

1 Samuel 18

- David has defeated Goliath and saved Saul's army
 - At the end of chapter 17 we learned that the victorious David kept Goliath's head and sword
 - Later in his life David will keep Goliath's head in Jerusalem as a trophy
 - So obviously, this victory made a significant impact on David
 - And so it should
 - David just defeated an enemy so strong that no one else in Israel would dare even engage with him
 - David ran out onto the field of battle without so much as a moment of hesitation
 - He was already calculating his reward at the first he learned of the bounty
 - More importantly, this moment defined David for the rest of his life
 - Forevermore David was known as the giant-slayer
 - He was the fearless one who saved Saul's army
- But in this victory the seeds of future conflict were planted
 - I doubt David could have even imagined the years of trouble that were in store for him as a result of this victory and all that came from it
 - Because not only did David take note of this victory, but so did Saul and the people
 - Saul knew David already, but this victory caused Saul to take a closer look at this young man
 - Earlier in chapter 17 David stepped forward to fight Goliath, and Saul sized him up
 - Saul took one look at him and declared that David had no chance of winning

- So in a ridiculous effort to even the odds, Saul put his armor on David

1Sam. 17:38 Then Saul clothed David with his garments and put a bronze helmet on his head, and he clothed him with armor.

1Sam. 17:39 David girded his sword over his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. So David said to Saul, "I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them." And David took them off.

- In that moment, when Saul put his own royal armor on David, he was symbolically crowning David in his place
 - David has already been anointed by Samuel
 - The only thing standing between David and the throne is its current occupier, Saul
 - So it was highly significant that Saul places his armor on David
- But even more significant, notice David's response
 - He cannot wear the armor because he says he had not tested them
 - But the original Hebrew could be translated "I have not been tested"
 - In other words, David is prophetically declaring was not yet ready to assume the role of king
 - Before he can take that position from Saul, David must be tested by God so he can be prepared and proven to be ready
- And ironically, the course of that testing will be Saul himself, as the king becomes increasingly paranoid that David will take his throne away

1Sam. 17:55 Now when Saul saw David going out against the Philistine, he said to Abner the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this young man?" And Abner said, "By your life, O king, I do not know."

1Sam. 17:56 The king said, "You inquire whose son the youth is."

1Sam. 17:57 So when David returned from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the Philistine's head in his hand.

1Sam. 17:58 Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."

- Saul inquires who is this young man after all
 - We know Saul called for David to soothe him with music in the court, so why does Saul fail to recognize David?
 - One answer is that Saul never really took a close look at David in the court
 - He was like any other servant to Saul perhaps, such that Saul could over look him later
 - Saul inquires of his commander, Abner, who doesn't know either, probably for the same reason
 - So Abner is told to bring the young man to the king
 - And when David appears holding Goliath's head, Saul asks him his name
 - And David answer he is the sons of Jesse the Bethlehemite
- After Saul won his first victory for Israel, the response from the people was as you might expect
 - The vast majority supported Saul as leader though a few initially rejected him
 - In time even those who had rejected Saul came to support him out of necessity
 - Now that David has won his victory, he will enjoy a similar response, though it will be far more complicated
 - And this begins in chapter 18

1Sam. 18:1 Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself.

1Sam. 18:2 Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house.

1Sam. 18:3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself.

1Sam. 18:4 Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt.

1Sam. 18:5 So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and prospered; and Saul set him over the men of war. And it was pleasing in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

- At the conclusion of the battle and of David's appearance before Saul, we're told the soul of Jonathan is knit to David
 - The story of David and Jonathan is a favorite for many Bible students
 - It's a beautiful and meaningful story of self-sacrifice and humility
 - Of pure, godly love of one for another
 - Jonathan, of course, is the son of Saul and the heir apparent for the throne of Israel
 - Were Saul to die, Jonathan would be expected by the people to take Saul's place and rule
 - But we know that God's plan is for David to be the next king
 - So under normal, human circumstances we would expect these two men to be rivals and fierce enemies
- But instead, we're told they form a close and abiding relationship
 - Notice we're told that the soul of Jonathan is knit to David
 - Samuel's choice of words stands out
 - Souls aren't knitted together just every day
 - The word for knit is qashar, and the word simply means to bind together for a common purpose
 - The word can also be used in a negative sense to describe conspirators
 - Once again, though, it's describing two people joined together in a common purpose
 - More interesting, Samuel says it was the soul of Jonathan that was bound together with David
 - The Hebrew word for soul can also be translated life or person
 - So the sense of v.1 is that Jonathan's life was united with David's life
 - Notice also the specific way this union is happening
 - First, the Hebrew verb indicates that neither Jonathan nor David were the actors causing the union

- The cause is outside either David or Jonathan
- Secondly, notice the direction of the union
- Jonathan is united to David, not the other way around
- This is important because it tells us that Jonathan was placing David above himself in this relationship
- We can see the one-way nature of this movement more clearly when we look at what Samuel writes next
 - First we're told that Jonathan loved David as he loved himself
 - Jonathan is being drawn selflessly toward David by his love for the man
 - He loves David with the kind of love the New Testament would call agape love
 - Some have perverted this verse to claim this was homosexual love
 - But the clear intent of the text is describing a selfless devotion of one man to another without any sexual implication
 - In fact, the Hebrew word for love in this verse is never used in the Bible to describe homosexual love
 - The love Jonathan felt for David is akin to the love a son has for his father or a disciple for his master
 - Jonathan's love is all the more striking when you remember that Jonathan was about 30 years older than David
 - Clearly, God was supernaturally drawing Jonathan to David
- Next we see Jonathan made a covenant with David because of his love for David
 - A covenant was a life-long unbreakable commitment to defend the other
 - There were several types of covenants
 - Some depended on each party to keep certain terms
 - Other covenants were one-way and only depended on the faithfulness of the one granting the covenant

- In this case, Jonathan makes a one-way covenant with David
 - In v.3 Samuel says clearly that Jonathan is making the covenant with David
 - They didn't make a covenant together nor did David make one with Jonathan
 - Jonathan made one with David
- Secondly, notice that the giving of the covenant was a result of Jonathan's love for David
 - The love in Jonathan's heart prompted him to grant David this covenant
 - We can say it was an act of love
- Finally, Jonathan seals the covenant by placing his royal robe and armor on David
 - This is the most significant moment
 - Jonathan is the heir apparent
 - But he just transferred that to David
 - He signifies that David is the next king
- And he gives David his armor
 - This signifies David's leadership of the army
 - And the with that came the authority to kill any who oppose his rule
 - So Jonathan is abdicating the throne
 - Joyce Baldwin asks:

"In our political world, where power plays such an important role, what would be thought of a prince who voluntarily renounced his throne in favor of a friend whose character and godly faith he admired?"

- So we have to ask what would cause Jonathan to do such a thing?
 - The answer is back in v.1

- Jonathan's soul was united in love with David
- And of course, we know the Lord was the One holding the knitting needles
- So the Lord produced in Jonathan a love for David that triggered in Jonathan the desire to submit to David's authority
- And why was the Lord creating this strong, loving bond between David and Jonathan?
 - The answer should be clear: so that Jonathan won't oppose David's rise to power
 - In fact, Jonathan has now pledged to support David as king against his own personal interest
- Jonathan could have tried to hold onto the throne of Israel
 - But instead, he willingly gave it up to the one who rightfully deserved it
 - Ironically, Jonathan would never have had the throne anyway
- As Spurgeon wrote

Jonathan's was a singular love, because of the pureness of its origin. Jonathan loved David out of great admiration of him. When he saw him come back with the head of Goliath in his hand, he loved him as a soldier loves a soldier, as a brave man loves another brave man. He felt that there was the right kind of metal in that young man and though Jonathan was the king's son, and heir-apparent to the throne, we find that he, "stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his belt." He felt that such a hero, who could so trust his God, and so expose his life, and come off so victorious, deserved his utmost love. It did not begin in self-interest—it did not begin in relationship—but it began in the likeness that Jonathan saw between his own nature and that of David. It was one brave man loving another brave man.

Jonathan's love proved, also, to be most intense. It is said that, "he loved him as his own soul." He would at any moment have sacrificed his life to preserve the life of David. In fact, I do not doubt that Jonathan thought David's life much more valuable than his own and that he was quite willing to expose himself to peril that David might be preserved. Jonathan's was a very intense love. May we see more of this kind of love among Christian men! May they love each other for Christ's sake and because of the love of God which they see in one another—and may they be intense in their affection!

- This is God preparing the way for David by causing the house of Saul to move out of the way
 - Of course Saul himself isn't willing to make that move
 - But Jonathan will forever be David's ally
- In v.5 we're told that David goes wherever Saul sends him as a captain over the army and David prospered
 - The literal meaning of the Hebrew word for prospered is "to act wisely"
 - So we should read v.5 that David went everywhere Saul asked and acted wisely so that he accomplished good things
 - And of course the people celebrated David's success
 - David is killing Philistines left and right, and everyone in Israel is giddy with the prospect of being freed from this scourge
 - But David's success opens a wound in Saul

1Sam. 18:6 It happened as they were coming, when David returned from killing the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy and with musical instruments.

1Sam. 18:7 The women sang as they played, and said,
 "Saul has slain his thousands,
 And David his ten thousands."

1Sam. 18:8 Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said,
 "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands.
 Now what more can he have but the kingdom?"

1Sam. 18:9 Saul looked at David with suspicion from that day on.

- As it happened, on one occasion as David is returning from battle, he is met by crowds cheering his victory from city to city
 - The crowds are principally women because men were engaged in work in the fields during the day while the women worked closer to the home
 - The women dance and sing with joy over his victories
 - And as they cheer him, the women sing a song that draws a comparison between Saul and David
 - At first we might wonder why the women decided to draw a comparison between Saul and David

- Couldn't they have simply lauded David without mentioning Saul?
- Yes, but in Jewish culture songs and poetry are typically formed as comparisons
- Jewish people use metaphors, figures of speech and parables all the time
- So comparisons are natural
- In fact, Hebrew poetry doesn't depend on rhyme but on repetition and comparison
 - So to create a song lyric the Hebrew women search for something with which to compare David's bravery
 - The logical comparison would be to Saul's actions as captain of the army
 - So they acknowledge Saul's accomplishments
 - And then in typical form, they magnify the comparison in the second line when mentioning David's accomplishments
- In fact, it's doubtful that David's accomplishments in battle were literally ten fold greater than Saul's, but that's not the point
 - The Lord inspired this song to ensure one particular outcome
 - The Lord is provoking Saul's pride and paranoia
 - Saul is going to serve as the thorn in David's side to help prepare David to rule Israel
 - And here we see the Lord preparing the conflict
 - To be clear, the Lord is not the author of Saul's sin
 - The Lord is simply exposing it
 - The song lead Saul to act in sin by showing his pride
 - Saul hears the song and becomes angry over being the lessor in this comparison
 - Immediately Saul asks what more can David take from me than the kingdom?

- He means that his honor has been taken, so all that's left is the kingdom
- His question is prophetic, though he doesn't know it
 - Yes David will have the kingdom one day
 - But for now, Saul's conclusion is ridiculous, of course
 - The fact that a bunch of women granted David a superior position in their song means nothing
 - It's not as though Israel voted for their king
 - And even if David had public approval, that doesn't mean David was seeking to displace Saul
 - On the contrary, David will defend and protect the king's honor, even after Saul dies
- But from this day forward, Saul's attitude toward David was vastly different
 - Saul immediately switches from seeing David as a powerful servant to a dangerous rival
 - And this changes David's life dramatically as well

1Sam. 18:10 Now it came about on the next day that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul, and he raved in the midst of the house, while David was playing the harp with his hand, as usual; and a spear was in Saul's hand.

1Sam. 18:11 Saul hurled the spear for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall." But David escaped from his presence twice.

1Sam. 18:12 Now Saul was afraid of David, for the Lord was with him but had departed from Saul.

1Sam. 18:13 Therefore Saul removed him from his presence and appointed him as his commander of a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.

1Sam. 18:14 David was prospering in all his ways for the Lord was with him.

1Sam. 18:15 When Saul saw that he was prospering greatly, he dreaded him.

1Sam. 18:16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, and he went out and came in before them.

- As v.10 indicates, the Lord doesn't waste time in His plan, because on the next day the Lord raises the tension even further

- The evil spirit that is working to torment Saul is given freedom to disturb Saul greatly
 - So Saul is in an especially bad state
 - Like one of those days at work when people tell you the boss is in a bad mood
 - Well, Saul is in a very bad mood...and he's armed
- David is doing his usual task of trying to soothe the king with music, but the Lord is choosing not to remove the evil spirit when David plays as He has before
 - Instead, the spirit leads Saul to murderous thoughts
 - So that even as David is playing nearby, Saul heaves his spear at David
 - This is a lethal weapon, especially at close distance
 - And somehow, but the grace of God, David dodges Saul's spear
- The cause for Saul's rage is the recognition that God's Spirit was with David but not with him
 - He begins to see his most loyal subject as his greatest enemy
 - But he correctly recognizes that the Spirit of the Lord is working in David
 - And David's prosperity leads Saul to fear David
- Earlier in v.5 we're told that Saul sent David out time and again
 - It suggests that Saul sent David away because David's presence in the court only served to enrage Saul further
- Remembering that Saul knew the Lord, we have to see his actions in light of what Paul says in Romans 7 about the nature of man
 - There's a battle taking place in Saul, like a civil war
 - He recognizes that the Lord has withdrawn his Spirit from him
 - And he knows that David is now receiving the Lord's blessing
 - But Saul can't embrace that fact or even accept the Lord's will

- Because Saul's flesh, enflamed by the enemy, is crying out for satisfaction
- And as Saul feeds his flesh, he becomes more and more ungodly
- This is something the Lord is working with to suit his purposes
 - The man Saul isn't the man prepared from the heart to serve Him
 - He's a man operating in the flesh
 - And very quickly we begin to see the folly of men working in their own power, their own flesh to serve God
- But the most amazing part of this story is that David escaped from Saul's attack twice
 - In v.11 we see that word "twice" and wonder what led David to hang around after the first experience with the spear
 - It's our first clue to understand David's loyalty and devotion to the king
 - He respected Saul so much that after Saul tried to kill David once, nevertheless David stayed at his post
 - Saul must have had a second episode at a later time
 - But still David was there serving Saul
 - We can see a glimpse of Christ in this behavior
 - David is rightful king
 - But nevertheless he subjects himself to the whims and rage of a man of authority
 - Just as Christ was the rightful king yet He subjected Himself for a time to those in power who persecuted Him
 - Even after He was brutally attacked, Christ didn't retaliate but asked the Father to forgive
- In v.13 we're told Saul sent David out to minimize his dread
 - Where before David's presence comforted Saul, now David's presence troubles Saul
 - But the effect is still to bless David

- As he goes out, David gains more exposure among the people of Israel
- Which in turn only serves to earn David more praise before the people
- When the Lord is determined to bless someone, that blessing will come regardless of which way circumstances turn
 - When David was serving in the court, he was blessed
 - Now that he has been sent outside the court, he's blessed
 - It wasn't the circumstances that blessed David
 - It was the Lord
- And Saul couldn't stop it
 - In fact, the more Saul did to minimize David, the more David's stature grew
 - This is an object lesson in Romans 8:31

Rom. 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

- God was for David, so Saul's opposition could not stop the blessing God intended to deliver to David's life
- Even Saul's wrath against David served to contribute to David's blessing
- Much to the disappointment of Saul
- In fact, Saul conceives a plan to bring David's downfall, yet once again David's faithfulness turns the table on Saul

1Sam. 18:17 Then Saul said to David, "Here is my older daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife, only be a valiant man for me and fight the Lord's battles." For Saul thought, "My hand shall not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him."

1Sam. 18:18 But David said to Saul, "Who am I, and what is my life or my father's family in Israel, that I should be the king's son-in-law?"

1Sam. 18:19 So it came about at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given to Adriel the Meholathite for a wife.

1Sam. 18:20 Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David. When they told Saul, the thing was agreeable to him.

[1Sam. 18:21](#) Saul thought, "I will give her to him that she may become a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him." Therefore Saul said to David, "For a second time you may be my son-in-law today."

[1Sam. 18:22](#) Then Saul commanded his servants, "Speak to David secretly, saying, 'Behold, the king delights in you, and all his servants love you; now therefore, become the king's son-in-law.'"

[1Sam. 18:23](#) So Saul's servants spoke these words to David. But David said, "Is it trivial in your sight to become the king's son-in-law, since I am a poor man and lightly esteemed?"

[1Sam. 18:24](#) The servants of Saul reported to him according to these words which David spoke.

[1Sam. 18:25](#) Saul then said, "Thus you shall say to David, 'The king does not desire any dowry except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to take vengeance on the king's enemies.'" Now Saul planned to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.

[1Sam. 18:26](#) When his servants told David these words, it pleased David to become the king's son-in-law. Before the days had expired

[1Sam. 18:27](#) David rose up and went, he and his men, and struck down two hundred men among the Philistines. Then David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full number to the king, that he might become the king's son-in-law. So Saul gave him Michal his daughter for a wife.

[1Sam. 18:28](#) When Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David, and that Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him,

[1Sam. 18:29](#) then Saul was even more afraid of David. Thus Saul was David's enemy continually.

- Since Saul wasn't successful in killing David by his own hand, he devises a way to kill David indirectly
 - The plan is for the Philistines to kill David in battle, and Saul would provide the bait to cause David to enter into the fight rashly
 - Ironically, David pulls a similar stunt later in his time as king
 - First, Saul offers David one of his daughters in marriage
 - The idea is that once David became the king's son-in-law, he would be a greater target in battle
 - But David's humility and respect for Saul thwarts Saul's plan
 - When David learns of the offer, he expresses disbelief that he could accept the king's daughter
 - He asks who is he that he should marry a king's daughter?

- David is referring to his inability to pay a sufficient price for the bride
- In this day marriages were business deals between families
 - Sons and daughters both had worth to a family
 - Sons were future heirs and workers in the family business
 - Daughters produced offspring to extend the family's strength
 - A son remained with a family and a daughter was given to another family
- So the family of the groom paid the family of the bride for taking the daughter away from her family
 - The price paid for the daughter was a statement of her worth in the eyes of the family she joined
 - If a groom offered too little for a bride, it was an insult to the bride and her family
 - And David understands that he doesn't have the funds to pay an appropriately high price for the daughter of a king
 - Anything David could offer would have been viewed as an insult to a princess
- David's isn't saying no to Saul's offer, but he is making clear that he doesn't have the means to pay the bride price
 - So he's working to avoid embarrassing or humiliating the bride by his inability to offer the right price
 - His motives are pure and his humility is genuine
 - It would be easy for him or anyone in his position to exhibit false humility
 - To say, "Oh no, I couldn't..." but then to move ahead anyway
 - To gain the credit for having been humble but then also claim the benefit of the offer
 - But David sincerely doesn't view himself worthy of the honor
 - This is a rare quality and something we should cultivate in ourselves

- Not false humility, designed to impress men
- But sincere appreciation for our unworthiness
- So that as the Lord desires to bless us, we may receive those blessing entirely unexpectedly
- And then our testimony will be of a sinner saved by grace, blessed by the generosity of a Lord Who gives good gifts
- But Saul doesn't respond to David's humility with grace
 - Instead, Saul gives her to another man
 - Apparently, Saul expected David to respond by asking what he could do to earn the daughter
 - To which Saul would have given David some dangerous mission intended to result in David's death
 - When David didn't play along, Saul went against his own word
 - Saul had pledged his daughter to David but in the end he didn't keep his word
 - Normally, this would have been enough for any man to dismiss the king as untrustworthy, but David continues to have respect for Saul
- Another daughter of Saul had genuine love for David, a
 - This daughter, Michal, is the second of Saul's children to love David
 - It's a clear sign of God's grace that even as He brought an evil spirit to Saul, He was working to ensure that members of Saul's household loved David
 - Not only did Jonathan love David but so did Michal
 - But Michal becomes Saul's next opportunity to trap David
 - Saul decides that this time he will offer David the wife and use others to help convince David to pursue her
 - Saul commands his servants to persuade David to pursue Saul's daughter
 - David's interest in Michal is not wrong, but this episode foreshadows a sinful weakness in David's character

- He has an eye for the ladies...especially naked ones on rooftops
- And they have an eye for him
- Later this weakness will lead to the saddest episode in David's life
- David's response to the servants is similar to his earlier response, saying he isn't worthy of the bride price
 - But Saul is ready with a response this time
 - Saul directs his servants to tell David that a hundred foreskins of Philistines would suffice
 - Since we can safely assume that no Philistine would willingly contribute his foreskin to David's dowry, we know Saul was asking David to kill 100 Philistines
 - For David, this sounds like a plausible way to marry the king's daughter
 - But for Saul, it's a plan designed to get David killed
 - Attacking an enemy was always dangerous
 - But engaging in an uncoordinated, unplanned attack at the spur of the moment was virtual suicide
 - So Saul is hoping that David dies in battle
 - But the Lord is with David, so he succeeds in the battle
 - In fact, David delivers twice as many foreskins as a sign of his love
 - Nothing says love like 200 Philistines foreskins
 - This time Saul has no choice but to honor his promise, so David is married to Michal
 - But Saul is all the more afraid of David, because he realizes that the only way someone kills 200 Philistines in this way is if the Lord is with him
 - And this causes Saul to have all the more dread
 - Saul is experiencing the fear of the Lord
 - It's a fear driven by sin

- Saul knows he's seeing the Lord move against him
- But it's a slow, steady drip rather than a sudden quick flood
- And the slowness is driving Saul mad
- And that's what God intends
- From this day forward, even though David was Saul's son-in-law, Saul treats David as his enemy
 - There is no turning point now
 - David is effective Saul's captain of the army and his most loyal subject
 - Nevertheless, Saul is going to treat David as if he were leading a coup against Saul
 - In doing so, Saul is opposing the Lord
 - And so the die is cast for the Lord to produce the testing in David that David himself acknowledged was missing
 - David can't assume the position of king until the Lord has tested him
 - Testing is a process of refining impure materials until the impurities are removed
 - And only the precious, pure, true things remain
 - Testing requires pressure, heat, stress
 - And those qualities don't come from peaceful circumstances
 - They require the turmoil of opposition
 - Saul is that catalyst to produce opposition for David
 - And through that friction the Lord will produce a good outcome in preparing David for service as king
 - And in the midst of that trial, David will have cause to write the unparalleled poetry of the Psalms
- Meanwhile, David continues to do as God called, remaining blameless before men

[1Sam. 18:30](#) Then the commanders of the Philistines went out to battle, 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.