
“The Lord Preserves His Anointed...Through His Spirit”

1 SAMUEL 19:18-24

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AT A GLANCE

In 1 Samuel 19:18–24, Saul sets himself against God’s anointed, sending assassins after David. But instead of succeeding, every attempt collapses under the power of the Spirit of God—even Saul himself is brought low. This passage reveals that no scheme of man, no hostility of culture, and no demonic ideology can overturn the purposes of God. His Spirit restrains the wicked, protects His people, and guarantees His promises. What stripped Saul bare preserved David — and still preserves God’s people today.

Who Is Really In Control?

If God can stop assassins in their tracks and bring kings to their knees, then what do we have to fear in the face of rising hostility today?

Every generation asks the same question: *Who is really in control?* We look at our leaders, our culture, even our enemies, and we often wonder if evil will prevail. In 1 Samuel 19, Saul—Israel’s king—sets himself against God’s anointed. He schemes, he rages, he sends his men to hunt David down. But what happens next is shocking: the Spirit of God Himself intercepts the assassins, halts their plans, and even strips Saul of his royal dignity.

This passage pulls back the curtain to show us something essential: no scheme of man, no hostility of culture, and no demonic ideology can overturn the purposes of God. His Spirit restrains the wicked, protects His people, and guarantees His promises.

That’s not just David’s story—it’s ours too. So as we open God’s Word today, let’s ask Him to do for us what He did for David—to strengthen our hearts, silence our fears, and remind us that His Spirit is greater than any enemy we face.

1 Samuel 19:18-24

18 Now David fled and escaped, and he came to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and lived at Naioth. 19 And it was told Saul, “Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah.” 20 Then Saul sent messengers to take David, and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as head over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. 21 When it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they also prophesied. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they also prophesied. 22 Then he himself went to Ramah and came to the great well that is in Secu. And he asked, “Where are Samuel and David?” And one said, “Behold, they are at Naioth in Ramah.” 23 And he went there to Naioth in Ramah. And the Spirit of God came upon him also, and as he went he prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah. 24 And he too stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel and lay naked all that day and all that night. Thus it is said, “Is Saul also among the prophets?”

Refuge in Ramah

Verse 18 Now David fled and escaped, and he came to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and lived at Naioth.

Thanks to the prior intervention of Jonathan, and his wife, Michal, David's life is spared. He is able to make his escape from his home and evade the men sent by Saul to kill him.

David fled to **Samuel**, the man who anointed him king on behalf of the Lord. The last time we read of Samuel was in 16:13. He had just anointed David. The Spirit of Lord rushed upon David that day, a confirmation that Samuel had completed his mission, so he left and went home, to **Ramah**.

Now that they're linked up again, they retreat to **Naioth**; likely a prophetic settlement or school. This move signals something important and instructive for us today: David is shown to consistently seek the Lord in time of need. His instinct when the going gets tough is not to rely upon his own strength or wisdom, but the Lord's. That's a huge difference between David and Saul, one the author wants the reader to notice and contemplate.

Saul Hated Truth

Verses 19-20a And it was told Saul, "Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah." 20 Then Saul sent messengers to take David, Why is Saul so bent on killing David? What has he done? He's done nothing but help him.

The problem is that Saul is a godless leader with jealousy and selfish ambition in his heart. James warns us about this. This "wisdom" is not from God but is demonic. The way Saul thinks and views the world, since it is not from God, is demonic.

Since ultimately what dominates is not love for God and His glory, it does not inspire seeking the Lord, but rather it seeks to preserve the self. It is a mindset that clings to selfish ambition.

The Spirit Intervenes

Verses 20b-21 and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as head over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. 21 When it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they also prophesied. And Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they also prophesied.

These assassins were stopped right in their tracks; powerless against the Spirit of God! If the Spirit of God can come upon wicked men and make them prophesy, what can He not do?

Not once, not twice, but three times this happened. Christian, what do we have to fear?

Catch Saul's audacity in the next verse. **Verses 22-23 Then he himself went to Ramah and came to the great well that is in Secu. And he asked, "Where are Samuel and David?" And one said, "Behold, they are at Naioth in Ramah." 23 And he went there to Naioth in Ramah. And the Spirit of God came upon him also, and as he went he prophesied until he came to Naioth in Ramah.**

Saul knew what God did to the three groups of messengers and still thought that he could somehow break through himself. It's sheer arrogance. The bible says, "*God is no respecter of persons.*" *Acts 10:34* In other words, God's not at all impressed that Saul is king. He made him king in the first place.

The **Spirit of God came upon** Saul and he also **prophesied**. This prophesy is not necessarily speaking words of prophecy like Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah or John the Baptist. This may have been more like the mumblings of a madman. But that's just the beginning of Saul's exposure in Ramah.

Laid Bare and Exposed

Verse 24 And he too stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel and lay naked all that day and all that night. Thus it is said, “Is Saul also among the prophets?”

When Saul **stripped off his clothes**, he symbolically stripped himself of his royal vestments, too, and along with them his royal power.

The last phrase is not a sincere question, it's jest. It's mocking. It's ironic. **“Is Saul also among the prophets?”** Saul is being humiliated from one degree of shame to another. What we see here is Saul exposed and laid bare, completely lost his mind, no control of his faculties, & naked.

This all serves as a vivid illustration that, *“The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.” Proverbs 21:1*

Application:

Sin Exposes

You have heard me say time and again, “Sin will take you further than you want to go, leave you there longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay.”

Saul was a living example of the effects of sin. He was clothed in royalty, full of power, and in control of a kingdom. Led by his selfish ambition and motivated by sinful jealousy, Saul is left stripped of his royalty as well as his dignity.

Oh Saul, where is your vision? It's interesting that Saul sent messengers to Naoith three times, but when he went he had to ask where Samuel was. Saul was a man blinded by his sin. He could not see what was right in front of him.

Jesus said, *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” John 14:15* And Peter, Christ's Apostle, reminds us, *“You shall be holy, for I am holy.” 1 Peter 1:16*

Christian, are you pursuing righteousness in your life? Sin, left unchecked, will cost you. It will blind you to what is painfully obvious to others. It will leave you exposed and bare.

Sin exposes, yet at the same time we see God's restraining hand preventing Saul from sinning further by killing David. The depravity of man is no match for the Sovereignty of God. No scheme of man or Satan can overthrow Christ's kingdom.

The World Opposes

Saul's obsession with David mirrors the spirit of the age—a deep hatred for God's truth and God's people. Jesus warned His disciples, *“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. John 15:18–19*

If the world loves you, if the world receives you as its own without resistance, without hesitation, without pushing back against your faith, it's possible you are of this world. The killing of a Christian man who tried to engage in civil debate, Charlie Kirk, is a sobering reality check.

Peacefully standing for God's truth invites hostility in a world that has rejected God; sometimes it leads even to violence. Christians today must grapple with what it means to live and witness faithfully in a world that is not neutral toward Christ. Tens of thousands of people cheered the murder of an innocent Christian man and many call for more of it. This is our world today and it calls for Christian courage.

Courage isn't bravado; it's Spirit-fueled confidence that God's promises will stand. This means deepening prayer, knowing God's Word, and dependence on the Spirit.

Parents, you should prepare your children for opposition, helping them see that following Jesus is worth every cost. Jesus warned His followers that they will be hated. Paul echoes, *“all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,” 1 Timothy 3:12*

We need not live in fear, but we must count the cost. We are not guaranteed safety, but we are guaranteed He is with us. And what a joy to know that even in tragedy, God is at work turning darkness to light. Look at how Christ is building His church in the aftermath of Kirk’s murder. Churches are full, long-time atheists are turning to Christ. College campuses are bustling with faithful zeal.

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28

This brings us to our third and final point of application today.

The Spirit Preserves

David was hunted and afraid; God’s people often feel the same. Parents wrestle with protecting their kids in an increasingly anti-Christian culture. Believers fear speaking openly about Christ, worried about disapproval, backlash, & persecution.

Where do we turn for refuge and strength? David sought the Lord. David went to his spiritual father, Samuel, and found solace in the comfort of God’s protection. David’s safety didn’t come from cleverness or weapons but from God’s Spirit.

Even Saul’s power was no match for God’s plan. This brings deep comfort: no one dies a second earlier than God allows, and no one can stop His kingdom purposes. David said, *“My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!” Psalm 31:15*

David fled to Samuel, but we flee to Christ; the One who calls out, “Come to me all who are weary and I will give you rest.” In Christ, God’s Spirit not only protects us but fills us with courage to endure suffering. The killing of a faithful leader does not halt the advance of the gospel—it often accelerates it, just as we read in Acts 7 & 8.

In light of Charlie Kirk’s death, it’s tempting to “quiet down.” Instead, this is a moment to *“...speak the Word of God with boldness.” Acts 4:31* God’s Spirit emboldens His people even when culture rages.

But let’s remember that Saul was not beyond God’s reach. We’re told to pray for those who persecute us as well as those in authority. God’s Spirit can humble and transform even the most hostile heart.

This text reminds us that our safety is not ultimately in security teams, laws, or self-defense (though those are wise and needed). Our safety is in Christ, the greater David, who was pursued and killed but rose victorious. The same Spirit who overpowered Saul’s men now indwells and seals us.

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, Ephesians 1:13

Even martyrdom cannot thwart God’s kingdom. Death is just a doorway to everlasting life with Christ. Speaking of Christ, let’s make the...

CHRIST CONNECTION

Saul, Israel’s king, becomes God’s enemy by opposing His chosen servant. Yet Saul’s rage only serves God’s purposes. At the cross, human authorities (Herod, Pilate, Jewish leaders) conspired against Christ, God’s ultimate Anointed One (Acts 4:25–28). Like Saul, their rebellion only advanced God’s redemptive plan.

David found refuge in Naioth among the prophets, with Samuel his spiritual father. Jesus found refuge in the Mount of Olives where He prayed, *“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.”* Luke 22:41-44

God’s Spirit descended on Saul and his messengers, halting their murderous plans and forcing them to prophesy. This anticipates Pentecost, where the Spirit’s power overcame human faculties and spoke through the first disciples, birthing the church (Acts 2).

Saul, who once stood tall as king (1 Sam. 9:2), is stripped of his royal garments, lying helpless. His spiritual bankruptcy is on display. This scene foreshadows the downfall of every false ruler, every demonic ideology, and every rival kingdom, culminating in Christ’s triumph as King of Kings.

“Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.” Revelation 19:11–16