

Jonathan's Friendship with David and Saul's Jealousy

1 Samuel 18

1 Samuel 18 - *"Now when 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. 2 Saul took him that day, and would not let him go home to his father's house anymore. 3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. 4 And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt. 5 So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and behaved wisely. And Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants. 6 Now it had happened as they were coming home, when David was returning from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women had come out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy, and with musical instruments. 7 So the women sang as they danced, and said: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." 8 Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed only thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?" 9 So Saul eyed David from that day forward.*

10 And it happened on the next day that the distressing spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied inside the house. So David played music with his hand, as at other times; but there was a spear in Saul's hand. 11 And Saul cast the spear, for he said, "I will pin David to the wall!" But David escaped his presence twice. 12 Now Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, but had departed from Saul. 13 Therefore Saul removed him from his presence, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. 14 And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the LORD was with him. 15 Therefore, when Saul saw that he behaved very wisely, he was afraid of him. 16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them. 17 Then Saul said to David, "Here is my older daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife. Only be valiant for me, and fight the LORD's battles." For Saul thought, "Let my hand not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him." 18 So David said to Saul, "Who am I, and what is my life or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?" 19 But it happened at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given to Adriel the Meholathite as a wife.

20 Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David. And they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. 21 So Saul said, "I will give her to him, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him." Therefore Saul said to David a second time, "You shall be my son-in-law today." 22 And Saul commanded his servants, "Communicate with David secretly, and say, 'Look, the king has delight in you, and all his servants love you. Now therefore, become the king's son-in-law.'"

23 So Saul's servants spoke those words in the hearing of David. And David said, "Does it seem to you a light thing to be a king's son-in-law, seeing I am a poor and lightly esteemed man?" 24 And the servants of Saul told him, saying, "In this manner David spoke." 25 Then Saul said, "Thus you shall say to David: 'The king does not desire any dowry but one

hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to take vengeance on the king's enemies.” But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. ²⁶ So when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to become the king's son-in-law. Now the days had not expired; ²⁷ therefore David arose and went, he and his men, and killed two hundred men of the Philistines. And David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full count to the king, that he might become the king's son-in-law. Then Saul gave him Michal his daughter as a wife. ²⁸ Thus Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him; ²⁹ and Saul was still more afraid of David. So Saul became David's enemy continually. ³⁰ Then the princes of the Philistines went out to war. And so it was, whenever they went out, that David behaved more wisely than all the servants of Saul, so that his name became highly esteemed.”

Background Notes

1 Samuel 17 is the account of David's great victory over Goliath and the resulting victory of Israel over the Philistines. As a result of David's courageous victory over Goliath, Saul set David over the men of war. I wonder how David's older brothers, who were in Saul's army, felt about this? How would you like to have your kid brother outranking you, and giving you commands?

Another result of David's great victory over Goliath was that he became a very popular hero in Israel. The women came out of all the cities of Israel singing and dancing, and they sang: “*Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.*” Well, that state of affairs didn't sit very well with King Saul, as you can imagine, and Saul became very jealous of David. In fact, Saul tried to kill David twice with his spear, when David was again playing his harp before King Saul. Remember, David had become Saul's harp player (1 Samuel 16), and he played for King Saul when the evil spirit troubled him. David still had his job as royal harpist, and verse 10 says that the “evil spirit from God” came upon Saul. Remember, God didn't make this spirit evil! However, God allowed this fallen spirit to trouble Saul because Saul had turned away from the Lord.

Notice, by the way, that Saul prophesied when the distressing spirit came upon him! Evil spirits can be the source of prophecies – but those prophecies are not from God. In his anger and fits of rage, Saul hurled his spear at David, but David escaped -- twice. I've been to the excavation of the palace fortress of King Saul at Gibeah. There are no huge rooms there, so either Saul, in his rage, aimed badly, or David was very agile -- probably a combination of both.

Doctrinal Points

1. There will always be people who honor the Lord's servants.

“*Now when 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*” (v1). 1 Corinthians 13:4 says that “love is not jealous,” and Saul's son Jonathan bears this out. Jonathan was also a courageous warrior, as we saw back in 1 Samuel 14, but Jonathan was not jealous of David. Jonathan was older than David, but he didn't look down on him; he helped David and honored David.

As the son of King Saul, Jonathan was in line for the throne. The fact that Jonathan gave David his robe and his armor, sword, bow and belt seems to indicate that Jonathan realized that David would be the next king. Even though he recognized that David was to be the next king of Israel, Jonathan showed no jealousy. Look over at 1 Samuel 23:17 *“And he said to him, “Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Even my father Saul knows that.”* Jonathan’s respect, help, loyalty and honor of David continued until the day of Jonathan’s death.

Jonathan is a great example of a believer who is sensitive to God’s choice of leaders, and who respects, helps and honors those whom the Lord has specifically called to be shepherds and leaders of His people. We need more Jonathans – wouldn’t you agree? Without the Jonathans, the Davids have a much more difficult task of serving the Lord and leading God’s people. Praise the Lord, when God calls a David to lead His people, He provides a few Jonathans too! There will always be people who honor the Lord’s servants.

2. There will always be people who are jealous of the Lord’s servants.

Verses 8-9: *“Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, “They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed only thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?”⁹ So Saul eyed David from that day forward.”* And verse 12: *“Now Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, but had departed from Saul.”* And verse 25: *“But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.”*

You can be sure that the more God expands your ministry and enlarges your sphere of influence and blessing, the more you will experience the jealousy of others. Jealous people will not support you, and they may even turn against you. We expect this to happen in the secular world, and it happens all the time in the business world. Unfortunately, it also happens within the church. This is certainly illustrated in Saul’s jealousy of David.

Notice in this chapter how jealousy operates, and how it goes from bad to worse. Jealousy can’t stand seeing the blessing of God on others. Jealousy sees others as a threat. Jealousy plots the downfall of others. Saul even tried to kill David twice with his spear.

Jealousy doesn’t keep promises. Saul demoted David in rank, from being a general (v5) to only a commander of a thousand (v13), and he didn’t give David his daughter, Merab, for his wife, as Saul had promised. And when Saul finally gave his daughter, Michal, to David because she loved David, Saul was hoping that she would become a “snare” to David! Furthermore, Saul demanded 100 Philistine foreskins as a dowry, hoping that David would be killed in the process of getting this disgusting dowry. When David doubled the dowry, Saul became even more jealous and afraid of David. Verse 29: *“and Saul was still more afraid of David. So Saul became David’s enemy continually.”*

Jealousy is a deadly sin, but all too often this sin is ignored, and then it causes a situation that goes from bad to worse. As a result, jealousy destroys friendships, destroys fellowships, and destroys churches.

We know from the rest of the story that Saul's insane jealousy forced David to flee for his life. Until God removed Saul, David had to be on the run. It's so sad, because the story could have been so different. God could have blessed the nation of Israel so much more if there had been harmony between Saul and David! Unfortunately, there will always be people who are jealous of the Lord's servants.

Practical Application

Don't miss the spiritual picture of Jonathan's love for David.

This is really a doctrinal point made practical, isn't it? Although this spiritual picture or type is really a teaching point, don't miss it – it's practical! As you know, David is a spiritual picture of Christ in many ways. Before his enthronement, David is a picture (or "type") of Christ at the present time, during his time of rejection. David was the anointed king, but he was not yet enthroned as king, and King Saul and his establishment rejected him. What a picture of our Lord at the present time! But Jonathan loved David! He was devoted to David. Jonathan was loyal to David, honored David, and recognized David as the rightful king. Jonathan is a spiritual picture of the committed Christian, who shows love and devotion to the Lord in spite of the cost, even though He is rejected by the world at the present time. Are you a Jonathan? Don't miss the spiritual picture of Jonathan's love for David.