

3 20:24-34

4 20:35-42

5 19:17b

1 20:3

2 20:8b

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