**Week Thirteen – November 15/16 – I Samuel 20**

**Introduction -** Last week in chapters 18-19 we considered Saul’s single-minded preoccupation with trying to end David’s life. This week we see Saul’s relentless aggression against David tempered by the encouragement of the covenant friendship between David and Jonathan. **What is one of the most fun encouraging moments you have ever experienced in a friendship? Does anyone have a story about a time when a friendship was especially helpful in making it through a difficult season?**

**Read I Samuel 20:1-9 - What do we learn about David’s heart from his initial questions to Jonathan in verse 1?** (*Instead of immediately pointing a finger at Saul, David appeals to Jonathan concerning his own innocence. He not only shows reverence for Saul’s authority, but he is also examining himself for any fault.*)

David says in verse 3 to Jonathan *“..there is but a step between me and death.”* Although this is a statement of discouragement during the time of Saul trying to kill him, David in his kingship over Israel seems to continue this mindset, living out his dependence on the Lord. **Do our current lifestyles reflect us knowing that there is “but a step” between us and death?** **How is God glorified more in our lives when we live in knowledge of this truth?**

**Read I Samuel 20:10-23 -** Let's work to build a definition of covenant. **How would you describe what a covenant is?** Jonathan and David’s friendship is not just them getting along really well or a “I’ll scratch your back if you scratch mine” kind of relationship. It’s a relationship built around a true understanding of covenant. **In this covenant relationship, what is the first committed oath Jonathan promises to David?** *(v12-13 to warn David if Saul seeks to kill him).* **Considering Jonathan’s position, why might the world see this as foolish?** *(Jonathan was next in line for the throne! His best interest would be to get rid of David.)* **Based on this first characteristic, what are words that can be used to help build this definition of covenant?** *(Selfless, Self-denying, Humble, Others?)*

**What is the second part of this covenant Jonathan urges David to keep?** *(v14-17 not to allow Jonathan and his house to be cut off.)* **Read 2 Samuel 9:1,7-8.** Again how foolish this is to the world - whenever a new kingdom was established, the goal was to purge out the previous kingdom. **How did David’s understanding of covenant affect what He did? Based on this section, what words can we add to our definition of covenant?** *(Covenant is self-denying, steadfast love that is faithful.)*

Jonathan and David devise a plan to signal whether or not it is safe for David or if he must flee. Before they put their plan into action, **what does Jonathan show us as the most important aspect of covenant?** *(v23 - “The LORD is between you and me forever.”)* **Read Hebrews 6:16. How does this verse illuminate the weightiness of this covenant based on their connection in the Lord**? **Read Hebrews 6:17-20. What are the aspects of this covenant God has made to us? How should we respond to this covenant God has made? “**In confusion and trouble we can run to the one person who has made a covenant with us. That covenantal love ultimately flows not from a formal covenant promise but from the very nature of a covenant God who is rich in love” (Davis, 207). **So, what is our final definition of covenant that we have come to?**  *Covenant is self-denying steadfast love that is faithful according to God’s promises which anchor our souls to the hope found in Jesus.*

**Read I Samuel 20:24-34 - Keeping with the theme of covenant, how is Jonathan's loyalty to David displayed in this section?** In David's absence, Jonathan's covenant is solidified even further by his doing of what he said he would do. He passes on David's excuse, he intercedes on behalf of David's innocence, and he puts himself in the way of danger for David's sake. His trust in God allows him to stand before the king and plead his case, knowing that something could go very wrong. **Do we often see someone like Jonathan who has such a trust in God that he is able to act with such disregard for his own potential gain? Why is that so rare?**

**How does Jonathan respond to Saul's oath that his kingship would not be secure as long as David lived?** (*Not worried about himself, worried about David and his life*). True trust in God and his plans means laying goals important to us and focusing on His purposes and kingdom. **Read Matthew 6:33. How do we see Jonathan seeking first God's kingdom and not his own? What are some of the things in your life you struggle to give up in order to seek first his kingdom?**

19:6 and 20:31 are Saul's mutually exclusive claims to Jonathan regarding David. In the first, we see Saul react to David's innocence with mercy, but far from that in the second. With the turbulent difference in Saul’s reactions and despite his threats, Jonathan kept his oath to David and did not waver. **When adversity arises, do we become lackluster and untrustworthy in our promises? When does God’s kingdom shift more toward your peripheral?**

**Read I Samuel 20:35-42 - What words or phrases in v. 42 highlight the covenant commitment between these friends?** Jonathan shares these words as indicators of why David should be able to “Go in peace.” **As David becomes a refugee, what are challenges to believing that he can travel with any sense of peace? How do the words/phrases of covenant friendship help in embracing peace when all else seems far from peaceful?** ”Biblical peace is not often a general tranquility but rather a rightness at the center in the midst of much turmoil.” (Davis, 213) **Have you ever experienced this kind of “biblical peace”?**

**Conclusion -** We enter a season of David on the run. We see two continual realities around David: God cares for him AND he is continually under the threat of being hunted by Saul. **How do we learn and believe in God’s care in times of trouble? How do you return to the promises of God’s faithfulness (covenant!) when it feels like all you can see are troublesome circumstances around you?**

**Consider the following quote: “ Life does not consist in achieving your goals but in fulfilling your promises.” (Davis p. 214) What are some of the biggest takeaways we can learn from David and Jonathan about developing friendships that are rooted in and seeking to mirror God’s faithfulness?**