

Message #8

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Life of David

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SAUL AND JEALOUSY

1 SAMUEL 18

INTRODUCTION

English was not my favorite academic subject in college, although it was one of my majors. I necessarily had to study Shakespeare. My favorite Shakespearean play was *Othello*, which is classified as a tragedy. Othello was a general who appointed Cassio to be his chief assistant. The choice of Cassio infuriated Iago, who felt that he was the one who should have received the job. His jealousy prompted Iago to quietly and effectively wreak havoc with the people around him. At one point Iago issued this classic line about Cassio: **“Cassio hath a daily beauty in his life, that makes me ugly.”** (REPEAT)

Such is the characterization that could have been made by King Saul of David. This is the force at work in the passage before us this morning. It is the force that all of us have felt. Jealousy is a temptation and a danger that all of us need to learn to master if we are going to navigate life successfully. The story before us this morning has lessons to teach us about how to do that.

We have seen that a thousand years before Christ the people of Israel demanded that they have a king like all of the other nations around them. God through the prophet Samuel consented to their request and gave them Saul. He was the kind of king whom they wanted. He initially was successful in leading his people in victories over their surrounding enemies. But in Chapters 13-15 of 1 Samuel, we saw that Saul had significant character defects. In #16 God directed Samuel to anoint David to be the kind of king whom the Lord wanted.

David was the youngest of eight sons and had the menial job of being a shepherd in the small town of Bethlehem. But he had character. He patiently waited for the Lord to bring about the promise made to him. Because of his musical ability, he ended up serving in the palace of Saul, playing his lyre to calm him when he was plagued by an evil spirit. Then last week we saw from #17 how David rose from obscurity to defeat the giant Goliath.

Now we shall see how David deals with fame and public acclamation. As is often the case with godly leaders, David will go through a period of testing before he is ready to take on the role that God has assigned to him. This testing will take place at the hands of the king David has been assigned to replace.

I.

We shall begin by looking at the first ten verses of 1 Samuel #18, which are found on p. 241 of the black Bibles under many of the chairs. We shall consider SAUL AND THE EFFECTS OF JEALOUSY ON SELF. (PROJECTOR ON--- I. SAUL AND THE EFFECTS...) According to v. 1, **“As soon as he [David] had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.”** The setting is the aftermath of the battle in the Valley of Elah where David killed Goliath.

Jonathan is the oldest son of King Saul, which makes him the crown prince of Israel. Jonathan is probably a fair amount older than David, who was the youngest son in his family. One might expect that if anyone was going to be jealous of David, it would be Jonathan. For it is David who has been tasked by God to be the next king of Israel. That Jonathan has the reaction that he does says volumes about his character. This is a quality guy.

We saw in earlier chapters that Jonathan was a brave and fierce warrior. He also has a strong faith in God, which is reflected in a concern for God’s honor. Saul sees in David qualities that he himself possesses. Neither individual is focused on his own status. Rather they are both focused upon serving God and seeing His interests accomplished. After seeing David’s conduct on the battlefield, Jonathan is drawn in as a supporter of David.

Verse 2: **“And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house.”** Previously David had gone to the palace only when the king was plagued by the evil spirit. The rest of the time David was still serving as a humble shepherd for the flock belonging to his family.

We read in vv. 3 & 4, **“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.”** This is a remarkable sacrifice on Jonathan’s part. We learn elsewhere that Saul and Jonathan were the only ones in the Israelite army who had armor. More than that, Jonathan is making a formal agreement whereby he is giving up his claim to the throne of Israel to David. Somehow Jonathan recognizes that David is the one who should be the next king.

A couple of centuries earlier the King of Ugarit divorced the queen. The crown prince was given the option of either living with his mom or with his dad. If the crown prince chose to go with his mom, he had to leave his royal clothes on the throne, thus signifying that he was giving up his claim to be the future king.

In the Biblical record we have at least a couple of examples of the symbolic significance of giving one's clothes to another. In Numbers #20 Aaron gives his priestly clothes to son Eliezer, signifying that he is to be the next chief priest. In 1 Kings 19 Elijah gives his mantle to Elisha, signifying that the younger man will take on Elijah's prophetic role.

Last week we considered a number of ways in which David's actions in #17 foreshadowed the actions of the future Jesus. Here we have an illustration in Jonathan of selfless behavior which will later be demonstrated to the highest degree in Jesus. The Apostle Paul writes in Philippians #2 vv. 5-7 (PHILIPPIANS 2:5-7), **"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant..."** The Son of God took off His divine clothes in order to become a human being and ultimately to die on the cross. Jonathan will likewise suffer a death which he did not deserve. (PROJECTOR OFF)

Verse 5: **"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."** Like Alexander the Great, David experienced military success at a very young age. There are few who handle such early success well. Yet there is no hint of arrogance or selfish pride in David. He is well liked and respected by all who come in contact with him. There is also the important factor to recognize that God is present with him and his exploits.

Verse 6 adds, **"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."** (PROJECTOR ON--- DAVID 2A)

The story is backing up chronologically to describe the return of the army from the battlefield in the Valley of Elah to the capital in Gibeah, Saul's hometown. It is a time of celebration. Notice also that the singers are coming out to greet King Saul. But there is a fly in Saul's ointment.

Notice v. 7: **“And the women sang to one another as they celebrated, ‘Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands.’”** As Saul listens to the top forty hits on the radio, this song begins to bug him. (PROJECTOR OFF) There is nothing about the words that demeans King Saul. It is just that David seems to get a greater recognition. Now there are some Hebrew scholars who claim that it was standard procedure in poetry to mention the greater person first, even though a higher number of Philistine victims is credited to David. A more theologically correct song would have attributed the victory to the Lord, who was ultimately responsible. But Saul is irritated.

According to vv. 8 & 9, **“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?’ And Saul eyed David from that day on.”** Thus jealousy takes hold of Saul. The king sees the rising popularity of David. He also remembers the judgment of God pronounced through Samuel that the kingdom would be given to another who was better than Saul. (1 Samuel 15:28) Thus Saul begins to fear that David is his replacement.

Verse 10: **“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.”** We have already seen that an evil spirit sent from God occasionally came upon Saul. The onset of Saul’s jealousy and the coming of this evil spirit the next day may imply that this jealousy in Saul opened him up for demonic involvement.

It is ironic that David is sincerely seeking to serve Saul in the playing of his lyre while Saul is harboring these feelings of bitterness toward David. Notice also that Saul has his spear in his hand while David has his lyre in his hand.

The onset of Saul’s jealousy has the initial effect of dominating his thinking, especially his interpretation of the actions of David. He suspects that David is trying to take over his role as king. The reality is that David is sincerely seeking to serve Saul. The first impact of jealousy is upon our selves. It colors our thinking. It tends to distort our perception of reality.

In Proverbs #14 v. 30 (PROJECTOR ON--- PROVERBS 14:30) the author writes, **“A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot.”** The first effect of jealousy is upon ourselves. It deteriorates our character. It makes our bones rot.

II.

In vv. 11-16 we learn about SAUL AND THE EFFECTS OF JEALOUSY ON HIS OBJECT. (II. SAUL AND THE EFFECTS OF JEALOUSY ON HIS OBJECT) Jealousy often does produce negative effects for the one who is the object of jealousy. Verse 11 reads, **“And Saul hurled the spear, for he thought, ‘I will pin David to the wall.’ But David evaded him twice.”** Such is the danger that Saul’s cultivated jealousy poses for David.

Saul’s raving in v. 10 might be interpreted as temporary insanity. Yet v. 10 indicates that Saul had a conscious intent to kill David. Saul is not out of his mind. He simply has a jealous mind which has given way to evil. Twice he apparently tries to kill David in an obvious way. In his humble way, David seems to initially chalk these first attempts by Saul to do him in as the result of the attacks of the evil spirit upon Saul.

Verse 12: **“Saul was afraid of David because the Lord was with him but had departed from Saul.”** It is ironic that David is the object of target practice, but Saul is the one who is afraid. Saul is also rational enough to realize what has happened spiritually. God’s Spirit and blessing has departed from him and passed over to David.

David could have responded to Saul’s attacks upon him by pulling out the spear and throwing it back at Saul. That he does not do that shows something about his character and his trust in the Lord. It is evident that the Lord is indeed with him.

According to vv. 13 & 14, **“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.”** Saul cannot handle having David around. So perhaps he sends him to a remote outpost, probably in Alaska. His appointment as a commander of a thousand men would be comparable to making him a lieutenant colonel in the US Army.

In David’s exposure to a new part of the country, he continues to conduct himself honorably. As his stock rises, Saul’s seems to go down. David continues to enjoy success as the Lord is with him.

Verses 15 & 16: **“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.”** The original word for “fearful awe” may also be translated as “dread.”

Bethlehem, the home town of David, was in the tribal territory assigned to Judah in the southern part of the country. Israel was the term later used of the tribes of Israel in the north. The fact that David is positively regarded in the north may suggest that David was sent to command a military unit in the north. While Saul may be trying to minimize David’s popularity by sending him to a remote outpost, David is just being exposed to more troops and more people in another part of the country. The result is that more people like him.

I pointed out last week that the name “David” is believed by the scholars to have a meaning of “beloved.” The appropriateness of his name is borne out by the popular reaction to him.

Still, Saul is out to do in David. It is a dangerous place to be when the source of jealousy is the king. David may not realize the enmity which Saul has for him. But Saul is determined to destroy him.

We likewise can face danger when we are the object of jealousy of a powerful person, at least one who has some kind of power over us. Yet the responsibility of the one who follows God is to do right. We are not to throw back the spears at the one who is jealous. Our focus should be to please God.

III.

In vv. 17-26 we encounter SAUL AND THE EFFECT OF JEALOUSY ON OTHERS. (III. SAUL AND THE EFFECTS OF...) Verses 17 and 18 say, **“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.’ For Saul thought, ‘Let not my hand be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him.’ 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?’”**

David still has a humble spirit. He is still seeking to serve Saul. Apparently the king is sending David on a military campaign against the Philistines. Saul is offering his daughter as a reward for a successful campaign. His real motivation is for David to serve his selfish purposes and die in battle. In the process he is using his daughter as a pawn in his own jealous efforts. He cares more about his own perceived success than the well-being of his daughter.

Saul has also proven to be dishonest. According to #17 the one who defeated the giant Goliath would be given his daughter in marriage. That has not happened. David does not complain.

Verse 19: **“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.”** David does not even follow through on this promise.

According to v. 20, **“Now Saul’s daughter Michal loved David. And they told Saul, and the thing pleased him.”** The irony continues. Saul hates David. His son Jonathan, the crown prince, loves David. Now his younger daughter also falls in love with David. Saul will now use her to fulfill his jealous schemes.

The story continues in vv. 21 & 22: **“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.’ Therefore Saul said to David a second time, ‘You shall now be my son-in-law.’ 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.””**

Saul lies about his supposed delight in David. He continues to manipulate. He uses words that sound nice, but are a lie. Perhaps David had such actions by Saul in mind when he wrote (PSALM 55:21) in Psalm 55, **“His speech was smooth as butter, yet war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords.”**

The plot thickens in vv. 23-26: **“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?’ (PROJECTOR OFF) 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.””** Now Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. And when his servants told David these words, it **pleased David well to be the king’s son-in-law.”** It seems as though David is blissfully unaware of Saul’s true, evil machinations.

The cultural expectation in that time and place was that a groom would provide a bride-price to the family of the bride. Since this was a king's daughter, the bride price would be high. The victory over Goliath should have been sufficient for David to acquire one of Saul's daughters, but David humbly goes along with this second offer of a daughter.

Meanwhile, Saul is manipulating his daughter and manipulating his servants to carry out his plan. His jealousy is adversely affecting others. He is going with the law of averages in hoping that all of David's fights with the Philistines will eventually lead to his death. But Saul is also fighting against the providence and the promises of God.

The last part of v. 26 and the first part of v. 27 tell us, **"Before the time had expired, David arose and went, along with his men, and killed two hundred of the Philistines. And David brought their foreskins, which were given in full number to the king, that he might become the king's son-in-law. And Saul gave him his daughter Michal for a wife."** At least Saul follows through this time on his promise.

Notice that this is the second time that Saul has offered a daughter. Twice we are told that Saul tried to kill David with a spear. Now David kills twice as many Philistines as Saul had requested for a bride-price. David does seem to desire this daughter of Saul.

David still appears to be unaware of Saul's true purpose to destroy him. God is providentially protecting this future king. How often do you suppose that God providentially protects us from harm when we are blissfully unaware of danger that could befall us? Perhaps there are people who are trying to do us harm. Perhaps there are unseen spiritual forces who are out to get us. Yet God may be providentially caring for us.

Verses 28 & 29: **"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."**

Saul's family is becoming even more heavily invested in David. At the beginning of the chapter Jonathan is making a covenant with David. Now at the end of the chapter Saul's daughter is making a marriage covenant with David.

This is just the opposite of what Saul wanted to happen. But God is at work, accomplishing His sovereign purposes. Even Saul recognizes that God is at work. Everyone seems to love David, but there is no

mention of anyone loving Saul. Saul is becoming isolated. Such is the result of what jealousy can produce. Left untamed, it can cause us to become unlovely people.

Verse 30: **“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.”** David’s stock continues to rise. Saul’s stock continues to fall. Saul’s pursuit of his jealous plans has produced collateral damage. His jealousy has an adverse effect upon others.

IV.

Consider then THE LESSONS FOR US. (PROJECTOR ON--- IV. THE LESSONS FOR US A. TO AVOID JEALOUSY...) The first lesson that I find here is TO AVOID JEALOUSY, FOCUS ON GOD AND HIS PLAN FOR US. David had many reasons to be jealous of others. He could have been jealous of his brothers. They got to go to the original meeting with Samuel, and he did not. His older brothers got to go to battle when he had to watch the family sheep. David had to serve an evil king who had a position that had been promised to him. Yet David chose to trust in God and focus on accomplishing His will.

Jealousy is a temptation that is endemic to the human condition. We find it at work in the earliest pages of the Bible. Cain kills Abel because of jealousy over his brother’s sacrifice accepted by God. Esau is jealous of Jacob’s receiving the blessing of the oldest son. The brothers of Joseph are jealous of the position that their younger brother has with their father. On it goes through Biblical history and history outside of the Bible to this day.

We live in a culture that breeds jealousy. Advertisements continually pass before our eyes offering beautiful things and travel and experiences involving things that we may not be able to afford. We have a celebrity culture where we see people who appear to have power and fame and access to the good life. We have a political culture which promotes the notion of income equality. It doesn’t matter if our income went up ten percent last year. If our neighbor’s income went up twenty percent, then that’s not fair. We are jealous.

Jesus told His followers that they should have a different focus. (MATTHEW 6:33) In Matthew #6 He said, **“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”** These words echo the sentiment in the Lord’s Prayer where he encourages us to pray for the coming of His kingdom.

The correct focus for us to have is the God who is there and the plan that He has for us. Each of us has unique talents and spiritual gifts and situations in life and tasks which God has for us to fulfill. With this focus we should be able to declare with the Apostle Paul (PHILIPPIANS 4:11) in Philippians #4 v. 11, **“...I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.”**

If we are truly Christians, if we have trusted in Jesus as our Savior, we already have the most important things that we can have in life. Paul (EPHESIANS 1:3) declares in Ephesians #1 v. 3, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...”** He goes on to say that these blessings include forgiveness of sins and membership in God’s family and an inheritance in heaven and knowledge of the truth and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Henri Nouwen writes, **“No two lives are the same. We often compare our lives with those of others, trying to decide whether we are better or worse off, but such comparisons do not help us much. We have to live our life, not someone else’s. We have to hold our own cup. We have to dare to say: ‘This is my life, the life that is given to me, and it is this life that I have to live, as well as I can. My life is unique. Nobody else will ever live it. I have my own history, my own family, my own body, my own character, my own friends, my own way of thinking, speaking, and acting--- yes, I have my own life to live. No one else has the same challenge. I am alone, because I am unique. Many people can help me live my life, but after all is said and done, I have to make my own choices about how to live.”** (*Can You Drink the Cup*, pp. 31-32) We do have the promise that God will be with us as we focus on God and His plan for us.

B.

The second lesson that I find here is that IN DEALING WITH ENEMIES, we need to TRUST GOD AND DO THE RIGHT THING. (IV. THE LESSONS A. B. TRUST GOD AND...) David could have justified taking action against Saul. The Lord had told him that he was going to be king. Saul threw spears at him. David could have thrown spears back at Saul. Saul had made a promise that the victor over Goliath could have his daughter. David could have demanded what was right. His popularity was on the rise. Saul’s was on the decline. He could have claimed the throne as being rightfully his. But David trusted God and did the right thing.

As we go through life, we occasionally encounter people who seem to have it in for us. It may be at work, at school, on social media, or even in our family. The temptation is to fight fire with fire. That’s what the heroes do on TV, right?

In Romans #12 v. 14 (ROMANS 12:14) the Apostle Paul urges us, **“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.”** That’s what David did. A few verses later, (ROMANS 12:19) the apostle adds, **“Beloved--- remember, that is what the name David means--- never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’”**

The ultimate example of this behavior is Jesus. He was the object of jealousy of the religious leaders of His day. They pinned Him to a cross. But this was necessary to accomplish our atonement, to pay the penalty for the sins of the world. (PROJECTOR OFF)

If we grasp the significance of what He did for us, we should have the same kind of response that Jonathan had toward David. His soul was knit to David’s. Our soul should likewise be knit to the soul of our Lord. We should be willing to give up our weapons and armor and allow him to be king over us.