

1st Samuel 18:1-19:23
Prosperity, Persecution, Protection

Introduction

1. Last week we saw David...in some respects...burst onto the scene with his defeat of Goliath the Philistine giant
2. While all of Israel's soldiers stood back and cowered in fear, David—little more than a young shepherd with no real military experience—boldly faced off against a seasoned military champion
3. With only a sling and a stone, he killed Goliath and ultimately sent the Philistine army into full retreat
4. This began David's rise fame among the Israelites, but also brought something unexpected—Saul's disdain and attempts on his life
5. Over the next few chapters—18-24—we will witness Saul's descent into wickedness and David's in grace and favor before the LORD

A. David's Prosperity (18:1-5)

NOTE: These first five verses describe events that occurred during the battle against the Philistines described in 17:52-54 and prior to David and Saul arriving home in 18:6

1. He and Jonathan formed a special bond (1, 3-4):
 - a. The text describes this relationship as David's and Jonathan's souls being "**knit**" together (1a)
 - b. Twice in these opening verses, and again in 20:17, we are told that Jonathan "**loved him as himself**" (1, 3)
 - c. This led to the two of them making a covenant (3):
 - 1) This covenant is mentioned five times in 1st Samuel (18:3; 20:8, 16; 22:8; 23:18) and in all but one instance it indicates that Jonathan initiated the covenant
 - 2) It's clear in these texts that Jonathan initiated the covenant because he recognized David as God's anointed and his rightful role as Israel's future king
 - 3) The covenant assured mutual loyalty to one another—Jonathan protecting David from his father, Saul, and David agreeing to never cut off Jonathan's house forever
 - 4) As a sign of this covenant, Jonathan removed his royal robe and all of his military armor and gave it to David—this was significant because it symbolized Jonathan giving up his rite to succeed his father to the throne, and recognizing David as the rightful heir to the throne
2. He prospered as a military leader, and in everything he did (2, 5):
 - a. Saul made David a permanent member of his royal court—prior to this David would split his time between service Saul and shepherding his father's sheep back home (2)
 - b. He also made him a commander in the military and entrusted him with military campaigns (5a)—this was likely during the battle to defeat the Philistines that followed right after David's killing of Goliath (described in 17:52-54):
 - c. David prospered in this role and experienced great success (5):

- 1) **“prospered”** is a rather significant word theologically because it is tied to Israel’s covenant with the LORD and the Law
 - 2) In God’s charge to Israel prior to entering the Promise Land He promised them that they would prosper if they would honor the covenant and keep the Law: “So keep the words of this covenant to do them, that you may prosper in all that you do” (Deuteronomy 29:8)
 - 3) Joshua reminded the Israelites of this as they were about to conquer the Land (Josh 1:7-8): **“Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. 8 “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.”**
 - 4) This is reflected in David’s success/prosperity: (18:14): **“David was prospering in all his ways for the LORD was with him”**
 - a) His success wasn’t limited to just his military campaigns
 - b) His success was directly related to his relationship with the LORD
3. Even the people were pleased with David (5): **“And it was pleasing in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul’s servants”** (5b)
 - a. The general population was pleased with David’s
 - b. Even Saul’s royal servants were pleased success
 - c. See also 18:16: **“But all Israel and Judah loved David, and he went out and came in before them.”**
 - d. And 18:30: **“...So, his name was highly esteemed.”**
 4. The author provides two clues to David’s prosperity:
 - a. The first is found in a simple phrase that appears three times in chapter 18: **“the Lord was with him”** (12, 14, 28)
 - b. The second is found in the last verse of chapter 18: **“...and it happened as often as they went out, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul. So, his name was highly esteemed.”**

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| B. David’s Persecution (18:6-30) |
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NOTE: The events described in 6-9 take place when David and Saul first return from the battle that defeated the Philistines:

1. Saul becomes angry and grows suspicious of David (READ 6-9):
 - a. As was customary when men would return from battle, the women of the city composed songs of praise and greeting Saul and David with singing
 - b. Saul, however, is offended when they attribute more deaths to David than him
 - c. He immediately sees David as a threat to his kingdom and becomes suspicious of David
2. Saul tries to kill David (10-30):
 - a. First, with a spear 2x (10-11):
 - 1) Saul is tormented by an “evil” (think troubling) spirit of the Lord, sent as a form of judgment against Saul

- 2) While in a fit of rage, he tries to kill David...twice...by hurling his sword at him and trying to pin him to the wall
- b. Second, by plotting to have David killed by the Philistines (12-30)
- 1) Saul begins to fear David because the Lord has departed him but is with David
 - 2) So, he gives David a military promotion and makes him **“a commander of a thousand”** (13)
 - 3) As David prospers in this new role and continues to gain the favor of all Israel (14-16) Saul’s fear of David grows
 - 4) In an apparent attempt to increase the danger David faced against the Philistines, Saul tries to offer David his oldest daughter, Merab, as a wife (17): **“My hand shall not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him.”**
 - a) It’s not clear how this would increase the risk to David’s life, but it might be that Saul believe it would help David be motivated to **“fight the LORD’S battles”** on behalf of the king (17)
 - b) David refused to accept so Saul gives Merab to another man
 - 5) In a second attempt to put David in danger, Saul hatches a plan to convince David to marry his younger daughter, Michal (20-30):
 - a) Michal **“loved”** David and Saul saw that as his opportunity to use her as a **“snare to him”** so that the **“hand of the Philistines may be against him”** (21)
 - b) It’s not clear in what way Michal would be a snare:
 - a) There is some association between this Hebrew word and idol worship, and it may have been that Michal worshipped idols and Saul hoped it would lead David into idol worship (this might explain the idol Michal used as a decoy to protect David in 1 Samuel 19:32)
 - b) However, this doesn’t explain why this would cause the Philistines hand to be against David (unless it implies God’s disfavor)
 - c) A better explanation might be Saul’s plan to have David kill 100 Philistines in place of a dowry
 - d) In other words, she was the **“bait”** (another rendering) for Saul’s plan to have David killed by the Philistines: **“Now Saul planned to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines”** (25)
 - c) Saul’s plan fails when David kills twice as many Philistines as Saul requested, and marries Michal (26-27)
- c. All of Saul’s attempt to eliminate David fail, and his fear of David continued to grow (28-29)
3. Just as the author provided some clues to David’s prosperity, he provides answers to why Saul persecuted David:
- a. He was afraid that David would usurp him as king (18:8): **“Now what more can he have but the kingdom?”**
 - b. He dreaded the fact that David was prospering and having success (18:15)
 - c. But, more strikingly, he knew that the LORD was with David but had departed from him (18:28-29): **“When Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal, Saul’s daughter, loved him, then Saul was even more afraid of David. Thus Saul was David’s enemy continually.”**

C. David's Protection (19:1-24)

NOTE: Saul continues to try to kill David with another four attempts in this chapter alone, but God's protective hand, though not mentioned directly until the end, is the dominant theme

1. Jonathan protects David from Saul (19:1-7):
 - a. Saul ordered Jonathan and all his servants to kill David (1)
 - b. But Jonathan revealed Saul's plan to David (2-3)
 - c. Jonathan intervenes on David's behalf (4-5)
 - d. Saul is persuaded not to kill David and allows him back into his presence (6-6)

2. David escapes Saul's spear...for the third time (8-10):
 - a. Saul's promise not to kill David doesn't last long
 - b. David has another successful campaign against the Philistines (9), which should have pleased Saul but it appears the opposite might have been true
 - c. Once again, Saul is tormented by an "evil spirit from the LORD" and tries to kill David with his spear a third time
 - d. Once again, David escapes

3. Michal protects David from Saul (11-17):
 - a. Saul's attempts to kill David become more bold, and more public
 - b. With all previous attempts failing, he now sends guards to David's house to kill him
 - c. However, David's wife Michal warns David and helps him escape:
 - 1) She sends him out the back window and down the wall
 - 2) She constructs a dummy out of a household idol to deceive the guards
 - a) There is debate as to exactly what Michal used
 - b) The Hebrew word is teraphim which refers to small idols in most of the OT
 - c) While some English translations translate this as "household idol", others prefer the generic "image" (ESV, KJV, NKJV) so as not to imply an idol
 - d) There is no evidence elsewhere that David or Michal possessed idols, and David's character and God's favor to David would make that highly unlikely
 - e) Some Jewish scholars have argued that there were many types of teraphim including idols, objects used as sun dials, statues, and even life size sculptures wives had of their husbands
 - f) One argument against this object being an idol and possibly a statue is that the teraphim used in the OT as idols were small enough to fit into saddle bags (Rachael hid two of them in this way), whereas what Michal used had to be large enough to make the guards think it was David sleeping in his bed

4. The Holy Spirit protects David from Saul (18-24):
 - a. After David escapes to Ramah and into the presence of Samuel, Saul once again sends his henchmen to kill David
 - b. When they approach Samuel and a group of prophets, the Holy Spirit comes upon them and they begin to prophesy
 - c. So, Saul sends additional henchmen, but they too begin to prophesy
 - d. Finally, Saul takes matters into his own hands and goes to Ramah to kill David himself

- e. But, like the messengers before him, Saul is also overcome by the Holy Spirit and begins to prophesy

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| Conclusion |
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1. There is a ton of irony in this passage
 - a. David, the man after God's own heart, prospers—but it's that prosperity that causes Saul to stiffen his resolve and hardened his heart even more against David and the LORD
 - b. God's presence with David through the Holy Spirit is a sign of approval and favor, where God uses an "evil" spirit to torment Saul
 - c. Even though the Holy Spirit departs from Saul as a sign of God's judgment and dis-favor against him, it returns only to thwart Saul's plan to kill David and causes him to prophesy and glorify God
 - d. Saul's plan to use Michal as a "snare" to David actually results in thwarting his plan and saving David's life
 - e. Likewise, his own son Jonathan protects David
2. One of the themes that continues to appear in this book is that God protects his children but destroys those who oppose him:
 - a. We see that displayed here more profoundly than anywhere else in the book
 - b. In these two chapters alone we see Saul—the most powerful man in Israel—try to kill David over half a dozen times
 - c. But each time, David escapes—sometimes through his own efforts, sometimes through the help of Saul's own children, sometimes by God's direct intervention