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1 Samuel / Jonathan (Name); Saul (king); David / 1 Samuel 18

[True faith is demonstrated in trusting God's power and in obeying his word, not in fear or fake religion. A contrast of the faith of Jonathan and the fear of King Saul.]

[David, God's anointed, walks in faith and divine favor while Saul succumbs to envy and rebellion against God's will.]

Text: 1 Samuel 18 (5 mins)

Call: “*The grass withers and the flower fades,*”

Response: “*But the word of the Lord endures forever.*”

The Rise And Fall Of Kings: One Abandoned One Anointed

1. Faithful Friendship (v1-5)

1.1 A Covenant of Love (v1-3)

1.2 A Costly Surrender (v4)

1.3 A Confirmed Success (v5)

2. Fearful Failures (v6-16)

2.1 A Festering Frustration (v6-9)

2.2 A Furious Rage (v10-11)

2.3 A Failing Fear (v12-16)

3. Fulfilled Favor (v17-30)

3.1 A Scheme to Trap (v17-25)

3.2 A Strength from God (v26-27)

3.3 A Success Established (v28-30)

4. Application And Call To Christ

5. Questions For Study

Introduction (5 mins)

This evening, as we open 1 Samuel 18, we pick up where Pastor Mike left off with King Saul and David. In chapter 16, we saw David anointed by the prophet Samuel in the presence of his family, chosen by God to be the next king of Israel. Then, in chapter 17, David arrived at the battle lines and heard, for the first time, the arrogant defiance of Goliath.

Because of his faith displayed through bold words, David was quickly brought before King Saul. His words to Saul echo the faithful confidence of Jonathan back in chapter 14: “It may be that the LORD will work for us, for nothing can hinder the LORD from saving by many or by few.” With similar conviction, David declares, “Let no man’s heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.”

How amazing! The entire army of Israel cowered in fear, but God again raised up one man, His chosen instrument, to bring deliverance. And this time, salvation was surely worked by few; David went alone. He had no armor bearer, for he was not the son of the king. He wore no armor, for he came straight from the fields tending his father’s sheep, and the armor offered to him was untested. Like Jonathan, mocked by the Philistines when they cried, “Come up to us, and we will show you a thing,” David, too, was mocked by Goliath: “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?”

But David was unmoved. He was not armed with sword or spear but with something far greater, the true tested armor of faith and the sure weapon of the name of the LORD. These are the very weapons offered to all God’s people in His Word, if we would but take them up as David did.

Armed with faith in the living God, David struck down the giant. The battle was the Lord's, and God delivered Goliath into David's hands. After this, Saul began to inquire earnestly about David, not merely his name, but who he really was. His curiosity was not casual. With the promise of his daughter's hand in marriage already on the line, Saul wanted to know more about this young man of humble beginnings. Perhaps he was already reflecting uneasily on Samuel's words spoken to him back in chapter 15: "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you."

Surely those words had been festering in Saul's heart ever since, gnawing at him with a bitter reminder of his rejection. Instead of submitting to God's Word in repentance, Saul allowed his heart to grow in disobedience, jealousy, fear, and envy. Those sins now begin to dominate his actions more and more, as we will see in chapter 18. Here, the rise of David, God's chosen and anointed King, is placed in sharp contrast with the tragic fall of Saul, the king abandoned by God.

The chapter highlights the struggles and obstacles David encountered, even as God's chosen one. This should emphasize to us that divine favor does not shield us from hardships, but God remains faithful, offering protection and guidance through every trial.

1. Faithful Friendship (v1-5) (11 mins)

Jonathan's covenant love for David reveals God's design for covenant loyalty and foreshadows Christ's love for His people.

1.1 A Covenant of Love (v1-3) (4 mins)

Chapter 17 closes with the conversation between King Saul and David just beginning, and chapter 18 picks up immediately where it leaves off. While the details of their discussion are not given, the response of Jonathan tells us much about what must have been said.

Verse 1 says that once Saul had finished speaking with David, "the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." Whether Jonathan was present for the entire conversation or heard it recounted afterward, the impact was profound. His heart was immediately bound to David in covenant love.

What captured Jonathan was not merely David's bravery or skill in battle, qualities he surely admired as a soldier himself. Rather, Jonathan was moved by David's faith. Here was another man who trusted wholly in the power of the Lord to save. Jonathan recognized in David the same unwavering confidence in the living God that he himself displayed earlier in chapter 14, when he declared, "It may be that the LORD will work for us, for nothing can hinder the LORD from saving by many or by few." This shared trust in the covenant God of Israel was the foundation of their friendship.

Verse 2 reminds us that Saul acted as kings of the nations often do. Just as Samuel had warned in chapter 8, Saul "took" David into his service and would not let him return home. Saul attached David to himself for personal gain. But Jonathan's attachment was different. King Saul was bound to David by service, but Jonathan was bound to him by soul.

Verse 3 formalizes this unique friendship: Jonathan initiated a covenant with David. This was no shallow alliance born of circumstance, like schoolboys thrown together by geography. It was a covenant of deep purpose, rooted in the faith of God's promises. Jonathan's loyalty revealed his concern for the kingdom of God and the glory of Israel's Lord, not for his own advancement.

There is an important lesson here even for us: envy, resentment, and strife are born out of worldly, self-centered priorities. But godly love is born out of concern for the glory of Christ and His kingdom. Christians who truly seek the glory of Christ will not be jealous of the gifts, ministries, or callings of others. Instead, we rejoice in the grace God has given to our brothers and sisters and find our hearts knit together with theirs in gospel labor.

1.2 A Costly Surrender (v4) (5 mins)

In **verse 4**, Jonathan and David's covenant commitment is shown to be no empty gesture, but one marked by real sacrifice. At this point in the chapter, we might wonder why Jonathan's reaction to David was so radically different from Saul's. If anyone had reason to feel threatened by David's victory, it was Jonathan, not Saul. Jonathan was the crown prince, the rightful heir to Israel's throne, the one who could naturally expect to succeed his father. Yet none of this mattered to him.

If we imagine that Jonathan simply failed to grasp the implications, Saul himself later removes all doubt. In chapter 20, Saul tells him, "As long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom shall be established. Therefore send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die". Jonathan understood perfectly well that David's rise meant his

own decline.

It is possible that Jonathan may have already known more than we realize. In chapter 15, Samuel told Saul, “The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you”. Though Samuel never again saw Saul after that pronouncement, the real possibility exists that Saul relayed this to his son. There must have been some answer to the question about why Samuel never comes around anymore. While the implications are that Jonathan knew of this word from Samuel, Saul fought the word of the Lord with bitter resistance, Jonathan received it with humble faith. Where his father’s heart was hardened, Jonathan’s heart was softened.

So here in chapter 18, Jonathan is not concerned with securing his own advancement. His consistent concern is for the welfare of God’s people. He recognized in David a man of faith, one who trusted the Lord, one who sought the advancement of God’s kingdom. In David, Jonathan saw a kindred spirit and the qualities of a faithful king that Saul so plainly lacked.

That is why Jonathan’s covenant love is expressed in action. Verse 4 records him stripping himself of his robe, armor, sword, bow, and belt, all the outward symbols of his royal position, and giving them to David. As Dale Ralph Davis observes, Jonathan, in effect, renounces his own claim to the throne and, so far as his will is concerned, transfers the right of succession to David.

Who does this? Not the world’s princes. Not men driven by self-preservation or ambition. The instinct of the flesh is to plot against rivals, to cling to status, and to guard one’s rights. But Jonathan’s surrender was an act of faith. Only faith in the living God can make a man willing to be the lesser, to yield what the world prizes, and to rejoice in the rise of another.

And, Awakening Church, this is the call of the gospel. Just as Jonathan surrendered his royal rights to God’s chosen king, so too must we surrender the rights we imagine we hold against Christ, the true and greater King. Only faith will make us gladly lay aside our self-interest, bow before Jesus, the Son of David, and live in covenant loyalty to Him who reigns forever.

1.3 A Confirmed Success (v5) (2 mins)

In **verse 5**, we see that Jonathan’s devotion to David was not misplaced. Bound now to the service of Saul, David went out and came in at the command of the king, yet all of his success came from the Lord. Saul, for his part, acted as far as any worldly, self-serving man could be expected to go. He placed David over the men of war, not out of true honor or faith, but out

of self-interest. Just as he had done with Jonathan's earlier victories, Saul was ready to claim David's triumphs as his own, hoping to strengthen his own position and secure his own glory. But Saul was deceiving only himself.

The reality was plain: it was David who went out, it was David who led the men, and it was David's success that Scripture tells us was "good" in the sight of all the people and even in the sight of Saul's servants. The Lord's hand was evident, and it could not be hidden.

Here, the divide begins to widen, even if Saul had not yet admitted it to himself. Jonathan saw the Lord's favor upon David and loved him for it. The people saw David's success and rejoiced in it. Even Saul's own servants recognized that the Lord was with him. For the moment, their approval may have been whispered quietly, kept from the king's ears. But as we shall see in verse 6, Saul's growing jealousy would soon drag this reality into the open, where it could no longer be denied.

2. Fearful Failures (v6-16) (11 mins)

Saul's jealousy and insecurity reveal the ruin of a man abandoned by God's Spirit.

2.1 A Festering Frustration (v6-9) (2 mins)

In **verses 6 and 7**, the moment of triumph that should have united Israel instead exposed the corruption in Saul's heart. As the women sang of victory, Saul's insecurity boiled over. Their song did not dishonor him, yet his pride could not endure that David received praise.

This was the seed of a festering frustration, one Saul had experienced before. Instead of rejoicing in the Lord's deliverance, he twisted celebration into rivalry. In **verses 8 and 9**, his joy for God's victory becomes jealousy when he asks, "*What more can he have but the kingdom?*" Saul was a man abandoned by the Spirit of God, and his perception of reality was now interpreted through envy rather than faith. Where Jonathan saw a kindred spirit and a gift of God, Saul saw only a threat. Sin always turns God's intended joy into bitterness. From this moment, Saul's heart was set against David; there would be no rest, no peace, only suspicion.

2.2 A Furious Rage (v10-11) (4 mins)

The festering frustration soon erupts into full-blown rage. **Verse 10** tells us that “a harmful spirit from the Lord rushed upon Saul.” God had removed His Spirit from Saul, and now he was given over to the torment that comes when the restraining presence of God is absent. Saul raved in his house like a madman, and his paranoia turned violent as he hurled a spear at David.

This shows us what happens when sin is left unchecked. Phillip often uses this point from John Owens' *Mortification of Sin* when he speaks on this topic: left unchecked, every sin will progress to its most debased form.

"Sin aims always at the utmost; every time it rises up to tempt or entice, might it have its own course, it would go out to the utmost sin in that kind. Every unclean thought or glance would be adultery if it could," and "every covetous desire would be oppression... might it grow to its head".

- John Owen

So it is with Saul when envy becomes wrath, and wrath seeks destruction. This is the nature of sin: it distorts perception and drives us toward destruction. How many families, friendships, marriages, and churches have been pierced because festering envy was allowed to become furious rage? Saul’s spear reminds us that sin never remains hidden in the heart; it always seeks an outward target. We should notice the blindness of Saul’s fury in the text. David had done nothing but serve faithfully, soothing him with music, leading the armies, and bringing victory to Israel. Through all of this, Saul could not see the loyalty; he saw only a rival.

Verse 11 recounts Saul’s violent action: he hurled the spear twice at David in an attempt to pin him to the wall. The text suggests that David may not have fully understood Saul’s murderous intent at first. Out of humility and love for Saul, he likely excused the behavior as a temporary lapse, perhaps thinking, “*Saul is having one of his bad spells.*” Yet the danger was real. Even under threat of death, David continued in humble service, trusting the Lord to protect him. The lyre in David’s hands contrasts sharply with the spear in Saul’s, a vivid picture of obedience and humility versus corruption and fear.

2.3 A Failing Fear (v12-16) (5 mins)

Ironically, the one who sat on the throne was the most afraid. **Verse 12** says, “Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him but had departed from Saul.” Saul, who should have been secure in God’s calling, was inwardly defeated because he knew the Spirit of God had abandoned him.

In **verse 13**, desperation sets in. Saul tries to remove David from his presence by placing him over a thousand soldiers, perhaps hoping the dangers of battle would eliminate him. Yet Saul’s plotting only magnified David’s success. The text repeats, “the Lord was with him,” and Israel grew to love David more and more.

Verses 14-15 emphasize that David prospered in all his undertakings. Saul’s dread deepened daily, while David’s favor grew among the people. The contrast is striking: Saul, consumed by paranoia, sinks lower into fear; David, upheld by the Spirit, rises higher in honor. Finally, in **verse 16**, the nation openly loves David, further isolating Saul in his terror.

This is the tragedy of Saul’s life; his fear of man eclipsed the fear of God. His throne, once given by the Lord, is now consumed by insecurity. Every scheme, every act of jealousy, only further revealed his weakness and God’s sovereign hand at work. As Gamaliel wisely warned in Acts 5:39, “if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” Saul’s rage was not against David alone; in resisting the Lord’s anointed, he was resisting God Himself. All his efforts proved futile, because no one can overthrow God’s plan.

This truth is echoed by Jesus in Matthew 23:12: “Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” Saul exalted himself and was humbled. David humbled himself under the Lord and was exalted.

The humility of Jonathan further illustrates this contrast. Unlike Saul, Jonathan joyfully yielded his own rights and position to see God’s anointed succeed. This spirit of humility shines most brightly in John the Baptist, who declared, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). John gladly diminished for the glory of Christ, the true and greater Anointed One.

Ultimately, these verses point us forward to Jesus, the Son of David. Just as Saul raged against David, so the rulers of this world raged against Christ. Psalm 2 foretold this rebellion, and Acts 4:24-28 identifies its fulfillment in Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, and the

people of Israel gathering against God's Anointed. Yet even through rejection, the cross, and death itself, Christ triumphed, because all unfolded "according to God's predestined plan."

The gospel proclaims the same lesson Saul learned in futility: to fight against God's Anointed is to fight in vain, but to bow to Him is to share in His victory.

To bow willingly now is to find forgiveness, life, and joy in Him; to refuse is to face Him one day as Judge. Submission to Christ is not optional; it is the dividing line between life and death, blessing and curse, hope and despair. Saul's problem was not David's rise, but his own rotting heart. Where Christ reigns, we rejoice in the victories of others; where self reigns, envy festers. Saul's life shows the futility of resisting God's Anointed, but Christ's kingdom shows the blessing of surrendering to Him.

3. Fulfilled Favor (v17-30)

God preserves and advances His anointed despite opposition.

3.1 A Scheme to Trap (v17-25)

Driven by jealousy, Saul devised two schemes to eliminate David. In **verse 17**, he offers his eldest daughter, Merab, in marriage, hoping that David's zeal in battle to win her would lead to his death. Saul wanted David to return from the battlefield not as a celebrated hero, but as a corpse, buried with honor, while Saul's troubles were buried with him.

In **verse 18**, however, David responds with humility, showing no expectation that Saul would bestow such an honor on someone of his lowly station. When Saul instead gives Merab to another man in **verse 19**, David remains steadfast, continuing to fight "the Lord's battles" on behalf of Israel. Yet Saul's plan fails—David fights, but he survives. Perhaps there was not enough conflict at that time to give Saul his desired outcome, so he crafted a second scheme.

In **verse 20**, Saul learns that his daughter Michal loves David—an opportunity that delights him. This time, he would ensure the danger was unavoidable. In **verse 21**, Saul intends to use Michal as a snare. Through his servants in **verses 22-25**, Saul convinces David that the king is unconcerned with wealth or a great bride price. Instead, the king desires only one

thing: one hundred Philistine foreskins. Behind this request was Saul's true design; by sending David against the Philistines, he placed him in repeated, deadly situations, creating a hundred opportunities for David to fall.

Just like earlier in our text, I don't think David, at this point, has identified any specific danger from Saul. The spear attacks were just Saul having a bad "episode," and the 100 small requests were just Saul removing the enemies of God.

3.2 A Strength from God (v26-27)

In **verse 26**, David is pleased with the king's offer. Though he lacked wealth, he possessed skill in war in abundance, and he was eager to prove his worth not with riches but with valor. In **verse 27**, encouraged by Saul's servants, David goes out once more to battle. If Saul demanded one hundred Philistines, David would give two hundred. Though poor in silver, David was rich in the strength God had given him, courage, skill, and a God-gifted ability to strike down the enemies of Israel.

Ironically, Saul's scheme backfires. What he intended for David's downfall only magnified David's honor. Instead of dying in battle, David returned triumphant, forcing Saul to give him Michal as his wife. Envy and jealousy had led to murder in the heart of Saul, and the trap he set had ensnared only himself.

3.3 A Success Established (v28-30)

In **verse 28**, Saul again acknowledges what has been evident all along: the LORD was with David, and even his own daughter loved him. This moment should have led Saul to repentance. He ought to have examined his heart and recognized what everyone else already knew: Jonathan, Michal, his servants, and the entire nation could see God's hand upon David.

Yet in **verse 29**, Saul does the opposite. Instead of humbling himself, he grows even more fearful of David. Clinging to a kingdom that was slipping from his grasp, Saul set himself in continual opposition to the one whom the LORD had anointed.

Then **verse 30** confirms the contrast. While Saul's schemes failed, David's success only increased. Every campaign brought greater victory. Every encounter magnified his reputation. The result was clear: David's rise was unstoppable because it was established by the LORD, not by human effort.

David entered chapter 18 as an obscure shepherd, unknown, untested, yet anointed by God. By the chapter's end, his circumstances are transformed. He has gained a loyal friend in Jonathan, a devoted wife in Michal, the respect of the king's servants, and the admiration of the entire nation. Though danger pressed in on every side, much of which David himself was unaware, the LORD was with him, preserving his life and establishing his success.

4. Application And Call To Christ

Everyone, at some point, finds themselves in the position of King Saul.

There was Saul, king over Israel, when suddenly David appeared, seemingly from nowhere. David of Bethlehem, a small and insignificant man from a small and insignificant place, a shepherd unknown and untested. Yet God had anointed him. Chapter 18 shows us the contrasting responses of those around David. The people of Israel loved him. He led their battles faithfully and successfully, because the LORD was with him. Saul's servants loved him. Saul's daughter Michal loved him. And Jonathan, Saul's son, was knit to him "heart and soul."

But Saul was filled with wrath. He saw David as a threat, someone who had come to take what he believed belonged to him. Saul had not made the kingdom; he had been given it by God, but now, because of his disobedience, God had chosen another. Saul despised the thought that the kingdom might belong to someone else.

And so it is with us. Each of us possesses a small kingdom: the kingdom of our own hearts. We may think we are in control, that our lives are ours to rule. But God sends His Anointed, a David for our hearts. This, better David, comes not from human ambition but from divine purpose. He fights the battle we cannot fight, and He comes victorious.

The question for our lives mirrors the question Saul faced: What will you do when God's man comes for your heart? David came to Saul holding the head of Goliath, a battle won on Saul's behalf. The greater David—Jesus Christ—comes to us holding the cross, having won the even greater battle over sin, death, and hell. And we must ask: Who is this David, and who is His

Father? Perhaps you have noticed Him at the edges of your life, or received His common blessings. Now, however, the question presses deeper: will you be knit to Him like Jonathan, heart and soul, or will you resist Him like Saul, with jealousy, fear, and wrath?

The New Testament gives the answer. Jesus is the Son of David (Matthew 1:1), the promised King who reigns forever on David's throne (Luke 1:32–33). Yet He is greater than David, for David himself calls Him "Lord" (Psalm 110:1; Matthew 22:45). Unlike David, Jesus is sinless. Unlike Saul, His kingdom is unshakable (Hebrews 1:8). His Father is not Jesse of Bethlehem, but God Himself in heaven (John 3:35–36). This better David fought for us, not with sword and shield, but with His own blood (Revelation 5:9), triumphing over sin and death through His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:54–57).

And now He calls us, not to stand at a distance, but to be knit to Him in covenant love, as Jonathan was knit to David. Jonathan, the rightful heir to Saul's throne, laid aside his robe, his armor, his sword, even his rights to the kingdom, and placed them in David's hands. What a picture of faith! To embrace the better David, Christ, is to do the same: to lay down the crown of self-rule, the weapons of self-defense, and the rights of our own hearts before the King whom God has sent.

This is no simple act. It is a miracle of God, for just as Jonathan required faith to recognize David as God's anointed, we require faith to submit our hearts to Christ. Why is that though, why is faith such a necessary part of this recognition and submission? I'll answer my own question: Jesus presents Himself as a threat, not to harm us, but because His rightful claim destroys our own illusions of control. Our bodies, our lives, our hearts, they are not ours to rule. "You are not your own," Scripture says, "for you were bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). Christ's claim is legitimate, and we belong to Him.

In 1 Samuel 18, Jonathan's soul was knit to David in covenantal love and loyalty. So it must be with us and Christ. Our love for Him must be covenantal, rugged, and loyal: "If You fight, I'll fight. Wherever you go, I'll stand. If you are opposed, I will speak up for you. Come what may, I am Yours." This is not shallow sentiment or romanticized affection. It is covenantal fidelity, the love that commits itself fully to another's cause. And so it must be with us and Christ. Our love for Him is a covenantal loyalty that mirrors His covenantal love for us, sealed in His blood.

The question remains: will you cling to your fragile kingdom like Saul, resisting God's King, or will you be humbled like Jonathan, bound heart and soul to Jesus Christ?

Jesus is our better Jonathan. Of all that Jonathan gave up in humility, Christ gave infinitely more.

- Jonathan set aside an earthly crown; Jesus set aside a heavenly crown.
- Jonathan humbled himself from prince to servant; Jesus humbled Himself from Creator to crucified Savior.
- Jonathan loved David while he was his friend; Jesus loved us while we were still enemies.

Jesus is our better David.

He has come victorious.

His kingdom will never end.

His Father is in heaven.

And He calls us now to lay down our hearts, our pride, and our rights, binding ourselves forever to Him in covenant love. There is no neutral place with God's King!

Awakening Church, let us go deeper in humble submission, laying all we have and all we are at His feet, and binding our souls forever to Him who fought for us, died for us, and now reigns for us, our Savior and eternal King.

There is a hymn that asks a significant question, and as we who are bound in faith leave here this evening, we should ponder this question in our own hearts and take this question to the world!

“What will you do with Jesus? Neutral you cannot be; someday your heart will be asking, ‘What will He do with me?’”

5. Questions For Study

Please be encouraged to use these questions in family devotion throughout the week and Awakening discipleship group discussions.

1. How does the bond between David and Jonathan reshape your perspective on love and loyalty?
2. In what ways does this chapter reveal God's favor in David's life?
3. Looking back, have you ever recognized a danger you faced that God shielded you from?
4. How do you manage feelings of jealousy or envy in your own life?
5. Jonathan surrendered his royal garments and weapons to David. What lessons can we draw from his selfless act of giving?
6. How did Saul's jealousy transform into fear, and what does this reveal about the nature of envy?
7. Despite his repeated successes, David stayed humble. How can we cultivate humility in our own achievements today?
8. How can you apply the insights from David and Jonathan's friendship to strengthen your own relationships?