

David and Saul

Second in a series, "Touched by David"

August 15, 2021, Aledo UMC

Old Testament Lesson, 1 Samuel 18:1-16 by Pastor Dave

¹ After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. ² From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return home to his family. ³ And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. ⁴ Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.

⁵ Whatever mission Saul sent him on, David was so successful that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This pleased all the troops, and Saul's officers as well.

⁶ When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with timbrels and lyres. ⁷ As they danced, they sang:

"Saul has slain his thousands,
and David his tens of thousands."

⁸ Saul was very angry; this refrain displeased him greatly. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?" ⁹ And from that time on Saul kept a close eye on David.

¹⁰ The next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully on Saul. He was prophesying in his house, while David was playing the lyre, as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his hand ¹¹ and he hurled it, saying to himself, "I'll pin David to the wall." But David eluded him twice.

¹² Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with David but had departed from Saul. ¹³ So he sent David away from him and gave him command over a thousand men, and David led the troops in their campaigns. ¹⁴ In everything he did he had great success, because the LORD was with him. ¹⁵ When Saul saw how successful he was, he was afraid of him. ¹⁶ But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he led them in their campaigns.

Sermon, "David and Saul"

This is the third sermon in a series, "Touched by David"

One of my simple pleasures in life is going for a drive. Depending on the length of the drive, I'll usually have a bottle of iced tea with me, perhaps some Chex Mix, and of course, music. My wife prefers listening to podcasts when she drives, but I prefer music. Unless the Cubs are playing.

The other day I was listening to oldies in the car when a super-oldie came on the radio. But with its catchy chorus and danceable beat, it's one of those songs that back in the day, shaped a nation. I'm sure you'll remember "Tens of Thousands," and here are the words to the chorus:

*Saul has slain his thousands,
and David his tens of thousands.*

Now that's catchy! It was especially popular with teen girls. You can imagine them dancing to the beat. You can almost hear the electric lyre and the tambourines.

*Saul has slain his thousands,
and David his tens of thousands.*

It was originally intended to celebrate both Saul and David, but Saul didn't take it that way. Instead, that song fueled Saul's jealousy.

And that's the first dynamic I want to point out to you this morning: The all-consuming power of jealousy.

I came across a sermon illustration this past week, but I wasn't sure if I should include it in my sermon, so I asked on Facebook if I should use it, and the overwhelming response was yes, use it. So here it goes:

After a long illness, a woman died and arrived at the Gates of Heaven. The gatekeeper came by, and the woman said to him "This is such a wonderful place! How do I get in?"

"You have to spell a word," the gatekeeper told her.

"Which word?" the woman asked.

"Love."

The woman correctly spelled "Love" and the gatekeeper welcomed her into Heaven.

Some six months later, the gatekeeper asked the woman to watch the Gates of Heaven for him that day. While the woman was guarding the Gates of Heaven, her husband arrived.

"I'm surprised to see you," the woman said. "How have you been?"

"Oh, I've been doing pretty well since you died," her husband told her. "I married the beautiful young nurse who took care of you while you were ill. And then I won the lottery. I sold the little house you and I lived in and bought a big mansion. And my wife and I traveled all around the world. We were on vacation, and I went water skiing today. I fell, the ski hit my head, and here I am. By the way, how do I get in?"

"You have to spell a word," the woman told him.

"Which word?" her husband asked.

"Czechoslovakia."¹

Irish novelist and playwright Samuel Beckett received great recognition for his work—but not every one savored his accomplishments. Beckett's marriage, in fact, was soured by his wife's jealousy of his growing fame and success as a writer. One day in 1969 his wife Suzanne answered the telephone, listened for a moment, spoke briefly, and hung up. She then turned to Beckett and with a stricken look whispered, "What a catastrophe!"

Was it a devastating personal tragedy? No, she had just learned that Beckett had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature!²

Clinical psychologist and author Gary Collins asserts that "There is a distinction between jealousy and envy. To envy is to want something which belongs to another person. 'You shall

¹ <https://www.preaching.com/sermon-illustrations/jealousy-and-revenge>. Accessed Aug. 10, 2021.

² <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/j/jealousy.htm>. Accessed Aug. 10, 2021.

not covet your neighbor's house, his wife or his servant, his ox or donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.' In contrast, jealousy is the fear that something which we possess will be taken away by another person."³

I want you to hear that: jealousy is a form of fear. And the Bible says that perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). That means **perfect love casts out the fears of jealousy**.

Where might we find this perfect love? At the cross of Calvary. Only God's love is perfect. And the only way to kick jealousy out to the curb is to be filled with the love of God.

Jealousy can affect how we conduct ourselves on our jobs, or among our neighbors, or in our familial relationships. But in each situation, jealousy is rooted in fear and anxiety. If you are jealous of someone, there is something about that person that makes you anxious or fearful. And if someone is jealous of you, then there is something about you or your circumstances that makes the other party anxious or fearful.

Saul was consumed by jealousy because he was afraid of losing his throne to David.

And that leads me to the second dynamic I want to point out to you today: The victorious life of the anointed. David, of course, is the anointed. And everywhere he went, he was successful because God was with him.

Now you might say, "Yeah, but that was then; this is now." And to a certain extent, you'd be right. Back in the Old Testament, God's anointing was rather selective. It wasn't necessarily for everyone. However, we live on the Pentecost side of history. And something special happened on the day of Pentecost: 120 followers of Jesus were gathered in an upper room when the Holy Spirit came and anointed each and every one of them.

Part of the legacy of Pentecost is that we are anointed by the Spirit of God that we might live a victorious life in Christ.

You have been anointed to live a victorious life in Christ.

But that doesn't mean our victorious life is going to immediately appear that way to those around us. It was years before David actually sat on the throne as king of Israel. At this point in the story of David, virtually no one realizes that David has been anointed of God to rule over Israel. Only Samuel (who is not present in this narrative), the narrator, the readers, and David know that David is destined for the throne.

And that is the third dynamic I want to point out to you today: The hidden plan of God.

Saul is frightened enough and suspicious enough to see what others cannot see: that David is on his way to becoming king. But what he does not see is that David's ascent to the throne is God's plan. Saul knows more than he understands, but he sees David only as

³ Ibid.

ambitious, not as destined by God. Saul sees David as driven by his own ego; he knows nothing of God's will, which has already decreed David's rise and his own eventual fall.⁴

God's will then, is resolved, but hidden.

How often do we find ourselves in the middle of God's resolved but hidden will? That's when our faith has to kick into overdrive because the victorious life of the anointed may not look like a victorious life to the outsider.

For the remainder of the book of First Samuel, Saul is determined to kill David. He's hunted like an animal. Did it look like David was living a victorious life? No. Absolutely not. But his faith in God kicked into overdrive because David knew that he was destined for something beyond his present persecutions and sufferings.

Charles Albert Tindley was one of our great African American Methodist preachers of yore. He was appointed to the same Philadelphia church at which he had once been janitor. He grew the church from 130 to a multiracial congregation of 10,000. He was being considered for the episcopacy when a rival preacher approached him and said, "You are an unlettered ignoramus. You...are not educationally fit to be a bishop."

Just before the election, an anonymous letter falsely accused Tindley of immorality. Tindley was never elected bishop. But that was the least of his heartaches.

His worst heartaches arose within his own family. One of his sons died in World War I. His wife died on the eve of the dedication of the Tindley Temple Methodist Church in Philadelphia. Charles remarried, but several of his grown children, still living at home, didn't get along with their stepmother. Charles finally sent them packing.

Atop those pressures were the financial pressures of a large church made up of poverty-stricken masses. "All of us know we are without jobs," he told his congregation when they were struggling to meet the church's expenses. "We don't own big bank accounts. We don't even know what tomorrow will bring. But we do have hope. We do have God."⁵

Charles Albert Tinley understood that the plan of God may be "unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see."⁶

And if Charles Albert Tindley's name sounds familiar to you, it may be because you've sung one of his hymns such as no. 525, "We'll Understand It Better By and By."

⁴ Interpretation, pg. 137.

⁵ Then Sings My Soul 2, pg. 253.

⁶ UMH No. 707.