

**1 Samuel 18**  
**October 2, 2022**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

Q: What would you guess are the hidden feelings that drive jealousy? [Let people engage]

**Transition:** We are getting ready to see how jealousy drives Saul, and it's ugly and evil. After David's dramatic victory over Goliath, Saul was so impressed with David that he didn't allow David to return to his family. Saul gave him a high rank in his army, and David succeeded in every military campaign he was involved in. You'd think that Saul would be delighted by that. But there's a problem. David's popularity among the Israelite people grew, which was not received well by Saul. He becomes jealous of David. Let's see how that gets expressed in today's text. Would someone volunteer to read the text for us?

**BOOK:**

**Saul's Jealousy of David**

**18** After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. <sup>2</sup>From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return to his father's house. <sup>3</sup>And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. <sup>4</sup>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.

<sup>5</sup>Whatever Saul sent him to do, David did it so successfully that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This pleased all the people, and Saul's officers as well.

<sup>6</sup>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 tambourines and lutes. <sup>7</sup>As they danced, they sang:

“Saul has slain his thousands,  
and David his tens of thousands.”

<sup>8</sup>Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. “They have credited David with tens of thousands,” he thought, “but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?” <sup>9</sup>And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

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

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

<sup>17</sup>Saul said to David, “Here is my older daughter Merab. I will give her to you in marriage; only serve me bravely and fight the battles of the LORD.” For Saul said to himself, “I will not raise a hand against him. Let the Philistines do that!”

<sup>18</sup> But David said to Saul, “Who am I, and what is my family or my father’s clan in Israel, that I should become the king’s son-in-law?” <sup>19</sup> So when the time came for Merab, Saul’s daughter, to be given to David, she was given in marriage to Adriel of Meholah.

<sup>20</sup> Now Saul’s daughter Michal was in love with David, and when they told Saul about it, he was pleased. <sup>21</sup> “I will give her to him,” he thought, “so that she may be a snare to him and so that the hand of the Philistines may be against him.” So, Saul said to David, “Now you have a second opportunity to become my son-in-law.”

<sup>22</sup> Then Saul ordered his attendants: “Speak to David privately and say, ‘Look, the king is pleased with you, and his attendants all like you; now become his son-in-law.’”

<sup>23</sup> They repeated these words to David. But David said, “Do you think it is a small matter to become the king’s son-in-law? I’m only a poor man and little known.”

<sup>24</sup> When Saul’s servants told him what David had said, <sup>25</sup> Saul replied, “Say to David, ‘The king wants no other price for the bride than a hundred Philistine foreskins, to take revenge on his enemies.’” Saul’s plan was to have David fall by the hands of the Philistines.

<sup>26</sup> When the attendants told David these things, he was pleased to become the king’s son-in-law. So before the allotted time elapsed, <sup>27</sup> David and his men went out and killed two hundred Philistines. He brought their foreskins and presented the full number to the king so that he might become the king’s son-in-law. Then Saul gave him his daughter Michal in marriage.

<sup>28</sup> When Saul realized that the LORD was with David and that his daughter Michal loved David, <sup>29</sup> Saul became still more afraid of him, and he remained his enemy the rest of his days.

<sup>30</sup> The Philistine commanders continued to go out to battle, and as often as they did, David met with more success than the rest of Saul’s officers, and his name became well known.

### **Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

### **LOOK:**

David was a victorious person who followed God, even though this made Saul jealous. The Lord still wants us to show humility and loyalty to our leaders, even if we outshine them.

### **Close in Prayer**

## **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (1 Sam 18)*. Victor Books.**

### **I. David Trusts the Lord (18)**

David's greatest test of faith was not when he faced Goliath; it was when he had to serve daily in Saul's court. Note the different ways his faith was tested:

#### *A. By popularity (vv. 18:1–11).*

David was beloved by Jonathan, Saul's son, and this in itself was an opportunity for testing. David would be the next king, but, by rights, Jonathan should inherit the crown. The friendship between these two men of God is a great example for us. Certainly there was no jealousy on Jonathan's part because of the honor bestowed upon David. However, with Saul it was another matter, for David was popular with the people. The fact that the women praised David and not David's God is significant. David was wise enough not to put too much stock in their words. But Saul's heart filled with envy when he heard that David had more praise than he did. "As the refining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise" (Prov. 27:21). Praise is like a hot furnace: it reveals what a person is really made of. The praise that made David humble only brought the dross to the top in Saul's heart and revealed his pride and desire for glory.

#### *B. By demotion (vv. 18:12–16).*

Verse 5 suggests that David was the head of Saul's personal body-guard, but now he is demoted to being merely the captain over one thousand men. Did this change David? No! His faith was in the Lord, and he continued to serve and honor his king. This made Saul all the more afraid! The king knew that God had departed from him and had given blessings to David. It takes real faith to experience a demotion before the eyes of the people and still maintain your humility and service.

#### *C. By disappointment (vv. 17–30).*

Saul had promised one of his daughters to the man who defeated Goliath (17:25), and now he was going to fulfill his promise. Note David's humility before the king in v. 18. But, did Saul keep his word? No! The woman was given to another man. Then Saul tried to use his daughter Michal as a tool to slay David; for the king demanded an impossible dowry, hoping that David would be killed in trying to obtain it. But the Lord was with David, and he completed the mission successfully. It is unfortunate that he did marry Michal, for the union was never a happy one. While in exile, David lost Michal to another man (25:44), but he gained her back when he started to reign at Hebron (2 Sam. 3:13–16). Her attitude toward David led to a complete separation later (2 Sam. 6:20–23).

**Merrill, E. H. (1985). *1 Samuel*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 449-450) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books**

18:1–7. **David**, as has been seen, was not only chosen from eternity to be the founder of the messianic dynasty of kings, but he was also providentially prepared by the Lord to undertake his royal responsibilities. David had served as a shepherd in the fields and had the loving, protective heart of a shepherd, a fitting attribute of a king. He had learned responsibility and courage by confronting and slaying wild beasts that threatened his flock (17:34–36). He had learned to play the harp, a skill that would make him sensitive to the aesthetic side of life and that would help him compose the stirring psalms which extol the Lord and celebrate His mighty exploits. David had been brought into the palace of the king as musician and warrior so that he might acquire the experience of statecraft. Though an uninitiated novice at the time of his anointing, he was eminently equipped to be king of Israel at his coronation some 15 years later. But his education was not always pleasant. With his rising popularity among the people came a deterioration of his relationship with **Saul**, for the king became insanely jealous of Israel's new hero.

After David's dramatic victory over Goliath, Saul brought him into his palace once again, this time as a commander of his **army** (18:5). David's favored position in the court was further strengthened by the personal affection felt for him by **Jonathan**, Saul's oldest son (vv. 1, 3). So close did this friendship become that **Jonathan**, though heir apparent to the throne of Israel (cf. 20:31), stripped himself of his own royal regalia and placed it on **David** in recognition of David's divine election to be king (18:4; cf. 23:17). More than once the covenant of friendship between the two men would work to David's advantage. Meanwhile David became so effective militarily that his exploits were celebrated in song: **Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.**

(2) Saul's jealousy (18:8–20:42).

18:8–16. So enraged was **Saul** at the diminishing of his glory that he, inspired by the demonic **spirit** (v. 10; cf. 16:14–16; 19:9), tried to **spear** David (18:10–11; 19:9–10). But God delivered **David** and gave him even greater popularity (18:12–16).

18:17–30. When **Saul** then saw that he could not destroy **David** personally, he determined to let **the Philistines** kill him. This he arranged by proposing that **David** marry his oldest **daughter**, **Merab**. Saul had already reneged on one marital promise to David (17:25). **David** protested, however, that he was a commoner and had no sufficient bridal **price** (18:25, *mōhar*, not “dowry” as in KJV and others). Before anything further could develop, **Merab ... was given** to another man (v. 19). Again, **Saul** offered his second daughter, **Michal**, who at that time loved **David** (v. 20; cf. 2 Sam. 6:16). But again, **David** argued that he was unsuitable to be a **son-in-law** of the king because of his low status (1 Sam. 18:23). In an act of apparent generosity **Saul** waived the usual bridal payment and demanded only that David kill **100** Philistines and bring back their **foreskins** (v. 25), a requirement he more than met by slaying **200** (v. 27). **Saul** had been hoping, of course, that the exploit would cost **David** his life (v. 25). As a result, Saul was again **afraid of** David (v. 29; cf. vv. 12, 15). But **David** became Saul's **son-in-law** by marrying **Michal** (v. 27), and his military **success** and his popularity increased (v. 30).

**Philbeck, B. F. (1972). 1 Samuel. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher's Bible Commentary (pp. 172–174). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.**

*The passage*—Following his victory over Goliath, David became a permanent member of Saul's court. There he was befriended by Jonathan, Saul's son, and lionized by the people of Israel. As David's popularity rose, Saul's personality progressively deteriorated. Although David was taking no overt actions to become king, Saul sought to have his youthful adversary killed. First, he attempted to do the job himself (vv. 10–11), and then he made an effort to get David

killed by the Philistines (vv. 17–27). Clearly, God was protecting David from Saul’s designs (v. 12).

*Special points*—Saul’s effort to kill David with a spear was attributed to “the evil spirit from God” (see comments on 16:14) which caused him to “prophesy” within his house (v. 10, KJV). At this time prophetic activity was closely associated with highly emotional or ecstatic behavior (see 19:18–24). Since in this context Saul tried to kill David, it is probably best to translate the phrase “and he *raved* within his house” (v. 10, RSV).

Saul’s efforts to get David killed by the Philistines must be seen against the background of ancient Israelite marriage customs. The groom was expected to present the bride’s family with a worthy gift as her purchase price. David felt that his family was too poor to offer a gift worthy of a princess (v. 18). Saul sent messengers who assured David that the marriage price would be considered well paid with the evidence that David had killed 100 of the uncircumcised Philistines. Again, Saul’s plan to kill his rival collapsed. David was able to discharge his obligation twice over.

**Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (pp. 435–437). Holman Bible Publishers.**

**18:1–4** The Bible indicates that Jonathan and David loved each other deeply (19:1; 20:17; 2 Sam 1:26) and made a covenant with each other (1 Sam 20:8, 16; 22:8; 23:18), but there is no indication of their having a homosexual relationship. Scripture teaches that God disapproves of homosexual activity (Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rm 1:24–27; Jude 7; see also the article “What Does the Bible Teach about Homosexuality?” p. 1716). Jonathan and David were men who were careful to obey God in all matters (1 Sam 23:16; 1 Kg 11:4), with the notable exception of David’s sin with Bathsheba. It is reasonable to conclude that these two men obeyed God in this matter as well.

In the ancient Near East, as in conservative Islamic societies today, adult men and women were not permitted to have friendships, casual or otherwise, with one another. Because social roles assigned to males and females differed greatly, men could not usually have close friendships, based on mutual interests, even with their wives. Women were excluded from many activities common to men; they could not take part in military affairs, and were generally excluded from religious rites as well. Men, in like fashion, were not expected to engage in most activities associated with women. Men had to cultivate their friendships with other men, while reserving sexual activity for their wives (or prostitutes). Sometimes such friendships could be intense, but they did not have a sexual component. Jonathan and David were great friends, fellow soldiers, brothers-in-law, and brothers in the faith, but they were not homosexual “lovers.”

**18:10** On God’s sending an evil spirit to torment Saul, see note on 16:14.

**18:10** Did Saul prophesy, or rave like a madman? Some English versions of the Bible state that Saul was prophesying here, but others say that he was raving. The difference arises from how translators choose to render the same Hebrew word. What was regarded as “prophesying,” in the ancient Near East, could take the form of frenzied and even self-destructive activity (cp the prophets of Baal, 1 Kg 18:28–29). Pagan cultures often regarded such bizarre behavior as proof that a god had come upon someone, and even associated prophetic activity with altered states of consciousness, insanity, or even epilepsy. This differed from the usual Israelite expression of

prophetic activity, which involved a prophet's speaking or chanting (1 Ch 25:1–3) coherently to an individual or group in the name of the Lord.

Because Saul's act of "prophesying" was connected with an irrational attempt to murder David, his most valuable soldier and assistant, he was behaving more like a pagan prophet than an Israelite prophet. Accordingly, many Bible versions translate Saul's activity as "raving."

**18:12** Once God the Father gives the Holy Spirit to a person, does the Spirit remain with that person or can He depart? At least three other OT passages in addition to the present verse suggest that the Holy Spirit could be taken away from people who persisted in living in disobedience toward God (Jdg 16:20; 1 Sm 28:15; Ps 51:11). On the other hand, Jn 14:16 indicates the Holy Spirit will abide forever with people who receive Him.

The NT teaches that the death and resurrection of Jesus fundamentally changed certain aspects of humanity's relationship with God. The old covenant at Sinai was replaced with the covenant of Christ's body and blood (1 Co 11:25; Heb 8:13), and with this change the Holy Spirit began operating differently in the lives of God's people. The NT speaks of the Holy Spirit as a gift to believers in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; 10:45) and a seal on their hearts, a guarantee of eternal life (2 Co 1:22; Eph 1:13). Besides being given to women and Gentiles (there are no examples of either of these receiving the Spirit in the OT), the Holy Spirit is a permanently indwelling presence in the lives of all Christians. The NT provides no instance of the Holy Spirit departing from a Christian; this suggests that what happened to Saul cannot happen to a believer in Christ.

**18:19** On who was married to Adriel the Meholathite, see note on 25:44.

**18:27** How many Philistines did David kill to gain the right to marry Saul's daughter Michal? The ancient texts disagree: the Hebrew text gives 200 but the Septuagint only 100. Even though Saul had only required David to kill 100, the larger number is probably correct. David was a zealous fighter for the Lord (v. 17) and his king (vv. 25–26), and this figure convincingly reflects David's high level of commitment to both.

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (1 Samuel 18). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**