

(Almost) Everyone Loves David (1 Samuel 18:5-30)

I. Saul's Envy and Suspicion Towards David (v.5-13)

Envy: the pain conceived and felt at the sight of any excellence or happiness. It is not just desiring what another person has; it is to resent that they have it. It is ill-willed regarding another's possessions and achievements. It is an entitlement that begrudges someone else for having virtuous or righteous advantages. It is pained at seeing another's success and will go through great lengths to propagate the suffering it experiences. It can never rejoice with or in another person and is never content.

- As the Israelite soldiers returned (most likely to Gibeah), they were celebrated; women sang, played instruments and danced in the streets.
- David's name was mentioned in the same song as Saul's. Saul became envious of David. When Jonathan was victorious against the Philistines (13:4), all of Israel heard that Saul was the victor; Jonathan's name was never revealed.
- Now, David is publicly acclaimed as a hero; the thousands and tens of thousands are stock pairs to be used as synonyms; it is hyperbolic language (v.7).
- The women did not intend to insult Saul. They came out to meet Saul, not David (v.6). Unlike the song of Moses and Miriam, which is God-centered (Ex. 15:1-21), this song is man-centered; there is no mention of the LORD. Saul is appalled, not that God's ascribed glory is withheld, but that David's name is mentioned with his and given the greater accolades.
- Saul is angry. This is the second time Saul is described as being angry. Previously, it was a righteous anger (11:6). Now, it is sinful (18:8).

Suspicion: Saul is beginning to put the pieces together of what Samuel has already revealed to him (13:12-15; 15:24-28); is David his replacement? Saul "eyed" David.

- The next day (v.10), a harmful spirit rushed upon him, which is similar to previous accounts (16:14-23). This time, however, Saul tries to kill David; he throws two spears while David is playing the lyre for him.
- The "raving" is the same Hebrew word that is translated "prophesying" (10:9-10). Translators chose "raving" because it was not peaceful; Saul's words and actions are violent and erratic. Interestingly, no one appears alarmed or surprised.
- Formerly, David's playing soothed Saul; now, his presence is odious and repugnant. Ironically, Saul is the fearful one (v.12). After this incident, Saul removed David from his court as a musician.
- Saul's intention in making David the commander of a thousand men was to place him in a volatile position; to be killed by the Philistines. In doing this, Saul assumed that David's triumphs would eventually run out.
- By God's providence, David was victorious in battle, as he came back and forth from war (v.5, 12-16) and was successful wherever he went. This was because the LORD was with him (v.14).

2. Saul's Antics (v.17-30)

Saul's Scheming Scenario #1: Merab (v.17-19)

- Saul may not have issued the rewards for the man who defeated Goliath (17:24-27). David at this point is still poor (18:23) and does not have Saul's daughter in marriage. Now, he must fight against the Philistines to win her (v.18).
- When Saul spoke with David for the second time (17:31-40, 58), Saul inquired who David's father was, not for the dispensing of rewards (v.24-27), but instead out of curiosity; if David defeats Goliath, Saul will conscript him to fight (14:52). Additionally, Saul is a suspicious man. David refers to himself, and later his father, as Saul's servant (17:32, 58). David does not want to be viewed as a threat.
- The text indicates that David did fight for Saul (v.18-19). Instead of Merab being given to David, she married Adriel the Meholathite (v.19). Saul never intended to consummate Merab's union to David; it was a ploy to place David in the hands of the Philistines. The children of this marriage will eventually be hanged by the Gibeonites because of Saul's sin (2 Samuel 21:8).

Saul's Scheming Scenario #2: Michal (v.20-29)

- Saul's plan with Merab did not work; David is still alive. Saul has reneged his previous commitment (Merab to Adriel instead of David).
- Saul is informed of his other daughter, Michal, and her love towards David. Similar to Saul's previous love (16:21) and Jonathan's love (18:1), this is a political love that is based on commitment and loyalty.
- Saul, in his wickedness, will play Michal's loyalty to his own advantage. However, David cannot afford the bride price (v.25) for Michal's hand in marriage.
- The bride-price in Israel was paid by the groom to the woman's father (Ex. 22:16-17). This law required a man to pay a hefty sum (typically 2-3 years wage) to the father of a woman he has violated. Bride-prices in cases where the woman has not been violated, as in this case, could be established by the father (Gen. 34:8-12). Saul sets the bride-price: 100 Philistine foreskins.
- David and his men return with twice the bride-price; 200 Philistine foreskins.

Despite Saul's duplicity and shenanigans, David's popularity and others' love for him grows; Jonathan loves David (18:1), all of Judah loves David (18:16), all of Israel loves David (18:16), Michal loves David (18:20, 28) and all of Saul's servants love David (18:22). While David is the object of God's favor and goodness, he is the envy of Saul.

Notwithstanding Saul's many attempts to kill David, he placed David in situations to prosper. Saul wants David to avenge his enemies (18:25), yet ironically, David, as Saul's enemy, is enriched. What Jonathan did to David privately through a covenant, Saul now makes public, through the covenant of marriage to his daughter Michal. David is now the son-in-law of Saul, and a prince (1 Samuel 13:14). For the first time, Saul knows that the LORD is with David, and he is terrified (v.28-29).