

**Goodness and Mercy Shall Follow Me**

1 Samuel 18-20

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Introduction: 1 Samuel 18 highlights further differences between David and Saul. As David increased in popularity, Saul degenerated to near insanity. Several texts describe how people loved David or took joy in what David did, which contributed to Saul's angry reaction. 1 Samuel 19 continues the narrative by showing how Saul's attempts to dispose of David were foiled by various means: Jonathan's intercession (19:4-6); David's swift action (19:9-10); Michal's forward thinking (19:11-17); and the Holy Spirit's intervention (19:18-24). Jonathan and David rightly conclude that Saul's hatred will not be satiated until David is dead (20:1-34), so they seal their friendship in the Lord together as David begins a life on the run (20:35-42). This entire section raises an important question: How can David say that goodness and mercy shall follow him, when he is but one step away from death? (1 Samuel 20:3)

01. God's goodness is fundamental to His nature. His mercy flows from His goodness in response to a fallen world.

02. God's goodness does not preclude His judgment on unbelievers nor hardships in the lives of believers.

03. God's goodness is often seen through His mercies, which sometimes come to believers in very ordinary ways and oftentimes is appreciated only in hindsight.

The Lord is My Shepherd
[a study through 1 samuel]

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION & DISCOVERY

1. Why was Saul envious of David? Since the Philistines were a common enemy of Israel (not just Saul or David), should Saul have acted differently when the people of Israel celebrated their defeat? How would your life change in the workplace if everyone celebrated a job well done without worrying about who gets the credit? What is distinctly Christian about "rejoicing with those who rejoice" (Romans 12:12)?

2. It is clear that nothing Saul devises can harm David. Why is this so? Are you encouraged by the fact that even the trials in our lives are ordained for our good and God's glory?

3. In 1 Samuel 19-20, God's providence comes in the form of "natural" means (i.e., a good word from someone; a personal skill; intervention from a loved one). Does the fact that God uses others to highlight His mercies in our lives make His providences any less remarkable? How have you benefitted from friends, family, or fellow Christians as God's means of grace in your life?

3. Jonathan and David's friendship forms an important part of the narrative. What does this friendship suggest about Jonathan's character given the fact that he should have succeeded his father as king? How does their friendship in the Lord mirror that of brothers and sisters in Christ? See 2 Samuel 9 for further insight into David's fulfillment of his promise to Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20:14-17.

4. David's comment that "there is but a step between me and death" (1 Samuel 20:3) was made in the context of being hunted by Saul. How does David's comment apply to all of us, even when life itself is peaceful? In what ways would your life change if you took David's words to heart? How can we live productively in light of this fact?

5. God's judgment on Saul continues throughout this section. What does this suggest about unbelievers who dismiss God's call for repentance on the premise that they can "get right" with God later in life? See the interplay between Pharaoh hardening his heart and God hardening Pharaoh's heart for further consideration (Exodus 8:15, 32; 9:34; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10).

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