

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 467

1 Samuel 19

May 20, 2023

Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)

Teacher: Dr. Justin Bass (JB)

Episode Summary

Saul became increasingly jealous of David and tried to kill him. Jonathan, Saul's son, tried to protect David and warned him of Saul's plans. David fled from Saul and went into hiding. Michal, Saul's daughter, helped David escape by letting him down from a window. Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him and kill him, but Michal tricked the messengers by putting a fake image in David's bed. David escaped and went to Samuel at Ramah.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 467: 1 Samuel 19. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin and he's the scholar, Dr. Justin Bass. Hey, Justin! How are you doing?

JB: Hey, Trey! Doing well, praise the Lord!

TS: Good, good, good. Do you have anything interesting you've been working on lately? What have you been up to?

JB: Well, this summer my main focus (beyond the normal things of family and things) is my next book. I've really got to get going on that. I really want to get that done. So I'm going to be working hard to get some deep work on that. Focusing on the dreams and visions of Jesus throughout church history. So I'm really doing a... What really inspired me to write it was my time in the Middle East—my time in Jordan—meeting so many Muslims from so many different nations that have had visions or dreams of Jesus and have come to Christ. That's what really got me going with it. But because of my own study of church history, I'm like, "Okay, I'm putting all these dots together." And I'm realizing this is a world-wide phenomenon—the fact that Jesus has been appearing to people in every century and almost every nation all over the world for the last 2,000 years. So I'd love to put all these great stories into one place, into one book, and also do some more of a deep dive into the resurrection accounts of the Gospels—to kind of begin where he first appeared to Mary Magdalene and Peter and the usual suspects of the New Testament, but then move on to the people he kept appearing to, even beyond the first century and all the way up to this day. So it's a fun project.

TS: That's interesting! And I take it you have interviewed (since you were over there in the Middle East) people who have had these dreams or visions?

JB: Exactly. Yeah, I met so many that this is what really got me going with that. To me, it's an extended argument... In *The Bedrock of Christianity*, I made all these arguments for the truth of the resurrection—all these historical arguments. Well, I think this is just one more to add to the case of the resurrection. Because if Jesus did rise from the dead, we would expect him to continue to seek and save the lost all over the world. And that's exactly what he is doing. He has really opened the eyes of people, especially in places that are dark and lost and closed up from the church. So it's pretty incredible.

TS: Do you have a time frame of when you think this book will be finished?

JB: God willing, I want to finish it... I've already got an outline, I've got the introduction done, and I'm working on a few chapters. But I'm hoping to actually have a first draft done this year, and then maybe in 2024, depending on the publisher... Hopefully we can get it out sometime in 2024. That would be my big goal. But we'll see. Books always take longer than you want [laughs].

TS: Absolutely. Well, good! We'll keep our eye out for that. I can only imagine you'll be back to talk about that on the podcast.

JB: Definitely.

TS: Okay! Well, why don't we turn our focus onto Saul trying to kill David today, huh? [laughter]

JB: That's the latter half of 1 Samuel, isn't it? That captures it. Alright, I'm ready... thank you, sir.

In the 29 years that the prison Alcatraz was running... I want to ask everybody listening, how many prisoners escaped? If you've seen the movie *The Rock*... That was fiction, so you can't answer "Sean Connery." There were many escape attempts, but how many actually got out of the prison and crossed the dangerous waters of San Francisco Bay to freedom? Well, according to the authorities (like the FBI), no one ever escaped. But new evidence revealed in just the last decade suggests that the most famous escape attempt (that was even made into a great movie called *Escape from Alcatraz* with Clint Eastwood—I highly recommend it) was indeed successful. On the night of June 11, 1962, Frank Morris, John England, and his brother, Clarence, undeniably escaped Alcatraz Prison, made it to the Bay, and started paddling on inflatable rafts they made from raincoats toward land. The authorities had always claimed they drowned, but the rafts were, indeed, uncovered on land after the escape and their footprints nearby. Evidence also suggests that they made it to Brazil and were still alive 50 years

later. Frank and the England brothers are still on the US Marshall's Most Wanted List, which gives you an idea what they think about whether they truly escaped or not. The way they escaped is fascinating. They dug below their prison cell sink through to the ventilation shaft. Once the hole was big enough, they crawled through and the shaft led them to the roof. But here's the best part: in their beds, they placed paper mâché dummies made with human hair stolen from the prison barber shop. So when the prison guards walked by at night, they were tricked by the dummies in their beds.

In the story before us in 1 Samuel 19, David's wife, Michal, will hide a large idol statue in David's bed and put goat hair on its head to trick Saul's guards. There is no evidence for this, but I like to think that Frank, John, and Clarence got part of their escape plan from reading the Bible. If there is one word that captures 1 Samuel 19, it is *escape*. David escapes imminent death four times in this chapter alone.

Let's pick up where we left off in 1 Samuel 18. Remember Saul tried to kill David by the hand of the Philistines but was unsuccessful. Now he makes clear he will kill David with his own hands, or at least the hands of his soldiers. We're going to read 1 Samuel 19:1-7.

Now Saul told Jonathan his son and all his servants to put David to death. But Jonathan, Saul's son, greatly delighted in David.² So Jonathan told David saying, "Saul my father is seeking to put you to death. Now therefore, please be on guard in the morning, and stay in a secret place and hide yourself.³ I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak with my father about you; if I find out anything, then I will tell you."⁴ Then Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father [JB: literally in the Hebrew, "he spoke a good and beautiful word"] and said to him, "Do not let the king sin against his servant David, since he has not sinned against you, and since his deeds *have been* very beneficial to you.⁵ For he took his life in his hand and struck the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great deliverance for all Israel; you saw *it* and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by putting David to death without a cause?"

Notice again the unbreakable loyalty of Jonathan to David. Jonathan fully supports David, while Saul tries to murder him.

⁶ Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan, and Saul vowed, “As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death.” ⁷ Then Jonathan called David, and Jonathan told him all these words. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as formerly.

"As Yahweh lives," Saul vowed to not kill David. The fact that he will easily break this vow very soon after this reveals the rotten state of his soul. Go back to the story of Jephthah to learn how serious it is to break a vow to Yahweh. But it does seem like Jonathan has broken Saul's heart for David for the moment. You see this many times toward the end of 1 Samuel, where Saul changes from a murderous maniac to a weeping, loving father. Saul makes me think of the Gollum/Smeagol dynamic in *Lord of the Rings*. He's at war with himself and goes back and forth from good to evil. And he really could turn to the good (to Yahweh) and be healed. But alas, neither of them do.

Let's keep reading 1 Samuel 19:8-10.

⁸ When there was war again, David went out and fought with the Philistines and defeated them with great slaughter, so that they fled before him. ⁹ Now there was an evil spirit from the LORD on Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand, and David was playing *the harp* with *his* hand. ¹⁰ Saul tried to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, so that he stuck the spear into the wall. And David fled and escaped that night.

David's successes against the Philistines revive Saul's envy. Do the women sing that song again: "David has slain his ten thousands?" Ultimately, Saul gave Satan a place—a foothold—in his soul again. A clear path here from the deadly inward sin of the heart (envy) to the outward sin of murder. Matthew Henry comments:

He that but the other day had sworn by his Maker that David *should not be slain* now endeavors to slay him himself. So implacable, so incurable, is the enmity of the serpent against that of the woman, so deceitful and desperately wicked is the heart of man without the grace of God, Jer. 17:9.

1 Samuel 19:11-12:

¹¹ Then Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him, in order to put him to death in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, told

him, saying, "If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be put to death."¹² So Michal let David down through a window, and he went out and fled and escaped.

Joshua's two spies (back in the book of Joshua) have already been let down out of a window to escape the Canaanites. And over a thousand years after David, another Saul will escape death through a window. Here's how Saul (the apostle Paul) recounts it in 2 Corinthians 11:

³² In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me,³³ and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and so escaped his hands.

So for those listening, if you ever have to escape through a window, you are in good company.

1 Samuel 19:13-14:

¹³ Michal took the household idol and laid *it* on the bed, and put a quilt of goats' *hair* at its head, and covered *it* with clothes.¹⁴ When Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, "He is sick."

The Hebrew word here for "household idol" is teraphim. Interestingly, this was the word used to describe the idols Rachel stole from Laban's house back in Genesis 31. If you remember the story, Rachel sat on the idols to hide them and told Laban she was on her period so she couldn't get up. The author of Genesis (Moses) is, of course, mocking these lifeless idols being sat on by Rachel. But also note that they must have been really small to be able to sit upon them. In contrast, this teraphim idol is human sized to replace David in bed. In other places in the Bible, teraphim are used for divination. So one wonders if Saul has them in his court for this reason. If so, the witch of Endor would not be an isolated incident.

Verses 15-17:

¹⁵ Then Saul sent messengers to see David, saying, "Bring him up to me on his bed, that I may put him to death."

"Carry him up on his bed—I want to kill him right in his bed!"

¹⁶ When the messengers entered, behold, the household idol was on the bed with the quilt of goats' hair at its head. ¹⁷ So Saul said to Michal, "Why have you deceived me like this and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped?" And Michal said to Saul, "He said to me, 'Let me go! Why should I put you to death?'"

I can't help but see this moment as the scene in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* when his sister bursts into his room, revealing a life-sized dummy in Ferris' bed. And she screams, "I KNEW IT!!!" Saul is basically saying to Michal, "I knew it! You deceived me about David." And then Michal, amazingly, lies to her father again. She says David threatened to kill her if she didn't let him go. The author of Samuel does seem to look favorably upon both Michal and Jonathan's deceiving their father to help David escape. Similar to Jael with Sisera, Rahab with the Canaanites, the Hebrew midwives with Pharaoh... Deception is sometimes approved of in the Bible. We could add Corrie ten Boom lying to the Nazis about the Jews hidden in her house. I agree with St. Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther (they are in agreement here) that we can categorize lies in three ways: the humorous, the helpful, and the harmful. The third is the truly sinful lies. "Humorous" covers satire, jests, jokes, the Babylon Bee... And the second applies to Michal saving David's life or Corrie ten Boom saving the lives of the Jews. Another way to think of it is this: demon-possessed murderers don't deserve the truth and should be deceived.

After this escape, David will never again return to Saul's court. The final section (1 Samuel 19:18-24) says this:

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

We haven't heard from the prophet Samuel since he anointed David back in 1 Samuel 16. It's wise of David to take refuge with the great prophet. It's like going to Gandalf for wisdom and protection.

¹⁹ It was told Saul, saying, "Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah." ²⁰ Then Saul sent messengers to take David, but when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing *and* presiding 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. So Saul

sent messengers again the third time, and they also prophesied.

15:00

Instead of seizing David, they themselves were seized. This company or band or school of prophets with Samuel are really interesting. They first showed up in the Bible under Samuel's leadership in 1 Samuel 10 and we find them later referred to as "the sons of the prophets" under Elijah and Elisha's ministry. They seem to share houses together. They probably shared meals and resources together and went through some type of theological prophetic training under Samuel. St. Jerome said that they foreshadowed the monks and monasteries of Christianity, but I don't think that's accurate. Samuel and these prophets did not isolate themselves from the world, but instead trained themselves up in prayer, in worship, in the scriptures, in order to proclaim the prophetic word of God to kingly power—to call peoples and nations to repentance. So the better parallel in church history, I think, would be the great missionary movements that continue to take the gospel to the ends of earth—in other words, what every church is really supposed to be. One of the best examples would be the Moravians from Herrnhut, Germany, in the 1700s led by a man named Count Zinzendorf. I like to think that Zinzendorf's great motto was the motto of this school of prophets: "You must be content to suffer, to die, and to be forgotten."

²² Then he [Saul] himself went to Ramah and came as far as the large well that is in Secu; and he asked and said, "Where are Samuel and David?" And *someone* said, "Behold, they are at Naioth in Ramah." ²³ **He proceeded there to Naioth in Ramah; and the Spirit of God came upon him also, so that he went along prophesying continually until he came to Naioth in Ramah.** ²⁴ **He also stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"**

I think the implied answer here is negative: "No, Saul is no prophet; he's insane!" What a sad and tragic turn Saul has taken—a truly Shakespearean-like tragedy. This proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets," forms an inclusio from where it was first asked in 1 Samuel 10, when Saul was first anointed by Samuel. Mettinger says it well in his book, *King and Messiah*, namely that this section is a reversal of what chapter 10 says of Saul's endowment with the Spirit. In both cases, the Spirit is a divine manifestation. In chapter 10, it gives Saul strength to carry out his feat of bravery. In chapter 19, it works in the reverse. It makes Saul helpless and drives him to strip off his clothes—the clothes of a king.

This is also the only time in the Bible that I'm aware of where the Holy Spirit comes upon a person for harm. What a horrifying prospect to have God's Holy

Spirit against you, haunting you and taking over your faculties to disable you! John Calvin rightly remarks that God effected this—that "the fact itself might show how he holds the hearts of men in his hand and power and turns and moves them according to his will."

Pro-tip: do not fight against Yahweh and his Spirit. It will not go well for you. In the end, all these escapes were further manifestations and proofs that Yahweh was with David. If Yahweh is with us (if we're in Christ, if we are invincible, immortal), then not a hair on our heads will be touched unless God permits it. As Paul thundered in Romans 8:

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Psalm 59 may have been written on this very occasion when David was hiding from Saul. Its superscription says:

A Mikhtam of David, when Saul sent men and they watched the house in order to kill him.

Let's close by listening to David's beautiful psalm to God.

**Deliver me from my enemies, O my God;
Set me *securely* on high away from those who rise up against me.
² Deliver me from those who do iniquity
And save me from men of bloodshed [JB: Saul's men].
³ For behold, they have set an ambush for my life;
Fierce men launch an attack against me,
Not for my transgression nor for my sin, O LORD,
⁴ For no guilt of *mine*, they run and set themselves against me.
Arouse Yourself to help me, and see!
⁵ You, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel,
Awake to punish all the nations;
Do not be gracious to any *who are* treacherous in iniquity. *Selah*.
⁶ They return at evening, they howl like a dog,
And go around the city.
⁷ Behold, they belch forth with their mouth;
Swords are in their lips,**

For, *they say*, “Who hears?”

⁸ But You, O LORD, laugh at them;

You scoff at all the nations.

⁹ *Because of* his strength I will watch for You,

For God is my stronghold.

¹⁰ My God in His lovingkindness will meet me;

God will let me look *triumphantly* upon my foes.

¹¹ Do not slay them, or my people will forget;

Scatter them by Your power, and bring them down,

O Lord, our shield.

¹² *On account of* the sin of their mouth *and* the words of their lips,

Let them even be caught in their pride,

And on account of curses and lies which they utter.

¹³ Destroy *them* in wrath, destroy *them* that they may be no more;

That *men* may know that God rules in Jacob

To the ends of the earth. *Selah*.

¹⁴ They return at evening, they howl like a dog,

And go around the city.

¹⁵ They wander about for food

And growl if they are not satisfied.

¹⁶ But as for me, I shall sing of Your strength;

Yes, I shall joyfully sing of Your lovingkindness in the morning,

For You have been my stronghold

And a refuge in the day of my distress.

¹⁷ O my strength, I will sing praises to You;

For God is my stronghold, the God who shows me lovingkindness.

Amen.

TS: Alright. Two good movie references: *The Rock* and *The Escape from Alcatraz*. Both great movies. Well done.

JB: Excellent movies.

TS: Yes, yes. Especially *Escape from Alcatraz*. Clint Eastwood.

JB: It's amazing how accurate... I did the research behind that movie and that movie gets it pretty right. So if anybody wants to see kinda how they actually escaped, it's pretty cool. And Clint Eastwood does an excellent job. He plays the lead guy, Frank Morris. And just so people know, they escaped, but they were

like bank robbers, they weren't murderers [laughs]. They were like bank robbers, which is still obviously awful, but I would in no way be excited about murderers escaping or something like that.

TS: Absolutely. All right, good stuff. Well, I'm glad David was able to escape four times there.

JB: Yahweh was with him. Yahweh was with him.

TS: Do you think when the Spirit of the Lord came upon those men and they prophesied, do you think they were terrified to the point where he stripped off his clothes, you know, or was it more just they can't do what Saul's asking of them or are they in a state of... not madness, but just overwhelmed. You know what I mean?

JB: I think "madness" is the right word. It's hard to know exactly what that experience was, but it does seem like they were literally beside themselves. They were out of their minds. God was controlling them. This would be a good "puppet master" type of example. He has really taken over their faculties and is ensuring that they're not going to do any harm to David or anyone else. He's completely... They are incapacitated for the moment [laughs]. They're not here right now. That kind of thing.

TS: All right, Justin. We appreciate you helping us out here with 1 Samuel. We'll look forward to your book, too. I'm going to keep tabs on you with that. Good luck this summer writing that book.

JB: Appreciate it.

TS: All right. We want to thank Dr. Bass for coming on and everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.