



Kiss The Son

1 Samuel 18:1-30

Grace Church | 2.14.21

I wonder how many of you know the story of Charles VI, king of France from 1380-1422. He is the King whose reign saw the most famous battle of the Hundred Years War between France and England—the battle of Agincourt, where King Henry V of England defeated the French although being vastly outnumbered. Henry led his troops to battle that day, but Charles did not. Charles didn't ride out into battle—he stayed home—because he suffered from severe mental instability and schizophrenia. The king was mad. When Charles was in one of his spells, it's said he wouldn't barely move from his chair or bed, not for meals or to change his clothes. His attendants had to cut his clothes off of him and feed him his food personally. Why? Because Charles became convinced that he was made of glass. If he moved too suddenly, he may break into a thousand pieces. So he barely moved, or wrapped himself in blankets, and even had iron rods sewn into his clothes in case he bumped into something.¹ For nearly 30 years, Charles VI ruled the kingdom of France in this state. He was completely mad, succumbed to what is called now “glass delusion”.

Apparently, it's not all too uncommon for kings and those in high positions of power and authority to experience mental breakdowns. Here in 1 Samuel 18 Saul's madness begins to show itself to us in full force. Overcome with jealousy, rage, and desperate not to lose his power, Saul begins the slow descent into some sort of schizophrenia. Saul doesn't suffer from glass delusion, but he does suffer from a self-delusion. He thinks David is out to get him, when in reality it's not David that is turning the gears of history, it's God.

Now, we look at Charles VI and perhaps find little common ground there of course—if any of you suffer from glass delusion come find me after service and we can get you help—but the reality is that we too suffer from delusion, a delusion that makes us just as mad as King Saul. Our delusion is a self-delusion: we think far too much of ourselves. Call it entitlement or pride or narcissism or being power-hungry—we all suffer from it. We gather glory for ourselves, we want to be the heroes of our story, we want praise and honor for our accomplishments. But our text today teaches us something different. It tells us that all glory and honor and favor belongs not to us, but to Jesus Christ, God's anointed one. And the more sinfully self-obsessed we are, the more that bothers us. But here is the thing:

¹ <https://daily.jstor.org/french-king-who-believed-made-glass/>



When we gather for ourselves glory and honor instead of giving it back to Christ, we are just as delusional as Saul. But here is the good news that we will rest in this morning: when we lay down our desire for our own praise and give it rightly to God in Christ—we get to take part in the blessings of God with him. In other words: the self-delusion of gathering glory for yourself may feel good now, but it's promises are empty. But the joy of living in covenant communion with Christ by humble faith: those joys never end.

I'll flesh that out more as we go. First, let's look at three ways God gives favor, then we will examine two responses to God's favor.

How God Gives Favor

Nothing hurts our ego more than hearing that we have received something we do not deserve. And so we read chapter 17 of 1 Samuel last week and long to be David, the conquering hero. But in our text today the truth comes out: David isn't the hero, he is the receipt of undeserved favor. The way David is represented in chapter 18 is purposefully passive. All the good things are coming to him—all he does is continue to fight and trust and live by faith. So this teaches us something: God gives favor to those who trust him, but it's not a one-to-one correlation. In other words, God chooses who he has favor upon. He is not a divine vending machine. I think often of the sovereign choice of Noah—saved by God solely from destruction. Why? Genesis 6 simply tells us: "Noah found favor in the sight of God." Similarly Abraham, called out from his land and said: "I will bless you." For no other reason than God decided to. God's favor is unmerited.

1. Covenant Love

Notice the overall theme of chapter 18 in regards to David. Remember, David is God's anointed—full of the Holy Spirit. Not because he looks the part necessarily but because God chose him as the youngest and smallest, back in chapter 16. So it's clear from last week that David's victory over Goliath is a sign that God has anointed and favored him. But here in chapter 17 we see some of the effects of that favor. Here in just 30 verses, we find four references to David's military success and three different assertions that God is "with" David. A careful reader will notice there is one verb repeated six times in the text, always with David as the object. The word is *love*. Again and again we are shown how all people save Saul are drawn to love David. **Verse 1**, Saul's son Jonathan loves David. **Verse 16**, all of Israel and Judah loved David. And verse **20**, Saul's daughter Michal loved David. How is God showing favor on his anointed? Through love: both from God and man.

The height of this love is shown to us in Jonathan. **Verse 1** launches us into this relationship between the two men. Remember Jonathan is pictured as valiant and full of faith himself, as we saw back in chapter 14. So Jonathan notices David's victory as says to himself: here is a man who is like me. Here is a man, **verse 3**, that I can love as my own soul, a kindred spirit.



The text says he makes or literally “cuts” a covenant with David. A covenant, we know is simply a binding agreement. It is cut because typically it involved a sacrifice, where an animal was cut in half and the promise was: “if we break this covenant, we will be cut in half like this animal.” We aren’t sure exactly the stipulations of the covenant are for these men, but what is important is that this symbolizes their intense devotion to one another. The word for love has no sexual connotations whatsoever—that is a different word in Hebrew—but rather it implies a kind of mutuality and friendship and respect that endears these men to one another.

Notice **verse 4**. Not only does Jonathan make a covenant with David to show his love for him, he takes off his own armor and his royal robe and gifts it to David. We will circle back to Jonathan’s actions here in a moment, but for now simply notice the unmerited favor of love David receives. He is a nobody from nowhere, and now the heir of the throne is saying to him: I will follow you—you are the protector of Israel and my captain. So while David refused Saul’s armor earlier, now he accepts Jonathans.

The love that the people have for David is expressed in the songs of the Israelite women in **verse 5-7**. David is set over men of war, in a sense seeming to take Jonathan’s place as the favored son of the king. And people start to take notice. The people honor their king, but they bring praise to David too. This kind of parallel verse wouldn’t necessarily been a mockery of Saul, but he certainly sees it that way. **Verse 8**, it displeased him, so where does his intentions go? **Verse 9**, he eyes him.

2. Providential Protection

But David is unhindered. The second evidence of God’s favor is providential protection. David sits with Saul, calm and collected and full of the weapon of faith: an instrument, while Saul has his spear, the weapon of human invention. Twice the mad king hurls his spear at David, and twice David evades. You have to wonder why David stuck around the first time, but it was likely because at this point Saul’s madness, his envious pride, is just beneath the surface—it comes out in a sinister plot later but it’s not yet public. David had no reason to suspect Saul’s actions were anything more than his mental instability and not personally pointed at David. Still, it must have angered Saul, to be so weak that he can’t even kill a defenseless harp player with his spear when he wanted to. Yahweh’s favor protects David, even when he is unaware.

3. Spirit Empowerment

This continues as Saul’s schemes get even more complicated. **Versus 12-16** detail how Saul’s plan is to get David killed by removing him from his nice job in the palace playing the lyre and putting him into the battlefield. This phrase “going out and coming in before the people” is typically used of the king—signifying the way the king represents the people and fights their battles. In essence, Saul is handing over his role to David, expecting him to fail. But David achieves even greater success. Why? **Verse 14** tells us “the Lord was with him.” The Spirit of the Lord has anointed David and empowered him for success in everything he does.



What is the significance of all of this favor and blessing: love, protection, and empowerment? Well, the significance for us is that it is what we all crave, is it not? We desire the favor of the Lord in our lives. But here is what we have to remember: this isn't possible by self-advancement or effort. The rise to power by the anointed king is not selfish ambition—God does it. It's outside of our control.

Which again, hits us pretty hard. For me to stand up here and say that what Christians believe is that love, protection from harm, and empowerment to be successful is not a right you possess, nor something you can work for, flies right in the face of our American self-made psyche. But here is the hard truth: God blesses who he wants, and favors who he wants. None of us deserve it. And how he provides that favor is in the scheme of the gospel news: Jesus Christ is the anointed one, the favored one of God. At his baptism, God calls out audibly and says: "this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." He possesses the unbroken covenant love of the Father. He walked continually in the confidence of providential protection, and he lived totally empowered by the Holy Spirit. And what is the teaching of Jesus? Take up your cross, and follow me. Leave father and mother and possessions and earthly goals and come under my covenant love, where I will protect you and I will empower you by my spirit, not yours.

And so we look at this passage and we are struck by the favor of God on David's life, and we look at our lives, and we wonder: do I have that same favor? And the answer to that question is if you are in Jesus Christ—if you really have turned away from your sins and you follow him truly and not just say you do—the favor of Jesus Christ is your favor. God is for you and with you and will bring about your sanctification. The Apostle puts it like this in Ephesians 1:

In him we have obtained an inheritance... In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

But notice the last part there. If Jesus Christ is the favored one of God, we only receive the favor of God in him. And that favor we have received is not for the praise of ourselves, but for what? The praise of *his* glory.

We love to hear that in Christ we have an inheritance! Who doesn't want to hear that, the grace of God has made us rich with eternal life. But what we struggle to hear is we can never take credit for those riches. So let's do this with the rest of our time. Let's talk about that struggle, that fight we have in our hearts. We want the favor of God, but we struggle when we see it. When we see others succeed, we want their success. When we hear the promises of the gospel, we forget to praise God and instead give ourselves a pat on the back. So here are three responses to seeing the favor of God in real time. Two are faithless, one is faithful.



Two Ways to Respond To God's Favor

1. Bitterness and Envious Plotting

This is Saul's first reaction, isn't it? He sees the favor of God in David's life, and he can't control himself. He is so embittered by the praise of David even just being on his level, he can't stand it. Immediately his thoughts go towards eliminating David, and the first thing he does is simply use his blind emotional rage to hurl spears at David.

In a similar vein, we can also respond to the favor of God by secretly plotting our own glory. After his public blow-up, Saul decides to take his anger to the white board for some secrecy. His goal is to marry David off to one of his daughters, and make sure that the bride price, which he knows David cannot pay, is to kill so many Philistines that the odds are high he would die in battle. After things fall through with his first daughter, the text says in **verse 20** that Saul was pleased his daughter Michal loved David. Why? Because now is the opportunity to get him, **verse 21**. Saul tries to get in David's ear, appeal to his ego a bit, in **verse 22**. Then he unleashes his crude plot: give me the foreskins of 100 Philistines, and you won't have to pay a dime for my daughter.

Saul expects David to fail in this gruesome task, but **verse 26-27**, we see David does double the work faster than the time allotted to him. This dude is unstoppable, all Saul can do now is **verse 29**, be more afraid and his continual enemy. Saul is so taken aback by the favor of the Lord on David's life that his only options are to 1) attack him in a fit of rage; or 2) plot to destroy him behind his back. Now, the curious thing about Saul is he does have some perception here. Look again at **verse 12**. He notices God is with David. He recognizes this in his rejection of God, the Spirit of God has departed from him and now is with David. That then causes fear in his heart. What is this fear? I think it's a fear that surfaces from entitlement and pride. Saul is afraid to see who he really is: a rejected and narcissistic king who is in dire need of repentance. Saul is so afraid of admitting the truth that he knows—that David has taken his place—that he would rather kill David than to see him surpass him.

Now the difference between Saul and the Christian is that in Christ, the Spirit of the Lord never leaves us. But I think this is a real point here. There may be some in the room today who do not know Christ. Like Saul, you know that the favor of the Lord is not upon them. You know they are sinners, you know that their best efforts always end up short. But you are too afraid of admitting that. So when you see someone else walking in the freedom of acknowledging weakness, you have to fight not to be bitter. But there is release for you: if you will come truly to Christ now and admit your need before him, he will not turn you away.

The gospel of John has this curious exchange, right at the end in chapter 21, when Peter has this restorative conversation with Jesus. He has finally realized his need of Christ, and is accepted into the love of Jesus. And right after that though Peter sees John and asks: "what about him"? In other words, Peter is already comparing his experience to John's. And Jesus says to Peter: "If it is my will



that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!” In other words: why are you comparing yourself? Both of you are kept only in my will. You follow me, and I’ll take care of you and the rest of my sheep.

If you are in Christ, here is the point. There will be days, plenty of them, when you're afraid to admit your sin. You will be tempted to hide your weakness, to admit that you are in desperate need of the grace of God. You will want to compare yourself to others who seem to be walking in the favor of God when you don't. And the longer you hold onto that, the harder it will be to not be bitter at both your brothers and sisters and at God. The more fearful you are of being less than, the more bitterness will rise up in your heart. The way to escape bitterness is through accepting the reality that you need God always. And the freedom of that is what in the rich mercy of God, he is ready to take you in. You are not too far gone! You can admit your need and turn to Christ again for help. You follow him, and he will take care of the rest.

When you struggle to believe the favor of the Lord is unmerited, when you envy those around you who seem to receive it more, when you think you deserve more than you have from God, you are just as mad as king Saul. And it's not worth it. Let me remind you of two reasons why:

First, plotting for your own praise is incredibly futile. You really can't stop God's anointed king, and it's silly to try. When we believe that you know better than God how to dispense his grace and favor, we become just like the Israelites who put Christ to death. Why did the Pharisees and the religious rulers want Jesus dead? They saw God's favor on him, and they envied him. And it was futile, wasn't it? They thought they got rid of their problem, but really they were just tools in the sovereign hands of God to bring about his purposes. Whether you like it or not, God will use you for his purposes. The question is: will you submit to be used willingly or will you buck up against him in envy and pride?

Secondly, envying the favor of God in others will leave you joyless and empty. Saul has lost all the joy of life. He is an empty shell of a king. So are we when we try to question the favor of God. When we believe we deserve grace more than someone else, all we are doing is cheapening the free grace of God. We are creating a gospel of self that will leave us empty.

How then does this text teach us to respond in faith to the undeserved favor of God? I think Jonathan provides the example.

2. A Humble Embrace of Covenant Love

Go back to Jonathan and David. His response to David's favor could not be more different than Saul. Rather than envying David, he loves David. Instead of plotting to kill David, he unarms himself and protects David. **Verse 4**, he literally strips himself of his royal robe and his armor, giving them to David. This act of incredible humility is meant to symbolize to us how we are to accept the grace of God in Christ. Jonathan is an impressive guy. He has a resume, he has political standing, he has fame. But all of it he is willing to lay down, lay aside, at the feet of David. All of it:



his accomplishments, his possessions, he strips it off in love for David. Not only that, he enters into covenant with David: he says, your life is my life, your welfare is my welfare, your family is my family. Not a hint of envy, not a hint of self-deception, not a hint of narcissism, not a hint of entitlement, only love.

Here, friends, is the way we respond to the favor of God. Jesus Christ, we learned last week, is our great champion. He is the king of everyone and everywhere. God has exalted him in his humanity above everything. He is worthy of all you have to offer and all you can give. In comparison with you, the favor he possesses is like the sun and your iphone flashlight. To see rightly, like Jonathan did, the glory of the Lord's anointed king, is to lay down all our accomplishments, all our worldly possessions, all our pride, and to put it at his feet and say: here it is! If I'm going to be blessed, it's not because I am great, but because you are; if I am going to succeed, it's not because I did it, but you did it for me!

Psalms 2 tells of the reign of God's anointed king. Listen to this language:

Psalms 2:2-4, 12

Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying,
"Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us."

He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.
Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Friends, here is the gospel. You do not even deserve a glance from the God of the universe. He made you and loves you, but you rejected him a long time ago in your sin. You were like Saul and the Nations: plotting in vain and setting yourself up against the true king. And it's humorous, your attempts to wrestle favor and glory from God! But God, in his rich mercy, has sent his anointed king, his Son, Jesus Christ, to you anyway. He bled and died on the cross and rose again to crush the head of the serpent Satan just like David cut the head off Goliath. And he comes to you today, gentle and lowly, and wants to make a new covenant with you. ***Jesus Christ, the Anointed one, desires covenant friendship with you. He wants to knit his soul to you forever, to give you all his blessing and inheritance. But you've got to lay down your pride at his feet and offer his praise in your mouth. You've got to kiss the son.***



And that's hard. But the thing is, he is going to get his glory. If you try to go your own way, try to get to God by proving yourself, by setting yourself up against him, you will perish in the way, forgotten. But if today, by faith, you again take refuge in Jesus Christ the Son, you will be blessed in him. If you humbly embrace his covenant love: go his way, not yours, he will never let you go.

Your greatest joy in life and death is not the ways in which you gain glory for yourself. Your greatest joy in life and death is the favor of the Lord surrounding you in Jesus Christ. To be the bride of Christ is far better than to be the master of earth. Listen to the masterful lyrics of Issac Watts, a hymn you may know:

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

