

Saul and David

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[0:00] It's lovely to see you all again, and I'm a bit short, so I'm going to push this down a little bit. So today we're in the book of Samuel again. Yes, thank you David.

We're going to take a moment just to remind ourselves of where we are in the narrative. So God's people, Israel, were dissatisfied. They wanted a king, not to bring them closer to God or to lead them into holiness, but because they wanted to be like all the other nations.

As a leader, Samuel prays to God about this situation. And God says to Samuel, actually they're not just rejecting Samuel, but they are rejecting God as king.

It's from 1 Samuel 8, 7. And God, being slow to anger and abounding in unfailing love, gives them what they want. But Samuel is to warn Israel of exactly what they'll be getting with human leadership, human kings.

And so Saul comes along, and he is anointed king over Israel. God gave abundantly to Saul and enabled him for the task.

[1:22] And yet Saul, as we've seen, he refused to be obedient to God. Saul rejected the Lord as the true sovereign over Israel.

And so as a result, the Lord rejected Saul. Rejected him as king. In 1 Samuel 15, 28. Samuel gives this news to Saul, and he says, The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to one of your neighbours, to one who is better than you.

That stings a bit, doesn't it? And so we meet David, who is anointed to be the future king over Israel. So David would enter into Saul's service.

Firstly as a musician, to comfort Saul. And then later to become his armour bearer. So as Saul rejected God, I found this very, very interesting part of the story.

So God removed the help of his spirit from Saul. Leaving Saul open to being tormented by a harmful spirit.

[2:37] We saw that in chapter 16. So then David would come and he would soothe Saul. He would soothe all these negative things that were happening in him by playing the lyre.

Is a lyre like a harp or is it a guitar? I don't know, I didn't do the research on that. It's like a small harp. I instantly think of it as guitar. But anyway, so David would play the lyre to soothe Saul.

Last week, we heard about one of the most famous stories in all the Old Testament. David versus Goliath. So David gained a victory over the enemy, the Philistines, by defeating their something like, was it Daniel will be able to tell me, how tall was Goliath?

Nearly 10 foot. That's a big man. That's a big man. So David defeated Goliath. And Goliath was a champion that tormented the armies of Israel for 40 days.

And it was a defeat that enabled a series of further defeats over the Philistines by Israel. Victory for Saul's army. So this shepherd boy and musician did seemingly what no one else was able to do, or probably more precisely what no one else was willing to do, because they were probably too scared.

[4:00] And I would say fairly rightly so if you're coming up against a man that size. How? How did he do this? Well, he did it through faith. That's what we heard.

And so Saul was very determined to keep hold of this warrior. This shepherd boy warrior. Saul saw the talent in him and he was like, I must have that man here.

And he was, David was a prosperous addition to Saul's kingdom. And we'll see that like the Israelites in their determination to have a human king, actually Saul wanted a good thing, but he

wanted it all for the wrong reasons.

Who remembers the 90s? Yeah? Could be more than that, surely. The older I get, the less hands go up when I ask that question.

Who remembers the picture, what the picture is? Does anyone know what the picture is? Precisely. A round of applause for Megan.

[5:14] That's right. It's a magic eye picture. Interestingly, magic eye is actually a brand name. I think the technical term for it is a random dot auto stereogram.

Of course, we can see why they called it magic eye, why everybody called it magic eye. That's right. It's a magic eye. So on the surface, if you don't know, the magic eye is a very pretty picture of dots and colors and nice things.

And you get some which are made up of birds and butterflies and all other nice things. It's lovely, yes. But if you were to investigate it further, if you were to look deeper, ask about, you might find that you can see something else too.

Can anybody see something else? Usually you have to be right up on top of it. Can we get a round of applause for that, man? No?

Come on, round of applause. That's right. It's a fish. I didn't actually expect anybody to get it. Oh, you've got a screen. He's cheating. Okay. Well, if you want to have another look at it, I have got a picture and I've printed it out and it's just down to the left of me.

[6:24] Right. I'm going off track. Yes. So it's a beautiful bluey color picture, but there's something else underneath this picture. And that's a bit like what we see with the people in the chapter today.

So today is going to be a bit of a character study. We're going to be thinking about what we see of Jonathan's love. We're going to see something of Saul's fear.

And David's something, something, something. We'll come to that. So Jonathan's love. So the first thing that we're told, please open your Bibles, by the way, if they're not open already, to 1 Samuel 18.

The first thing that we're told is that directly after the conversation with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David. So the word here actually describes two things being bound together in league with each other.

At least that's the way I understand it. Jonathan, being the king's son and heir to the throne, probably would have been by the side of the king, listening as the conversation between King Saul and David went on about Goliath.

[7:40] And he probably would have witnessed the events that happened with David and Goliath. And at the end of chapter 17, actually tells us very little about the conversation that happened between King Saul and David.

But I imagine that there probably was more than the few words that we read about. I don't think we can speculate on that. But I can picture, I can picture Jonathan standing there with a big grin on his face as he listens to this story as it's told by David.

See, Jonathan and David, they had an awful lot in common. They were both fearless warriors through their faith. Remember back in chapter 14, Jonathan and his armor bearer, they go up to attack the Philistines.

And by themselves, they take out 20 men. Verse 12 in chapter 14, Jonathan says this to his armor bearer. He says, Climb up after me.

The Lord has given them into the hand of Israel. Likewise, as we heard David against Goliath, the odds were against him also. Yet he trusted in the Lord.

[8:50] And he said to Saul in chapter 17, verse 37, The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.

Faith was at the very foundation of their motives of both of these men. Fearless warriors with faith at the very center of all of it.

Also, both men were very practical, very practical men with their gifts. And I wanted to point this out. I think this is an important thing. That God does equip people with practical gifts.

The victories that these men had over the Philistines were by God's hand. But there were practical elements to it. God's practical gifts go towards achieving amazing results.

See, Jonathan in chapter 14 had a certain wisdom of battle tactics. He used cunning and stealth to approach the enemy from a position that they wouldn't expect, giving them an advantage.

[10:01] Later on in the same chapter, in verse 30, Jonathan makes a statement that the battle against the Philistines probably would have gone better if they'd actually eaten something.

It doesn't come much more practical than eating food for energy. These are practical men. David was equally as practical. Chapter 17, verses 39 and 40 shows that he didn't, he didn't just march out to the enemy haphazardly without thinking about it and say, oh, it's okay.

God will take care of it. That's not what he did. When we read the scriptures, we see that he evaluated his own physical limits. When we see it, we see that when he was putting on the armor, he said, I can't go out to battle in this.

He chose a sling and stones as weapons, as weapons. On a couple of verses earlier, he was actually trying on a sword.

See, I suspect, this is just what I suspect, but I suspect that he realized that at 10 foot tall, Goliath would have had a reach with a sword and power that he would not have had.

[11:08] And he leaned into using weapons that would equalize both of those factors. The sling and the stones would have added power and reach beyond that which Goliath could handle, which is what we saw.

But that doesn't mean, when we talk about practicality and gifts, it doesn't mean that there's no room for God.

Actually, quite the opposite. David did say, the battle is the Lord's. What it means is, God is behind the little things, as well as the big things. Who gave these men wisdom in battle?

It was God. Who provided the stones that would take down Goliath? It was God. Who gave them courage and physical strength? It was God. We see God's hand in the big miracles, and we love to talk about that, don't we?

We can also see God's hand in the little things, as well. All those little things are actually amazing. When we look deeply into things, and see how they all come together, how God weaves everything together for those, who love him.

[12:22] So this is an encouragement to me, and I hope it is to you, that as we go about our day, we can actually pray for the little things, can't we? We don't have to pray, and we should pray for big things to happen, but we can pray for those little decisions.

Every little thing that comes along in our day, God's got that in hand. So these similar characteristics, I think, are part of why the text tells us, that Jonathan and David were one in spirit. They were very alike, but there is more, as the writer goes on to say, and he loved him as himself. They were similar people, sure, they were both superior warriors, fine, but this connection was clearly deeper than that.

They shared an interest, but hobbies don't tend to bring people that close together. Hobbies don't give people that kind of a connection, but what does is a love for God, and I think that's what we're seeing there.

It reminds me of 1 John 4, 7 that says, Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God, and knows God.

[13:40] Verse 3 tells us that it's a covenantal love. It's founded on promises. It's intended to be permanent. As two warriors, this probably would have been promises, like for looking out for each other, and defending each other, etc.

So we see the forming of this amazing friendship between Jonathan and David. David has just been positioned by Saul to be a warrior for his kingdom.

So as a response, in verse 4, Jonathan gives over to David all the items that would be appropriate for a person in that position. You might think this is a symbolic act.

It could well be. I think there's varying opinions on this. Some people have suggested that Jonathan recognised David as the Lord's next anointed king.

There's a high chance that that's possible. Or it could be that just out of love, out of kindness, he saw that a shepherd boy warrior wouldn't have had the money or the experience or wouldn't have owned all of the armour and things, the sword that he would have needed to be able to do the job,

so he gave it to him.

[14:54] There are various opinions on this. I'll leave you to make up your mind on that. But either way, what we see here as we open the chapter up, that he was motivated out of love for David.

And at the beginning of this chapter, we have standing before us as we go on, God's anointed future king equipped for the task ahead. So David goes to work soldiering for the king. And as we read up to verse 7, everyone seems pretty happy, right? There's a lot of joy. Jonathan loves David. The soldiers and leaders are all really happy with his performance.

All the town's women come out and they celebrate in song the victories of David. Verse 7, as they dance, they sang, Saul has slain his thousands and David his tens of thousands.

If the chapter ended here, we'd have a pretty joyful text to work from today, wouldn't we? But, it doesn't. The song, sung by the town's women, greatly upset Saul.

[16:11] And of course it did. Of course it did. He's the king. He's the king. And they just put this young shepherd boy warrior warrior with little experience above him.

It hurts when people mark you down, doesn't it? It does. But to do it in song, that's even more humiliating. Can you imagine, can you imagine, you come second in a race and you finish the race and you're standing there and you're expecting to be presented with a silver medal and what do you get?

People coming out, dancing and singing, playing their instruments and say, ha ha, someone's better than you. Not a nice feeling. No, not a nice feeling. It would be devastating.

And so this event leads us into the biggest part of the chapter which centres around Saul's response to what's going on with David. So let's take a closer look at the emotions of Saul.

So you're going to help me out here. I hope you've got your Bibles open. Verse 8, Saul was very angry. Verse 12, Saul was very afraid.

[17:35] Verse 15, when Saul saw, that's a hard thing to say, when Saul saw, how successful he was, he was afraid.

Verse 29, Saul became still more... I think it's afraid, isn't it? Did I get that wrong? It's afraid.

How was Saul feeling at this part of his life? Now put up your hand if you've ever felt afraid.

We've all felt afraid, haven't we? So why am I making this point? Firstly, because it's in the Bible. Saul, it's what God is saying and it's repeated which means usually when we see that it's a good indication that we need to pay particular attention to it.

But also, and this may be controversial, I felt really sorry for Saul. I mean, this is narrative literature, sure. We could just label him as he's the disobedient king and we can boo him at the right time and we can wait for him to fall from his throne and he gets toppled and then we can cheer.

[18:55] But actually, you know, I don't think that's a, that's a very helpful way to view real people and real history. So I thought I'd just add this as a little reminder that as we go through and we look at Saul's actions and reactions we can remember that for all his wrongdoings he was just human, wasn't he?

He was a man that was afraid and we've all been afraid. Okay, so he's angry too but fear is at the very root of this. A wise man said fear leads to hate, hate leads to anger, anger leads to suffering. That's what a wise man said. Why was Saul so afraid? I think the answer to this question is in verse 8 and 9.

Remember Samuel told Saul that the Lord has torn the kingdom away from him and given it to a neighbour that is better. Saul says in verse 8, what more can he get but the kingdom?

He began to watch him closely. Saul knows, doesn't he? He knows what's coming. I think he does. The process has begun. He's on his way to losing the kingdom and he's going to lose his power and authority along with it and a lot more.

[20:14] Almost as soon as he realises what's going on we see Saul's fear really come out. Verse 10 says, it was the next day and a harmful spirit from God came upon Saul and we saw something similar to that in chapter 16.

God had previously chosen Saul and sent his spirit to Saul to help him with the task of being king. But as Saul continued to reject God, God withdrew the help of his spirit.

It's worth noting and I'll throw this in here, I don't think this is connected with losing salvation. I don't think it's the same thing. I don't think that's what's being said in the text. I think if you continually reject the help and protection of God then you're left open to the spiritual realities of the world with no help and no protection.

It makes sense. Evil spirits are a reality of the world and they do still come under the authority of God which is probably what is meant by an evil spirit from God.

I don't think the text is saying that God is intentionally tormenting Saul as it were. So here is Saul prophesying meaning something like announcing to be speaking which in this case was probably a long stream of words that sounded a bit mad and we know this firstly because of his mental state angry, frustrated, upset, scared and secondly because of the influence of the evil spirit.

[21:55] It does make us aware that when the Bible says prophesying that we need to look very carefully at the literary context and not assume it automatically means something like God revealing the future to people.

So Saul moves to attack David with a spear not once but twice. This was intended to kill David. Saul wanted to kill David and it was a turning point for Saul in his life story.

If you're to peek outside of this chapter you'll see how from here Saul was completely consumed with killing David chasing him about and it doesn't end well for him but I won't go into that that's ahead in our studies.

Throughout the rest of the chapter Saul was scheming. He was scheming and plotting against David in an attempt to kill him and keep hold of the throne.

We're told of three main schemes and I've put them up there on the screen. Scheme 1 verse 13 He sent David away from him. I read this as Saul being eager to get him out to war in hopes that he would be killed.

[23:09] Having command over a thousand men certainly wouldn't be an easy task but even even more so it would be a difficult task for those who didn't have any experience which David didn't have a lot of.

I would say that normally I would imagine it would end in failure but it's not a problem for God and so it wasn't a problem for David. We see that quite clearly in verse 12 and 14 it says the Lord was with David and because of that David was successful.

That's scheme one. Scheme two verse 17 in the last chapter there was a promise that whoever killed the Philistine champion would get Saul's daughter's hand in marriage.

We remember that don't we? They would get what's her name Merab was it? Yeah the first one. We're told that this promise was repeated to him several times if you were to look back at chapter 17 verse 27 and chapter 17 verse 30 we see this repetition the person that kills the champion will get the king's daughter's hand in marriage and Saul here promises his daughter to David again but now he's added extra stipulations of a commitment to fighting the Philistines again his motives were all about David being killed by the Philistines this is what he's hoping you might think by David's response he's turning down the offer of marriage as he says who am I and what is my family or clan in Israel that I should become the king's son-in-law sounds like he's turning down the offer but I'm going to make the argument that he's not I don't think that's what's happening here as he says more or less the same thing again to Saul before he marries

[25:05] Michal so it's not a rejection of the offer I think David had every intention to marry Merab but the opportunity was revoked by Saul as we see in verse 19 this was the level Saul would sink in order to hurt David right down to the personal emotional level of marriage that's the second scheme of Saul and the third scheme of Saul that we see in this chapter verse 26 Saul's daughter Michal was in love with David Saul's plan was to offer her to him as a bride bride sorry not bride bride at the price at the price of 100 Philistine foreskins it was a task so intricate and dangerous that David would be sure not to return this was a set up from the start it's clear to see the king's price was 100

David and his men look at verse 27 went and killed 200 all three of Saul's schemes were designed to have the same outcome for David to die fighting the Philistines he wanted David out of the picture while Saul retains everything that he's scared to lose and at the same time keep his hands clean he didn't want to get his hands dirty and others to do the task for him so as we get down towards the end of the chapter what was Saul's outcome of the scheming it was complete failure

wasn't it he didn't succeed it was the opposite of success and his attempts to get rid of David only ended up with him being even more fearful verse 28 and 29 highlight the fear of loss that we see in Saul firstly the Lord was with

David the implication being not with Saul and secondly even his daughter now would be leaving to get wedded to David who is effectively his enemy and this fear of Saul's would never leave for the rest of his days he remained an enemy to David that's what scripture says I'm going to say isn't that sad it's really sad isn't it we can be have all kinds of feelings when we're reading narrative like this but I think we should be feeling sad so we've looked at Jonathan's love and we've looked at Saul's fear and now we come to the last section David's you might be wondering why my point is missing well I noticed something very interesting about

David in this chapter maybe you did too as we go through the chapter we see pronounced personality from all of the characters don't we just to sum up the section about Jonathan was small in text but it was powerful as we see his love binding him to David and motivating him to give over everything that was precious to him to see David succeed by contrast we read as Saul went down a path of being completely consumed of his fear of David jealousy because the Lord was with David this developed into madness as he fought to cling on to everything he had but started losing it all there's a lot of personality in both of these characters we read about the response of the people surrounding David's victories the troops and the officers were pleased the town's women celebrated in the streets all Israel and Judah loved him because he led their campaigns the king's daughter was in love with him

I think I remember I can't remember if I saw it on a video that I watched or if I read it in a commentary but I think somebody said somewhere along the line that's the only time in the Bible we hear a woman loves a man I don't know how much truth there is in that maybe someone can enlighten me to that later on but when it comes to David we actually really only see the surface of David's personality don't we as we go through the chapter which is interesting because we heard from Daniel last week that David is a big personality right here's a few things that will remind us of that he was a young man bringing cheese sandwiches to his brothers on the battle lines we saw him offended and angry about Goliath's defiance of the armies of the living God we see him asking about the rewards that he would get for killing the Philistine several times over probably something to do with the king's daughter we saw him arguing with his brother all this in the last chapter [30:47] I could go on there's lots more in there but there's a literary shift in this chapter in fact David only speaks twice and both of those times he says more or less the same thing a short sentence speaking in humility about who he is I'm only a poor man and little known and yet the chapter does mention David a lot verse 5 David was so successful that Saul gave him a higher rank in the army verse 12 the Lord was with David in everything he did he had great success because the Lord was with him when Saul saw how successful he was he was afraid of him when Saul realized that the Lord was with David verse 28 verse 30 David met with more success than the rest of Saul's officers seven verses all seemingly pointing to

David and look at the pattern success the Lord success the Lord success the Lord do you think there might be a theme going on here I have a theory in our character study today I think our text is an invite to look closer at our third person and ask the question who do you really see when you look at David do you simply see do we simply see David the shepherd boy who was clever in battle or do we see the Lord God at work through his anointed king David's actions demonstrated who he was he was the anointed future king of Israel protected and enabled by God and like our magic eye picture at the beginning the closer we look the more we see what's underneath and as I read down the chapter

I could see the picture of another anointed king the Lord Jesus he was also a king that was born to a poor family king that was hated by leaders who were trying to kill him king that was plotted against king that had people praising and singing in the streets a king that no enemy could defeat not even death this is the Lord Jesus so I think we can update our three main points of our chapters today we have Jonathan's love Saul's fear and David's Lord that sounds about right doesn't it so that's our study of the chapters today as we bring this into today's context I don't have a lot to say I have three closing points

I have two smaller points and a main thought for us to take ahead of us into the week and the first thought might be difficult to hear but it's a warning so I made an appeal for us earlier not to see Saul as the evil storybook style king but instead just to see him as what he was was just a very scared man and the reason for that is there is an undeniable warning here for us in the character of Saul I don't think materialism is far from any of us particularly now at this point in history particularly in the West and it's an established thing in this culture now we're bombarded with messages to look after ourselves first to love ourselves give ourselves priority it just so happens that the way to do that is by buying up lots of products that will make us happy treat yourself to a new whatever it's nonsense it's absolute nonsense don't believe it the companies tell you they don't believe it say no that's just not true there are some situations where we need to put ourselves first if we're injured or injured or whatever that's okay but it's not a lifestyle it's not a way to live it's not a healthy way of life and as a Christian when we look at ourselves if our relationships are determined first by ourselves by what we can get then it's time for a very serious self-assessment we should always be assessing ourselves but that kind of relationship isn't love it's just an imitation at best it certainly won't result in joy as we saw with Saul that's the warning that we see in that chapter love God first and he will supply all your needs for the task ahead my second smaller point would be the encouragement there's an encouragement here the chapter invites us to look closer at each other at our relationship as God's people as brothers and sisters in Christ especially when we've known each other for so long a lot of us when we really look at each other we see all kinds of things don't we see good we see bad if we're really being honest but if we really make the effort if we really look closely what we will definitely see through the love that we actively show each other in Christ

Jesus is God's sovereign hand working by his spirit who lives in us winning battles blessing his people and building the kingdom that's an encouragement for the week isn't it this is what we can see we can see our God our saviour working in the people around us hallelujah God isn't silent even now he's working out his plans and he's using us to do it what an amazing privilege that is that's incredible isn't that what we want to see that's what we want to see when we look around isn't it we don't always do these things perfectly do we but we can make the effort to see and so my closing point what I'll say to you is I think it's really all boils down to is one question and that question is what our relationship with Jesus looks like right now are we the Jonathan in this chapter are we really seeking to love Jesus daily in our covenant relationship with him and give everything we have over to him see success for the kingdom for his glory or are we the soul of the chapter putting our own wants and needs first and trying to keep Jesus out of our lives it's not black and white is it when we think about it some days we might feel more like Saul than Jonathan other days we might feel more like

[38:27] Jonathan than Saul it's a spectrum and the encouragement is wherever you are there today wherever we are there today whether we feel encouraged whether we feel we could be doing better or even if you don't know Jesus and you're trying to see who he is for the very first time I hope to encourage you with this truth the covenant love of Jesus is absolutely unbreakable as his love unbreakable that love of Jesus will be with us forever until we meet him again in the kingdom isn't that an incredible thing if that's not motivation for the week ahead what is Jesus so loves us he wants that relationship to power through every day every aspect all those little things in our lives for I am convinced that neither death nor life neither angels nor demons neither the present nor the future nor any powers neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord Amen Amen Amen