

21. Wise servant and paranoid king

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Somehow we expect a happy story to follow after a victory. However, the real life is not always like that. As a matter of fact, for Christians, it is the time to watch out. Because God allows the trials and tests to come usually right after a great spiritual, emotional, or physical victory, to build our characters like Jesus.

Likewise, we expected a happy story of David, but after killing the giant Goliath the Bible says differently. While the giant-killing was David's greatest achievement up to this time, it swept him out to a sea not of blissful kingship, but of tumultuous testing – and he was adrift on that uncharted sea for many years.

Tonight we are going to see David who behaves himself wisely and king Saul who cannot handle another person who might have more attention than himself and becomes paranoid.

A. INSTANT POPULARITY

1 Samuel 18:1-2 Now when he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. 2 Saul took him that day, and would not let him go home to his father's house anymore. 3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. 4 And 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.

What kind of interpretation are you getting from this paragraph?

"David, the son of Jesse" becomes an instant household name in Israel and Palestine.

King Saul's son Jonathan was a lot like David. They were approximately the same age group. They both were bold and men of action. Most of all, they both were men who had a real relationship with God, not like Saul.

At the same time, Jonathan and David were different. Jonathan was the first-born son of a king, and David was the last-born son of a farmer. This made Jonathan more than a prince, he was the crown prince. Jonathan would, by everyone's expectation, be the next king of Israel. But David was the king anointed by God.

We find these two young men made a covenant between them. According to their Hebrew custom, they would cut animals in two and place them on each side of a path. Then they walk on that path and realizing that anyone who doesn't keep the covenant would be like these animals. We find the same ritual in Genesis 15:9-11, the covenant between God and Abram.

The armor, sword, bow, and belt were treasured items for a warrior that would not have been casually surrendered. With these gifts Jonathan ratified his covenant with David. In retrospect, Jonathan's action was symbolic of a transfer of royal power from Saul's family to David.

It would be some 20 years until David took the throne of Israel and replaced Saul. If Jonathan was ready to recognize David as God's choice for the next king, David

was willing to let God put him on the throne, and in God's timing. Both of these men were thoroughly submitted to the Lord.

David couldn't use Saul's armor. It didn't fit him physically, but more importantly, it didn't fit him spiritually. He and Saul lived for, and were trusting in, different things. But David received Jonathan's armor, not only because they were more similar in size, more importantly, they shared the same heart for God.

Let's be careful whom we are going to associate with. I am not saying that we as Christians cannot have unbelievers as friends. But sharing our hearts and souls with unbelievers can be extremely dangerous.

2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

This not only applies to marriage and dating, but also it applies in business and close friendship.

Some people read a homosexual relationship into the love between David and Jonathan. They suppose that two men cannot love each other without it being what the Bible clearly says is immoral and abomination. But the relationship between David and Jonathan shows that the Bible doesn't condemn real godly brotherly love between men.

B. BEHAVING WISELY

1 Samuel 18:5 So 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.

Please give me your interpretation of this portion.

How would young David handle this sudden success? Most people lose their sense of balance and perspective in the thin air of their rapid rise to the top. David, however, kept a level head. Saul, in contrast, lost his head, and the Holy Spirit's absence in his life became even more evident.

Scripture says that David "behaved wisely" in his new role as a captain of Saul's army by knowing his position, knowing others' positions, working together in cooperation with those people instead of barking orders. It appears 4 times in this chapter.

The Hebrew word for "wisely" is "sakal." Sakal can be defined: "wisdom which brings success." According to Proverbs 10:19 and 21:11, people who display this sort of wisdom restrain their speech and are teachable. That was David. He wore his success with class and wisdom for the short time he had it.

The sakal person is teachable. No matter how fast the promotion or how high the exaltation may be, we are never to lose our teachability. We never reach a level where we are above criticism or we no longer need the input of others. And, frankly, there are times when our best lessons can be learned from our enemies.

C. NO. 1 SONG ON TOP TWENTY COUNTDOWN

1 Samuel 18:6-9 Now it had happened as they were coming home, when David was returning from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women had

come out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy, and with musical instruments. 7 So the women sang as they danced, and said: "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands." 8 Then 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?" 9 So Saul eyed David from that day forward.

What do you see here?

Whenever the No. 1 song of the Jewish Bandstand came on, everybody in Israel got excited except Saul. While they were shaking their bodies and doing song and dance, Saul was grinding his teeth. Why? Because it was about David, not Saul.

David became popular because he was a man after God's own heart and people could see the love, the wisdom, and the peace of God in him.

Saul's insecurity led him down a 4 step staircase to self-destroying hatred:

- 1) **It was a slow-burning displeasure**
- 2) **It was followed by stomach-tightening anger**
- 3) **It led to anxiety about losing his kingdom.**
- 4) **According to verse 9, it finally gave way to a full-blown attempt to murder David.**

Saul was very busy making himself known among his people with his own monument in Carmel. But now he sees David as his competitor who happened to be the one who saved his neck from the battle against Goliath.

When we are praised and popular, it isn't wise to let it go to our heads. This is a test, one that the devil wants to use to bring us down, and one that the Lord wants to use to build our characters up. Many people who could handle adversity well enough often fall under the challenge of success.

Jealousy and envy – both of these blind the eyes of the people from seeing the truth. People with jealousy twist facts to accommodate their own irrational thoughts and justify their own twisted conclusions in their hearts.

Jealousy can lead people to murder. I am not making a farfetched story. As you saw in TV news or newspaper, jealousy drives people to do something they wouldn't do, if they think through properly.

You might ask, "Doesn't the Bible say that God is a jealous God. How are you going to explain that?" Yes, that phrase appears throughout the entire Bible. However, the Hebrew word for this particular "jealous" is "qanna." Unlike other word "jealous" of other human, this only applies to God. The actual root word comes from 'zeal for the Lord.'

D. UNQUESTIONABLE SUBMISSION

1 Samuel 18:10-12 And it happened on the next day that the distressing spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied inside the house. So David played music with his hand, as at other times; but there was a spear in Saul's hand. 11 And Saul cast the spear, for he said, "I will pin David to the wall!" But David escaped his presence twice. 12 Now Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, but had departed from Saul.

What is your interpretation of this?

What does this mean that distressing spirit came upon Saul and he was prophesying? Do demons help people know the future? Is 1-800-PSYCHIC woman with bad Jamaican accents real? Saul wasn't speaking from the Lord at all, and actually "prophesied" is a bad translation of KJV, NKJV and NIV here. The Hebrew grammar used here can be used of idle ravings as well as of prophecy from the Lord. Saul was simply babbling like a madman not in his right mind.

1 Samuel 18:10 The very next day a tormenting spirit from God overwhelmed Saul, and he began to rave in his house like a madman. NLT

In the hands of David, he had a lyre, a musical instrument that brings edification and encouragement to Saul. But in the hands of Saul, he had a spear, a hurting instrument that brings destruction and death. David is on the way up, Saul is on the way down. How can we tell whether we are on the way up or down? By looking at what we have in our spiritual and emotional hands. Do we have something to bring people up or do we have something to tear down and destroy others?

David didn't pick up the spear. He didn't throw it back. He simply escaped Saul's presence. No one could blame David if he struck back, it could easily be called self-defense. Even though he knew that he was appointed to be a king someday, he didn't take it into his own hands.

The more songs were sung for us by others, the more spears are going to be thrown to us. It is one of the ways God is allowing them to be thrown to us, so that we may depend on Him.

Saul knew he was outmatched. All the spears in the world couldn't defeat David, because the Lord was with him. It was also that the Lord had departed from Saul. This made Saul uncomfortable with David, and made it hard for Saul to have David around. You know what I am talking about. It could be at your home or workplace. When you come in, they stop talking about something and glare at you though you didn't say anything. It is not because of you, but the presence of the Holy Spirit who lives in you. That is what they don't like – the presence of God in you.

E. SETTING A TRAP FOR DAVID

1 Samuel 18:13-16 Therefore Saul removed him from his presence, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. 14 And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the Lord was with him. 15 Therefore, when Saul saw that he behaved very wisely, he was afraid of him. 16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.

Saul's desire was not to bless David, but to set him up for harm. Saul's jealousy has made him manipulative, working a hidden, secret agenda on David. In the latter days, this was the very method David used to kill Bathsheba's husband Uriah. Wonder where did David learn that?

The key to David's success was not from his accurate sling shot, nor were they his wise behaviors, or his good looks. It is solely based on the presence of God in his life.

How can we have God's presence in our lives?

- 1) Dwelling in His Word every day
- 2) Constant communion with Him through prayers
- 3) Keeping short account with Him through asking His forgiveness of our sins
- 4) Practicing what we learn from His Word, the Bible

F. APPLICATIONS

- 1) Let's be careful in choosing friends. It can be an uplifting or a downward spiral.
- 2) Let's remain teachable to the end and restrain our speech.
- 3) Let's remember that the only good jealousy is zeal for the Lord.