



The Steadfast Love of the Lord

1 Samuel 20

MAIN IDEA

The steadfast love of the Lord binds His people to Himself through His anointed King, and that covenant lasts forever.

THE QUESTION THIS CHAPTER ANSWERS

What holds you to Jesus when everything else is being torn away?

THE ONE WORD

chesed, the covenant, steadfast love of God (20:14). It is made in a field, tested at a table, and sealed in a goodbye.

1. The Covenant in the Field 1 Sam 20:1–23

David runs to Jonathan with three honest questions: “*What have I done? What is my guilt? And what is my sin before your father that he seeks my life?*” (20:1). Humanly speaking, he is innocent. He has done nothing to earn this manhunt. Jonathan can’t believe it, still seeing his father through a son’s eyes. But David is being precise: “*there is but a step between me and death*” (20:3).

When David asks for help, he does not appeal to their friendship. He appeals to something stronger:

“Deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the Lord with you.”

1 SAMUEL 20:8

Jonathan swears it forward, and he does it knowing the cost. As crown prince, the day David becomes king is the day Jonathan loses the throne. Saul fights for it; Jonathan blesses it (20:13–15). He rests the whole thing on God rather than on the two of them: “*the Lord is between you and me forever*” (20:23).

- A covenant is a promise strong enough to outlive the people who made it, because its keeper is God Himself.
- We live in a disposable culture, and we’ve gotten so good at it that we now do it with people, friendships, and churches. This text sets something different in front of us.
- Church membership is our version of the covenant in the field. You entered a covenant before the Lord to watch over one another. It is not a subscription you cancel when the music changes.
- **GOSPEL GLIMPSE** • David rests everything on a covenant he did not earn. That is where the gospel puts every one of us before a greater Anointed.

2. The Cost at the Table 1 Sam 20:24–34

The feast comes. David's seat is empty (20:25). On day one, Saul assumes he's ceremonially unclean. On day two the seat is still empty, and Saul won't even say David's name. He calls him only “the son of Jesse” (20:27, 30, 31). The bitterness has taken over.

When Jonathan gives the cover story, Saul erupts. He insults his own son and throws his spear, this time at Jonathan (20:33). Then he admits what he has wanted all along:

“For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom shall be established.”

1 SAMUEL 20:31

Saul isn't confused about what God is doing. He sees it clearly and rejects it. Same family, same information, and one throws a spear while the other keeps covenant. Jonathan leaves the table fasting, “grieved for David, because his father had disgraced him” (20:34).

- You can take what God has said is true and either submit to it or rebel against it. Saul knew, and rebelled.
- Loyalty to Jesus will not always be cheap. Sometimes it exposes you to danger. Sometimes it costs you relationships. That cost is proof your loyalty to the true King is real.
- Some of us are called to be Jonathan for someone else, to walk into the room where a person is being targeted and ask, “Where is their guilt? What have they done?” instead of picking up a spear too.
- **GOSPEL GLIMPSE** · Generations later another Anointed One stood in a courtyard, handed over out of envy. “What evil has He done?” No one had an answer. David ran to survive. Jesus was innocent, and He stood.

3. The Seal in the Goodbye 1 Sam 20:35–42

Jonathan and David had built an elaborate secret system, the arrows, the boy, the code words, so they'd never have to risk a meeting (20:35–40). But when the boy is gone, David can't stay hidden. He comes out, bows three times, and the two grown men weep, “David weeping the most” (20:41).

Jonathan sends him off with the covenant as the last word:

“Go in peace, because we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord... The Lord shall be between me and you, and between my offspring and your offspring, forever.”

1 SAMUEL 20:42

David walks away and does not come back. His easy life is over; he's a fugitive until the day Saul dies. They did everything in their power to keep this parting from happening, and they failed. Still the covenant stood, because they were never the ones keeping it.

- Some of you are living through a loss you did everything to prevent. You went to the appointments, prayed the prayers, tried the treatments, fought for the relationship, and you still had to say goodbye. It really does hurt.
- What endured was the God who was between them, the God who is between you and the people you love, and between you and Himself, forever. Their closeness ended. He did not.

- Worried your relationship with God is only as strong as your grip on it? Look at where the security sits. It does not rest on David holding on or on Jonathan holding on. **You persevere because He perseveres you. You can't lose your salvation, because it was never yours to lose.**

The Gospel: A Seat at the King's Table

The Bible finishes this story in 2 Samuel 9. Saul and Jonathan are dead. David is king, with everything he was promised. And he asks: *"Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him?"* (2 Sam 9:3).

There is one. Jonathan's son, **Mephibosheth**: crippled in both feet, hiding in Lo-debar, with nothing to bring and no way to save himself, waiting for the soldiers to come. And they do come. They bring him to the king, and David says:

"Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan... and you shall eat at my table always."

2 SAMUEL 9:7

Church, do you see yourself yet? **We are Mephibosheth**, the heirs of a fallen house, hiding, with nothing to bring, deserving only judgment. David's covenant was sworn in a field. A King greater than David swore His in His own blood: *"This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood"* (Luke 22:20). That covenant holds right through death, because the King who keeps it always lives (Hebrews 7:25).

The strength of the covenant does not rest on you. You didn't make it and you can't break it. The King doesn't send soldiers to punish you. He sends an invitation.

Turn from whatever you've been hiding in. Trust the Son who was handed over for you. Receive Him today, and take your seat at His table.