

Session 5 David: Walking with Confidence in God (1 Sam. 18)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. 1 Samuel 18 gives insight into David's heart in a season when his circumstances changed in dramatic ways. We see his confidence in God in times of unusual blessing as well as in adversity.
- B. David killed Goliath, saving the nation from a military disaster (1 Sam. 17). This thrust him into national prominence. David experienced favor with Saul's family, the staff of the royal court, the army, and the nation in general (18:5, 28-30). His life changed dramatically from the quiet life of a shepherd in Bethlehem to a high-ranking officer in the military, serving in the king's court. He moved to Gibeah to live and serve in Saul's court, the governmental headquarters of Israel.
- C. David had favor with two of King Saul's six children: Saul's oldest son, Jonathan, the heir to the throne (18:1, 3), and his youngest daughter, Michal, whom David married, thus joining the royal family himself (18:20-27). Saul had four sons and two daughters (1 Chr. 8:33; 9:39; 1 Sam. 14:49).
- D. David had great favor with Saul until Saul's angry reaction to women singing of David's military victories (18:6-9). Then David lost his job in the royal court, and Saul sought to kill him (18:10-11).
- E. In chapter 18 we see that David walked with confidence in God in times of testing in seasons of being praised as well as in great adversity. Trouble came to David when the Lord allowed him to be trained to be a great king, using the deception and murderous rage of a demonized king—Saul.
- F. ***The Gibeah years*** (1 Samuel 17-20; approximately 18-23 years old): David's identity was tested and strengthened by success and adversity at the same time. The question was, could David connect with God amid many pressures in the same way he had in the security and solitude of Bethlehem?
- G. This period lasted about 4-5 years. It was a time of much honor, uncertainty, and danger, ending with David being pursued as an outlaw and fugitive by 3,000 government-financed soldiers.
- H. David grew up in the small rural town of Bethlehem before joining the royal court to serve on the king's personal staff. He joined the fast pace of the royal court, encountering many new people and agendas and changing situations. David must have experienced some *culture shock* when he moved to Gibeah to live and work in Saul's royal court (18:2).
- I. The Holy Spirit set David and Saul side by side (1 Sam. 18-19) to give us instruction, warning, and encouragement. Both men were chosen for leadership and anointed by the Spirit. The same God with the same resources was available to both. With David there was a steady growth in grace, while with Saul there was a continual increase in compromise, oppression, and perversion. One life ended in victory, the other in tragedy. Saul began so well and could have been all that David was.
- J. ***The test***: Can David stay humble and grateful in seasons of praise and mistreatment? Can he maintain a servant heart when exalted, and not attack when corrected or slandered? We will respond to praise in the same way that we respond to criticism, and to promotion in the same way that we respond to unjust demotion. It is not one decision that shapes our destiny, but many.

II. DAVID'S SEASON OF PROMOTION IN GIBEAH (1 SAM. 18:1-5)

- A. Life in Saul's court and David's favor in the nation (18:1-5)

¹Now when he [David] had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. ²Saul took him that day, and would not let him go home to his father's house anymore. ³Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. ⁴And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt. ⁵So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and behaved wisely. And Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants...¹⁶But all Israel and Judah loved David. (1 Sam. 18:1-5, 16)

- B. **Saul took David:** David moved to Gibeah to serve in the king's court, the government headquarters.
- C. **Made a covenant:** The covenant between Jonathan and David was expressed by Jonathan's gift of his robe and armor to David.
- D. **Robe:** Jonathan's robe spoke of his position of authority as heir to his father's throne. Jonathan gave David his princely robe that was reserved for the heir to the throne. Jonathan was essentially handing to David the right of succession to the throne, because he understood that God had called David to be king. Taking off his robe can also speak of Jonathan's commitment to not hide himself from David, but to be open, honest, and vulnerable, and not conceal his heart from David.
- E. **Armor:** Jonathan's armor (his sword, bow, and belt) included his weapons of war. In other words, Jonathan was committing to fight David's battles even to death: I will fight for you and stick with you. I will put my shield up for you and draw my sword to fight for you and never fight against you. At that time, giving armor was also a way to make an alliance.
- F. They were both committed to using their position, status, and resources to support each other. Jonathan was heir to the throne, one of the wealthiest and most powerful men in the nation. The most natural way for Jonathan to treat David would be as a rival to his position in the kingdom.
- G. Their love had significant personal and political implications (18:16, 22, 28; 20:17). They were bound together by mutual affection and loyalty in friendship and their service in the kingdom.
- H. This depth of relationship is a precious and rare gift from God. Friendship is necessary for realizing who we are and becoming who the Lord created us to be. In healthy kingdom relationships we do not seek to restrict or control each other, but to free and enrich one another.
- I. 1 Samuel 20 develops this relationship. David called Jonathan his brother when lamenting his death (2 Sam. 1:26).
- J. The Lord went before David to prepare the way, establishing an ally in the right time and place. This was God's provision for David to have a friend in the enemy's household. In difficult times, the Lord often prepares an ally to show us kindness. David's life was protected by this relationship.

III. DAVID'S PROMOTION (1 SAM. 18:5)

- A. Saul gave David a high-ranking position in the army (18:5). This position was an intervention of God's favor to prepare David to be the great warrior king of Israel.
- ⁵So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and behaved wisely. And Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants. (1 Sam. 18:5)*
- B. **Went out:** David went on many expeditions and grew in military experience and prowess (18:5, 30).
- C. **Behaved wisely:** David behaved wisely (18:5). Some Bible translations say, "David prospered." From a Hebrew perspective, acting wisely and prospering are nearly synonymous. He behaved wisely in relation to his sudden national popularity. He did not use his position to manipulate people or situations. The people under him were not threatened, because he operated in humility.

IV. SAUL BECAME JEALOUS (1 SAM. 18:6-16)

- A. Saul became angry and jealous after the women sang of David's military success (18:6-9). When David returned from killing the Philistines, the women sang of his military success as their husbands, sons, and brothers returned safely from battle (18:5-6). Saul became angry and jealous, and viewed David with suspicion. This was the turning point in David's relationship with Saul.
- ⁶...when David was returning from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women had come out of all the cities of Israel...to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy, and with musical instruments. ⁷So the women sang as they danced, and said: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." ⁸Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed only thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?" ⁹So Saul eyed David from that day forward. (1 Sam. 18:6-9)*
- B. **Very angry:** Saul interpreted the song in negative way. He was very angry, saying, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed only thousands."
- C. **Jealous:** Saul was jealous of David, in contrast to Jonathan's affection and the people's love for him. The seeds of jealousy in Saul's soul ripened and grew into a plan to murder David. The spirit of jealousy distorts our thinking. It can dominate our lives if we allow it to grow. The way to overcome this is by a ruthless honesty before God that confesses and repents of it.
- D. **Saul eyed David:** Saul watched David with a suspicious eye. He was paranoid. Samuel had told Saul that he would be replaced. Saul had been looking for any who might be his successor. Saul connected the women's song with Samuel's prophecy of Saul's "neighbor," to whom the Lord had given the kingdom (15:28).
- E. **What more could he have but the kingdom?** It dawned on Saul that David was the one whom God had called to replace him (18:8). God set up this situation by sending Samuel to inform Saul that one day a man would be raised up to replace him. This created suspicion in Saul toward others.

V. SAUL ATTEMPTED TO KILL DAVID (1 SAM. 18:10-13)

- A. Saul was oppressed by a demonic spirit, resulting in his first act of violence toward David (18:10-11). Saul's anger and jealousy opened the door for increased demonic activity in his mind and emotions. Giving way to jealousy gives Satan opportunity even in a believer's life (Eph. 4:26, 27).
¹⁰It happened on the next day that the distressing spirit from God came upon Saul...David played music with his hand...there was a spear in Saul's hand. ¹¹Saul cast the spear, for he said, "I will pin David to the wall!" But David escaped his presence twice. (1 Sam. 18:10-11)
- B. **Saul cast a spear:** This was his first overt act of violence. David did not pick up the spear and throw it back at Saul physically, or verbally, but quietly left. Attempted murder was a sure sign that the darkness in Saul's life was setting in. On a later occasion Saul again threw a spear at David (19:10).
- C. Saul removed David from his position in the royal court and demoted him to a position in the army, hoping that David would be killed in battle (18:12-13).
*¹²Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, but had departed from Saul.
¹³Therefore Saul removed him from his presence, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. (1 Sam. 18:12-13)*
- D. **The Lord was with David:** The evidence of the Lord's favor and presence were on David's life.
- E. **The Lord departed from Saul:** Saul's character gradually deteriorated. He went from being a national hero to a fearful, jealous, and depressed man, and then became an angry, murderous tyrant.
- F. **Afraid:** When Saul saw David's success, his fear that David might replace him as king increased (18:12, 15). Instead of being grateful to David because of his helpful service, Saul was afraid of him. He once loved David greatly (16:21), but now it turned to hatred. The spear episode incited fear—not in David, but in Saul. Saul reasoned that the only way that David was able to evade his spear at such close range was that "the LORD was with David but had left Saul" (18:12).
- G. **Saul removed David:** Saul wanted David out of royal court where he was gaining more favor. Saul did not repent; instead he fired David from his prestigious job in the royal court.
- H. **Made him captain:** Saul wanted David to be exposed to the danger of battle against the Philistines. David was sent from the protection of the court to lead the troops in battle. This new position posed risks for David's reputation and well-being. If he was not successful on the battlefield, it would reduce his prestige and popularity and maybe even end his life. David's God-given success in these military campaigns caused Saul to have more fear and David to have more favor in the nation.
- I. **Leadership lesson:** We are to have patient confidence in God if removed from our position in an unjust way, knowing that the Lord can bless us just as He blessed David in his new role.
- J. **Going out and coming in:** This speaks of functioning in leadership as a shepherd who helped God's people overcome the enemies of God's will in their life (Num. 27:17; 1 Sam. 8:20; 2 Sam. 5:24). It included the idea that David lived his life openly before them without pretense and hypocrisy.
- K. David's noble character, successful leadership, and popularity caused Saul to fear him (18:14-16)
¹⁴And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the LORD was with him. ¹⁵Therefore, when Saul saw that he behaved very wisely, he was afraid of him. ¹⁶But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them. (1 Sam. 18:14-16)

VI. SAUL OFFERED HIS DAUGHTER MERAB TO DAVID (1 SAM. 18:17-19)

- A. Saul offered his daughter Merab to David in marriage, but then gave her to another man in marriage that very day (18:17-19). This was meant to be a public (national) insult of David to stir up mutiny in his heart against the king. The political implications of this marriage included giving David status as the king's son-in-law and as part of the royal family.

¹⁷Saul said to David, "Here is my older daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife. Only be valiant for me, and fight the LORD's battles." For Saul thought, "Let my hand not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him."¹⁸So David said to Saul, "Who am I, and what is my life or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?"

¹⁹But it happened at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given to Adriel the Meholathite as a wife. (1 Sam. 18:17-19)

- B. **Who am I:** David responded in humility to the honor of being in the royal family. He responded in gratitude, not anger. He could have said, I am the one Samuel anointed, the one who killed Goliath to save the nation, and the one who is loved by so many in Israel. Instead he asked, what is my life (rank in life), or my father's family, being a simple shepherd with Moabite blood (Ruth 4:13-17)?

VII. DAVID MARRIED MICHAL (1 SAM. 18:20-27)

- A. Saul offered him marriage to his youngest daughter Michal as another deceitful scheme (18:20-27) to kill David indirectly by demanding an outrageously high dowry for her—that he kill 100 Philistines. The offer of marriage to Michal was Saul's third means of seeking to kill David.

²⁰Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David. They told Saul, and the thing pleased him. ²¹Saul said, "I will give her to him, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him." Therefore Saul said to David a second time, "You shall be my son-in-law today."²²Saul commanded his servants, "Communicate with David secretly, and say, 'Look, the king has delight in you...therefore, become the king's son-in-law'..."²³David said, "Does it seem to you a light thing to be a king's son-in-law, seeing I am a poor and lightly esteemed man?"...

²⁵Saul said, "Thus you shall say to David: 'The king does not desire any dowry but one hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to take vengeance on the king's enemies.'" But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines...²⁶it pleased David well to become the king's son-in-law...²⁷David arose and went, he and his men, and killed two hundred men of the Philistines. (1 Sam. 18:20-27)

- B. **Dowry:** David was a poor man and, therefore, unable to pay the bride price for a princess; only a wealthy man could afford to pay the high dowry price that a king's daughter would require. Saul set the price in the form of service instead of money, requiring David to engage in dangerous military exploits with the hope that the Philistines would kill him.
- C. **Humility:** To both marriage offers David responded with humility (18:18, 23). David did not think that he deserved the privileges and honor that he received from God and people. His humility was expressed in truly believing that he was not worthy to be a part of the royal family in the nation that was in covenant with the Lord. He understood Israel's role in God's eyes.

- D. **Gratitude:** David refused to be offended, but responded in gratitude, not anger, at being put in a position that required him to risk his life and at having been publically insulted by Saul refusing to give him his first daughter in marriage. Again, David could have said, “I am the one Samuel anointed and who killed Goliath to save the nation, etc.” But David did not give any signs that he thought that Saul’s demands for this dowry were either dangerous or demeaning.
- ²³***David said, “Does it seem to you a light thing to be a king’s son-in-law, seeing I am a poor and lightly esteemed man?” (1 Sam. 18:23)***
- E. When being passed over for promotion, it seems natural and reasonable to insist on being honored and to think that we deserve more honor than we received. However, these are gifts of God that no one deserves in reality, so we should hold them lightly, not think that we deserve them. That is the foundation of humility. Someone who walks in humility does not feel that they deserve more honor.
- ³***I say...to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. (Rom. 12:3)***
- F. Saul’s fear of David increased because he knew the Lord and the people favored David (18:28-30).
- ²⁸***Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal...loved him; ²⁹and Saul was still more afraid of David. So Saul became David’s enemy continually. ³⁰Then the princes of the Philistines went out to war. And so it was, whenever they went out, that David behaved more wisely than all the servants of Saul, so that his name became highly esteemed. (1 Sam. 18:28-30)***
- G. **Enemy continually:** Saul was a confirmed enemy of David for the rest of his days (18:29). Saul became his enemy continually, which eventually led him to seek to kill David directly (19:1).
- H. **Highly esteemed:** David’s actions and attitude resulted in his name being esteemed, the opposite of what Saul wanted to happen. It backfired on Saul. David was not killed by the Philistines, but rather gained more honor in the nation, even as Saul sought to destroy his life and honor. God overruled the anger of Saul and the Philistines, causing it to contribute to God’s plan for David.
- ¹⁰***Surely the wrath of man shall praise You [God overrules it to fulfill His purpose]. (Ps. 76:10)***
- I. **Behaved wisely:** David behaved wisely and was successful in promotion and adversity. Behaving wisely included being more successful than any of Saul’s other officers. He did not take advantage of his position in any way. He did not bully, manipulate, or promote himself in his new position or use information to which he had access for his benefit. He did not threaten people who did not embrace what he wanted. David did not tell others how badly Saul was treating him. He acted wisely in holding his speech (16:18 prudent of speech). David had many stories against Saul, but did not use them to undermine him. Saul broke his promises to him, but David did not speak of this to others.
- J. **Leadership lesson:** David was not going to die until he had completed God’s plan for his life. We cannot die until we complete the will of God in our lives.