

1 Samuel 18 — David, Love Him Or Hate Him

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Good morning CrossWinds! If you are a visitor, it is great to have you. My name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. This morning we return to our study of 1 Samuel. We are in 1 Samuel 18.

Before we get into our study, I would just like to ask you how you feel about the politics in our nation right now. Canceling student debt, immigration, January 6 hearings, the list goes on and on. Is there anyone who finds the politics in our nation encouraging?

It doesn't matter what side of the aisle you find yourself on politically. When we see secret schemes, hiding the truth, or trying to frame people for things they haven't done, it gets under our skin.

If you don't like dirty politics, I am sorry to tell you that today half of the sermon is about dirty politics. We won't be talking about dirty American politics but the framing and scheming that took place during Saul's reign as king three thousand years ago. Prepare yourself. Things will get juicy.

Remember where we left off in our study of this book. David was secretly anointed to be the next king by Samuel the prophet. While David, his family, and Samuel knew David's true destiny, but to everyone else, David was just a punk kid. He came from a poor family and worked a minimum-wage job watching sheep in a field.

David caught a break, and his musical abilities allowed him to entertain King Saul. To King Saul, David was nothing more than a teenager who could sing

and play the lyre, which was an ancient version of the guitar. In Saul's eyes, David was a nobody. At most, David was cheap entertainment.

All of that changed when under-20-year-old David, who wasn't old enough to be in the army, walked onto the battlefield with a stick, a leather sling, and five smooth stones. He faced a terrifying 9-foot-6-inch tall, hairy, metal-covered monster named Goliath. With just one shot between the eyes, David sent a rock into Goliath's brain. Forty days of Goliath humiliating Israel ended because of a teenage boy.

Like a seasoned warrior, David grabbed Goliath's sword and hacked off his head to finish the job. David did this in front of Saul, the army of Israel, and the Philistines. Nobody could believe their eyes.

Overnight David went from a nobody to a young man of insane popularity. David's name headlined every news story in Israel and Philistia. But as we turn the page in our Bibles and come to the next chapter, 1 Samuel 18, David finds it was easier to live in obscurity than to handle the headaches of all this popularity.

The way 1 Samuel 18 lays out is the first five verses of the chapter take us forward in time, summarizing the general trajectory of David's life as his popularity continues to rise. Verse 6 circles back to the day David killed Goliath and begins retracing the specific events that took place in David's life.

We will read the first five verses, then go back through those verses looking at what they say about three key people in David's world. Those people are Jonathan, Saul, and the rest of the nation. After that, we will go to verse 6 and look at some of the specifics that happened.

David became an important man in Israel.

As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him, so that Saul set him over the men of war. And this was good in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants. 1 Samuel 18:1–5 (ESV)

Jonathan and David became best of friends.

As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. 1 Samuel 18:1 (ESV)

The first relationship that developed in David's life after he killed Goliath was with Jonathan, the crown prince. Jonathan was Saul's oldest son. This is a remarkable relationship. Jonathan and David were very different. They were of different ages. Jonathan was older and served in the army before this day. He was the hero of the battle of Michmash. That took place the last time the Philistines invaded. At this time, David was just a little boy. They also came from different backgrounds. David grew up as a poor shepherd, while Jonathan grew up as the king's son, the heir to the throne.

Remember, Jonathan was already a hero in the nation, being the hero of the battle of Michmash. He was the only man with the courage to single-handedly take on the army of the Philistines. After the battle, when Saul tried to kill Jonathan for tasting a little honey and unknowingly violating Saul's silly order of no food until sundown. The entire army... saved Jonathan's life. The entire army stepped in to stop Saul from killing his son. They did that because the people loved Jonathan.

David came alone and became the center of attention. He stole the spotlight from Jonathan. What is so lovely is that while we would expect Jonathan to undermine David or to speak negatively about this 18 or 19-year-old boy, we see none of that. We see the opposite. Jonathan loved him.

It says the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David. In other words, David and Jonathan became best friends even though they should have been bitter rivals. Remember that they didn't have much in common. What enabled these two men to become best friends?

What knit them together: both of them deeply loved God. They were spiritual brothers. Jonathan was not serving in the army for self-promotion. He was not serving in the army to make a name for himself and gain a following. Jonathan was not trying to see how many friends he could get on social media. Jonathan simply wanted to serve his God and his country. This is why Jonathan was willing to risk his life and trust God's promises to save him and the nation. In young David, he found a unique man, a brother with the same heart. David also deeply loved God. His heart was also fully dedicated to God. He was also willing to risk his life while trusting in God's promises to save him and the nation in his battle with Goliath.

The beauty of their friendship was that Jonathan was not worried about protecting his position. He was not worried about somebody becoming more famous than him. Jonathan was just grateful to have a friend who had the same heart and love for God that he did. Rather than envying David's gifts and his rise to prominence, he could thank God for David's gifts and his prominence.

Before we look more at Jonathan's amazing ability to celebrate what God is doing in another's life rather than be envious of it, we need to pause and look at the phrase, "Jonathan loved David as his own soul." Unfortunately, a number of liberal commentators see this little phrase as evidence that David and Jonathan had a homosexual relationship.

That is a complete misunderstanding of this verse.

First, in this chapter, Jonathan, Michal, and all the people are said to love David. It is the same word used to describe everyone's love for David. Jonathan's love for David is not talking about some kind of a homosexual relationship he had with David since everyone else in this chapter, except for one person, also loves David.

Second, the word for love used in this verse does not have a sexual connotation to it. It means loyalty, esteem, admire, or to be drawn to. None of those things imply sexuality. In Hebrew, the word for physical intimacy is a different word. It is the word "to know", not to love.

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain,... Genesis 4:1 (ESV)

Third, this chapter is very clear that David and Jonathan are some of the godliest men in the nation. As such, they would know what Moses said about homosexuality.

If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them. Leviticus 20:13 (ESV)

So even though some theological liberals see a homosexual relationship in this passage, that is clearly not what is taking place. It is a complete

misrepresentation of the Scripture. The day those who have misrepresented this Scripture stand in front of Jesus to be judged by Jesus, they will be judged harshly for grossly misrepresenting God's Word.

Having dealt with the question of homosexuality in this passage, let's return to what the Scriptures want us to notice, the way Jonathan handles David rising in prominence while he finds himself diminishing in prominence. Jonathan celebrated David's God-given success rather than finding himself envious of it.

This is an important question we need to ask ourselves. How do we react when someone's gifts and abilities exceed our own? How do we react when we are on the starting lineup of the football team, but a new freshman, who is better than us, takes our position away? When we are sitting on the bench, can we celebrate their success, or do we become jealous and become critical? This is not just true in the sports world but it is also true in the church world.

How do we react when God chooses to make us less in his church because he has chosen to make someone else more? It is very hard to celebrate someone else's success when we see them succeeding in our place. When God chooses to diminish us, at least in our hearts and often with our voice, we are critical of successful people.

This kind of jealousy doesn't just happen personally. Sometimes it also happens corporately. Can we celebrate when God raises up one Bible-believing church while he chooses to reduce another? Sometimes, when that happens, it is not happening because one church has done anything sinful, it was just God's

sovereign will, just like it was God's sovereign will to reduce Jonathan's importance while raising David's.

We must remember that Bible-believing churches are not competing with one another to see who can become the biggest. They are on the same mission to reach their community. God may choose to raise up one and to diminish another for his own reasons. Remember that God was diminishing Jonathan but he didn't do anything wrong. In fact, he did everything right. He could even celebrate another's success instead of being jealous of their success. Can we do the same?

There is a story I have run across in my studies a number of times over the years. I typically don't share it because it is a little dated, but it seemed to fit these verses so well that I thought it would be helpful. F.B. Meyer and G. Campbell Morgan were both famous preachers from the 1900s in England. They also had churches near one another on opposite sides of the same town. Over time, between these two large churches, G. Campbell Morgan's church grew. People even left Meyer's church and went to G. Campbell Morgan's church to join their friends. When these two men spoke at conferences, Meyer's speaking engagements were moderately attended while the house was packed when G. Campbell Morgan stepped into the pulpit.

F.B. Meyers writes about the feelings of jealousy that came over his heart as he watched God diminish his church and raise up Morgan's church. Finally God reminded him of this passage. Jonathan didn't do anything wrong, but God, in his sovereign purposes, was diminishing Jonathan and raising up David.

Jonathan celebrated his rival's success instead of being consumed by envy. That is what F.B. Meyers decided to do for G. Campbell Morgan. He began praying for him and celebrating him.

As Christians, we must do that today with other Bible-believing churches. We must celebrate their success. We must encourage their pastors. We are to have open hearts of friendship toward them and not be consumed with envy of them.

Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. 1 Samuel 18:3 (ESV)

We are not told the details of this covenant that Jonathan made with David. It was obviously a promise of loyalty and friendship in spite of adversity.

I think there is a bit of wisdom in this verse for us to learn about friendship. True friendships, lasting friendships, involve commitment. They are not just a matter of convenience. They involve sacrifice. They involve keeping our promises when it is hard.

Today, we don't speak much about friendship and what true friendship involves. If you are on Facebook, you talk about how many friends you have. Friends on Facebook are not friends. They are mere acquaintances. Friendship is a choice. It involves sacrifice. It is a commitment. You can't do that on Facebook.

A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Proverbs 18:24 (ESV)

This reminds us is not how many friends you have on Facebook but having one friend that is committed to you in hard times and in good times is what matters. One of the reasons so many people are lonely is because too

many people don't know what it means to be a friend. We think friendship is about what we get from somebody else. That is wrong. Friendship involves the love, loyalty, and sacrifice we make for others.

True friendship doesn't just involve commitment and sacrifice but notice the basis of this friendship. It was found in their deep love for God. That is what they had in common. There is nothing wrong with having fishing friends. There is nothing wrong with having friends that enjoy the same hobby, but the deepest, most lasting, and most enriching friendships are around a common love for Jesus and God's Word. Friendships that do not have Jesus in common will only travel to a limited depth because, ultimately, those friendships are self-orientated, not God-orientated. They do not have the deepest and most important parts of life in common.

And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. 1 Samuel 18:4 (ESV)

Here we learn more about true friendship. Rather than Jonathan holding onto his position and his status, he knew that as a soldier, David had nothing more than a stick and a leather strap to throw stones. Only Jonathan and Saul had swords in Israel. Apparently, only Jonathan and Saul had armor in Israel. Jonathan took off his own robe and gave it to David. This robe symbolized Jonathan's authority. For Jonathan to now wear Jonathan's robe was David now carrying the authority and endorsement of the king's son. David wearing Jonathan's robe was like Jonathan giving David his credit card. He also gave David his personal armor, sword, bow, and belt. Remember that at this time only

Saul and Jonathan had this armor. Jonathan giving his armor to David was a precious and costly gift.

Here we see what true friends do. They sacrifice themselves to help their friend in time of need. They bless and encourage their friend. They help make their friend better, and they sacrifice to do it. We can learn a lot about what true friendship looks like when we see Jonathan giving his robe and armor to David. In our friendships, how do we go out of our way to help our friends in their time of need? Maybe we let them use our weed whacker but we typically don't sacrifice deeply for others. True friends do that. They sacrifice their time and their stuff to help a friend in need.

As I was thinking about this, my fondest memories of some of my best friends are those who sacrificed themselves to help me when I was in a real pickle. When Cindy and I were first married, we had an old house with a well. The well broke, and we would have a new one put in on a Monday. To save money, I tried to dig the 6-foot deep pit from the house to the well by hand over the weekend. That was a really bad idea. I spent hours in the hot July sun, making little progress in the rock-hard dirt. Then, on Sunday afternoon, I saw my friend driving down the road with a backhoe. I can still remember how grateful I was for my friend in that moment. True friends sacrifice and help one another. This is what Jonathan did for David. This is what real friends still do for one another today.

At the beginning of what will prove to be a very hard time in David's life, God gave David the gift of a true friend named Jonathan. Jonathan was a friend

that was not jealous of David's success, but he celebrated David's success, even if it meant his own importance diminishing. Jonathan was a friend who covenanted to be faithful to him. A friend is not a matter of convenience but a matter of commitment. Jonathan was also a friend who sacrificed himself to help David in his time of need. That is still what real friends do for one another today.

Folks, we all need that kind of friend in our life. While we may not have that kind of friend in our life, God has called us to be that kind of friend to others. That is something we can control.

When it comes to friends, the Bible doesn't just tell us what kind of friend we should be but it also tells us what kind of friends we should choose.

Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm. Proverbs 13:20 (ESV)

Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." 1 Corinthians 15:33 (ESV)

Be careful whom you call your friend. This is why parents must take special interest in their children's friendships. Show me your friends, I will show you your future. The Bible warns against pursuing friendships with people who are hot-tempered, who always find a reason to quarrel, who are gluttonous, who are drunks, and who slander others. Avoid friends that spend their words tearing people down, not building people up. Those are not the kind of people you want as your friends. Their lifestyle will rub off on you.

Let me share one final thought on friendships while we are on the subject. One of the things that always concerns me with the modern church is the way people come in the door, and they run out the door as soon as the service is over. People in the church rarely spend time together so they can make and be

godly friends. In this world, especially when life is hard, godly friends are important.

We spent a great deal of time on the first verse. Let's get back to the rest of the chapter.

Saul promoted David.

The next important relationship that developed is the one between Saul and David. Before David killed Goliath, Saul didn't take much interest in David. To Saul, David was just a court musician. At this point, Saul is very interested in David. He began giving him promotions.

And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. 1 Samuel 18:2 (ESV)

This was not unusual for Saul. We read this earlier in 1 Samuel.

"When Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he attached him to himself" 1 Samuel 14:52b

Saul says, "You work for me."

And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him, so that Saul set him over the men of war... 1 Samuel 18:5 (ESV)

Whatever tasks David did, he had success. You would think everyone would be resentful of David quickly rising through the ranks. That is not what we find. The people are not resentful of David. Instead, they love him.

David was loved by the people.

...And this was good in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants. 1 Samuel 18:5 (ESV)

In short, everybody loves David. All of Saul's servants love David. All the people love David. Jonathan, Saul's son, loves David. It looks like life is going

extremely well for David until we come to the next verse. There is one person who didn't love David.

Saul was jealous of David.

This episode begins a long period of hardship for David that will last until the end of this book. Even though David was loved by everybody else, Saul hated him because Saul was jealous of him.

Jonathan could celebrate what God did in David's life even if it meant Jonathan became less. Saul could not do that. He had to be the center of attention. As God began diminishing Saul because he was rejected as king and raising David up because God chose him as king, Saul was filled with jealousy that ruined his life. It began on the same day David killed Goliath and they were coming home.

As they were coming home, when David returned from striking down the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments. And the women sang to one another as they celebrated, "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands." 1 Samuel 18:6-7 (ESV)

As David and Saul returned to the capital city. There was a ticker tape parade like we see happen in a city when their team wins the Super Bowl. As often happens in these things, people develop a chant or a victory song. The women developed a victory song saying Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands. In reality, Saul hadn't slain anybody. Even though he was the giant of Israel, who had all the armor Goliath possessed, he hid from battle. He was a complete chicken for 40 days. He tried to bribe someone to fight for him. David also had not slain ten thousand. He killed only one Philistine named

Goliath. This song is not meant to be taken literally. It was meant to be taken figuratively. Saul should be thankful he was even mentioned because in the battle, he did absolutely nothing.

And Saul was very angry, and this saying displeased him. He said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands, and what more can he have but the kingdom?" 1 Samuel 18:8 (ESV)

When Saul heard this song, he was completely angry. He was infuriated. He was consumed with jealousy because David was given more prominence in this song than he was! Saul couldn't stand the thought of anyone being more popular than he was. He was filled with envy.

We should also watch carefully against an envying spirit in our own hearts. As sinners, we are all prone to envy. Envy does many corrosive things to our life. First, envy corrupts our capacity for joy. Instead of being able to celebrate things, we will find ourselves bitter and peevish about things. Second, envy takes our friends and turns them into our enemies. David was Saul's most loyal and valiant soldier in that battle, yet because Saul was jealous of him, Saul was needlessly angry at him. As we learned earlier with Jonathan, if we find ourselves jealous of other people that God has chosen to use in a way more significant than he has chosen to use us, if we become jealous of that person, will become resentful, peevish, suspicious, and irritable toward that person and everyone else around us. We need to confess this as sin and ask for God's forgiveness.

Saul's last comment was, "what more can he have but the kingdom?" The little bit of praise David received over Saul left Saul paranoid that he was going to lose his position of power. Saul was very insecure as king and thought it was up to him to hold onto that position instead of God maintaining him in the position.

Maybe the reason Saul was so paranoid was because twice God had already told him that the kingdom would be taken out of his hand and given to another. We saw this in 1 Samuel 13:14 and 1 Samuel 15:28.

And Samuel said to him, “The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you.” 1 Samuel 15:28 (ESV)

When Saul hears this song and the women singing about David slaying more Philistines than Saul, Saul hears about a neighbor who is better than him. Perhaps this teenage boy is the one God will make king? I think Saul is paranoid because he can feel God peeling open his fingers to take that kingdom away from him and perhaps give it to David.

And Saul eyed David from that day on. 1 Samuel 18:9 (ESV)

From that moment on, Saul has his eye on David. He was suspicious of David.

The next day a harmful spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house while David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day. Saul had his spear in his hand. 1 Samuel 18:10 (ESV)

The next day, after David became a national hero, David went right back to playing the guitar and singing for Saul. That was the lowly position of throne room entertainment.

As Saul listens to David play and sing, he becomes jealous. It says here that a harmful spirit from God rushed upon Saul. Saul's evil thoughts open up this spirit of torment to enter Saul's mind. He ends up raving around the house, yelling and screaming in rage.

Next, we see what that hatred and jealousy lead to.

Saul tried to kill David.

And Saul hurled the spear, for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall." But David evaded him twice. 1 Samuel 18:11 (ESV)

I don't know if these two assassination attempts by Saul were both on the same day, but at least the first was the day after David killed Goliath.

Here is the danger of abandoning God and letting ourselves become jealous of others' success. We will find ourselves out of control, consumed by rage, then saying or doing evil things we never expected. In Saul's case, it was attempting murder twice.

Amazingly, David evaded him twice and escaped the room with the spear still sticking in the wall.

Saul was afraid of David because the Lord was with him but had departed from Saul. 1 Samuel 18:12 (ESV)

Think about what happened. Saul and David were in the same room. It was close range. Saul was an experienced warrior. He was holding his spear. He threw it at close range at David, and yet somehow David escaped. Saul now realizes that God was protecting David. He shouldn't have missed. Saul knows the Holy Spirit is no longer with him but God's Holy Spirit is now with David protecting David.

Saul put David in the military, hoping he would die in the line of duty.

So Saul removed him from his presence and made him a commander of a thousand. And he went out and came in before the people. And David had success in all his undertakings, for the Lord was with him. And when Saul saw that he had great success, he stood in fearful awe of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, for he went out and came in before them. 1 Samuel 18:13–16 (ESV)

Saul couldn't stand to have David around. The more he saw David, the more jealous he became of David. Saul decided to get David out of the house and send him into the army. If David goes to the battlefield, maybe he will die in action and won't come home. Then Saul won't have to kill him.

The problem is that this plan backfired. Instead of floundering in the army, David had great success in the army. His popularity grew even more because the Lord was with him. God was committed to David's success. Now everybody knows David as a brave warrior. By sending David to the battlefield, all Saul did was give David a chance to prove himself and become more popular.

This leads Saul to hatch plot to try and bump David off.

Saul gave David risky military missions hoping he would die in the line of duty.

Then Saul said to David, "Here is my elder daughter Merab. I will give her to you for a wife. Only be valiant for me and fight the LORD's battles." ... " 1 Samuel 18:17 (ESV)

Here we have a problem. In 1 Samuel 17, Saul promised to give his daughter to anyone who killed Goliath. Saul did not keep his word. He was a promise-breaker, not a promise-keeper. Now Saul offered to give his daughter Merab to David as his wife if David would only be valiant and fight the Lord's battles.

The keyword here is the word valiant. He wants David to go on high-risk military missions. These are the kind of missions where not all people come back. There is a chance nobody will come back. David can marry the king's daughter if he is willing to risk his life. Saul hoped David wouldn't survive. He proposed a wedding, but he was planning David's funeral.

In case we missed it, the Bible tells us was the plan.

...For Saul thought, “Let not my hand be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him.” 1 Samuel 18:17 (ESV)

I tried to kill David twice. It didn't work. He is a young guy. If I offer him my daughter, young guys will risk their life for a girl. I will put him in a really bad battle and let the Philistines kill him for me. That way, I won't have any blood on my hands.

And David said to Saul, “Who am I, and who are my relatives, my father's clan in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?” 1 Samuel 18:18 (ESV)

David responded that he was not worthy of this offer. He didn't deserve to be married to the king's daughter. He and his family were nobodies. Some Bible scholars see this as David turning down Saul's offer. I may be wrong, but I don't think that is what happened. I do not see David turning this down. I believe David went on those missions. The problem was that he didn't come back dead. He came back very much alive. In fact, David was a complete success on those missions. That is not what Saul thought would happen so he had to figure a way to get his daughter out of this wedding.

But at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, she was given to Adriel the Meholathite for a wife. 1 Samuel 18:19 (ESV)

David came back from these risky military missions alive. He was looking forward to getting married. When he came home, there was another man's name on the wedding cake. He watched his fiancé walk down the aisle with another man. He watched his fiancé go into the bridal suite with another man. How is that for a knife through the heart? Twice Saul tried to put a spear through David's

heart literally. Now he put an emotional spear through David's heart. That is pretty sadistic. This is dirty politics.

Time passes, and a younger daughter of Saul now realizes that David is the most desirable and eligible bachelor in Israel. He is very much available since her father stood him up at Merab's wedding. She finds herself very much in love with David.

Saul gave David ultra-high-risk missions hoping he would die in the line of duty.

Now Saul's daughter Michal loved David... 1 Samuel 18:20 (ESV)

Jonathan loves David. Now Saul's daughter loves David. Everybody loves David.

...And they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. 1 Samuel 18:20 (ESV)

Why do you think this pleased Saul? We know the last thing Saul wants is for David to become his son-in-law. Saul sees this as another opportunity to use a different daughter as bait in a trap to kill David.

Saul thought, "Let me give her to him, that she may be a snare for him and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him." ... 1 Samuel 18:21 (ESV)

Saul used Merab as bait to get David on risky military missions. He will not use Michal to get David on an even riskier military mission hoping David will die.

...Therefore Saul said to David a second time, "You shall now be my son-in-law." 1 Samuel 18:21 (ESV)

At this point, I am not sure I would want to be married to the king's daughter. Saul tried to assassinate David twice. Saul stole my wife away from him on his wedding day and gave her to another man. What trick will Saul play this time? I am sure David doesn't trust him.

And Saul commanded his servants, “Speak to David in private and say, ‘Behold, the king has delight in you, and all his servants love you. Now then become the king’s son-in-law.’” 1 Samuel 18:22 (ESV)

Saul was no dummy. He knew David wouldn’t trust him so he tried flattery and manipulation.

And Saul’s servants spoke those words in the ears of David. And David said, “Does it seem to you a little thing to become the king’s son-in-law, since I am a poor man and have no reputation?” 1 Samuel 18:23 (ESV)

David once again says that he is not worthy to be the king’s son-in-law. He was just a poor man from Bethlehem. He had no money and reputation. By the way, in 1 Samuel 17, Saul promised to enrich the man who killed Goliath and give him his daughter in marriage. At this point, not only did Saul renege on his promise to give David his daughter in marriage, but David was poor because Saul reneged on his promise to give the man who killed Goliath riches. Isn’t this just like politics? This is a politician making a campaign promise to get elected then never keeping it.

And the servants of Saul told him, “Thus and so did David speak.” Then Saul said, “Thus shall you say to David, ‘The king desires no bride-price except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, that he may be avenged of the king’s enemies.’”... 1 Samuel 18:24-25 (ESV)

Saul tells David he desires a unique dowry for David to have Michal as his wife. Just give me a hundred Philistine foreskins. No uncircumcised Philistine would give up their foreskins willingly. David needed to murder them first, then take this fleshly prize as proof of their death. Jeffrey Dahmer murdered 17 people. Saul was trying to turn David in a Philistine serial killer. He was hoping that along the way, things would backfire and David would die.

In case we miss this, the next verse makes this explicit.

...Now Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. 1 Samuel 18:25 (ESV)

Surprisingly, David accepted the offer.

And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son-in-law... 1 Samuel 18:26 (ESV)

If Saul could scheme to trap David, David is perfectly capable of turning the tables and trapping Saul.

...Before the time had expired, David arose and went, along with his men, and killed two hundred of the Philistines... 1 Samuel 18:26–27 (ESV)

Notice it talks about the time expiring. Apparently, there was a short time period for David to harvest these Philistine foreskins from the uncircumcised Philistines. The hope is that the rush would make David slip up. David didn't slip up. He ended up doubling the number. We are to imagine David presenting these disgusting rotting pieces of flesh to Saul but twice the amount. Saul was trapped. There was no way he could back out. In fact, David became even more famous when people heard what he had done against the Philistines. Saul's reputation continued to decline.

...And Saul gave him his daughter Michal for a wife. 1 Samuel 18:27 (ESV)

Every attempt of Saul to kill David out of jealousy backfired. The chapter began with Jonathan, Saul's son, loving David and becoming his best friend. The chapter ended with Saul's daughter Michal loving David and becoming his wife.

The more Saul tries to push David away, the closer he becomes.

But when Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David, and that Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him, Saul was even more afraid of David. So Saul was David's enemy continually. Then the commanders of the Philistines came out to battle, and as often as they came out David had more success than all the servants of Saul, so that his name was highly esteemed. 1 Samuel 18:28–30 (ESV)

How do we apply this? In Old Testament narrative, the point of the chapter is often made by contrast, contrasting the characters..

Conclusion

1. Jonathan and Saul provide a contrast. How are we going to react when God chooses to raise someone up for his purposes, but in the process, he chooses to diminish us? Will we react like Saul and be consumed by jealousy that turns us into bitter, peevish, grumpy people? Will we react like Jonathan and celebrate what God is doing in another person's life instead of our own? We have to ask ourselves who we will be.
2. David and Saul also provide a contrast. They show us the difference between a life where the Lord is with someone and a life where the Lord has left someone. Even though David's life was difficult, he was carried and protected by God through all of his troubles. Saul was rejected as king. He left the Lord and refused to return. That led to him living in jealousy, darkness, anxiety, anger, and bitterness. He was even driven into madness because he worshipped himself instead of God. Saul found himself attempting murder, something he never thought he was not capable of doing.

All of this torment in Saul's life could have come to an end at any time if he had done just one thing. If he had repented of his sin and sought the Lord, even though he was rejected as king, God still could have accomplished good things through his life as king. That is the one thing Saul refused to do.

If you doubt that, I refer you to 1 Chronicles 33. There we read of Manasseh, the king of Judah. He began his reign as an extremely evil king. He erected altars to Baal. Worshipped the stars. He burned his sons alive in worship

of false gods. He practiced sorcery, witchcraft, and fortune-telling. In that chapter, it says that he led the people of Judah to do more evil than the nations God destroyed in the Promised Land. God disciplined him, the Babylonians captured him and put hooks through his body and chains on his ankles and wrists. Then they took him to a dungeon in Babylon. There, in his distress, he humbled himself and finally sought the Lord. He repented of what he had done and called out to God for mercy. God heard his prayer and touched the heart of his Babylonian captors to take him out of the dungeon and bring him back to Jerusalem. They reinstated him as king. He lived out his final year leading the nation in national revival bringing the people back to the Lord.

Manasseh is a wonderful example that no matter what you have done, no matter how far you have gone, no matter how wickedly you have sinned, when we turn to the Lord in repentance, God will forgive us and, through Jesus, take our sin away from us. He offers us hope and a future. Even if you were an actual murderer like Manasseh or an attempted murderer like Saul, God loves you and offers to forgive us and use us for his glory if we will only turn to him. Will you do that today?



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