

1 Samuel Chapter 18

Verses 1-4: By placing his own royal “robe” and “armor” on David, “Jonathan” did more than express his covenantal love for his friend. He willingly sacrificed his position as the heir to Israel’s throne and acknowledged David as the nation’s next king, something that Saul would obsessively strive against as long as he lived.

1 Samuel 18:1 "And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."

“Jonathan loved him”: Jonathan loved David with a loyalty and devotion indicative of covenantal love (18:3). Hiram of Tyre had much the same covenantal love for David (compare 2 Sam. 5:11; 1 Kings 5:1; 9:11). David’s later reign from Jerusalem is marked by loyalty to his covenant with Jonathan (2 Sam. 9:1).

Sometimes, there is a friend that is even closer than a person's natural brother. This is the case with David and Jonathan here. These two young men became close friends from the very beginning. The fighting with the Philistines had stopped at this point, and they had separated the spoil. Jonathan probably, greatly admired David for his bravery against the giant, Goliath. It could possibly be almost like hero worship. Whether Saul was jealous of this extremely close friendship that Jonathan and David had, we do not know. We do know that about this time, Saul begins to dislike David. This is one of the greatest examples of the love of friends in the Bible. They did not have a flesh relationship, such as homosexuality, their relationship was a pure friend relationship. They had kindred spirits.

1 Samuel 18:2 "And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house."

“Would let him go no more home”: Saul’s interest in keeping David in his household was more self-serving than a token of generous hospitality. Saul was aware of this promise of wife and wealth (17:25), and, no doubt, the stirrings of anxiety and fear were in his heart toward David, who appeared as a threat. Saul preferred to have him in the court to keep a watchful eye on the young upstart.

Saul needed David to play for him, when he was sick. He also was aware of the strength of David to protect him, in case someone wanted to destroy him.

Verses 3-4: Jonathan’s transfer of this royal attire to “David” may indicate his covenantal pledge to transfer to David his privileged position as heir to the throne.

1 Samuel 18:3 "Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul."

“Covenant” (see verse 1). Further mention of this honorable relationship is made (in: 19:1; 20:8, 13-17, 42; 22:8; 23:18).

The love of these two friends grew, after the admiration started it. These two decided to make an agreement that they would remain faithful to one another, regardless of circumstances.

1 Samuel 18:4 "And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that [was] upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle."

“Robe ... girdle”: Jonathan willingly and subserviently relinquished the outer garments and instruments that signified his position as prince of Israel and heir to the throne. Jonathan, a worshiper of Yahweh, quickly discerned that David was God’s anointed and, without reservation, offered the robe of succession to the true king of Israel.

This was the highest honor that Jonathan could pay David. He was saying, whatever power and authority he had, was now equally David’s.

Verses 5-23: David showed extreme humility despite his great success. The whole nation was singing his praises, but he continued to serve Saul and even refused the honor of marrying Saul’s daughter Merab because he did not feel worthy. Popularity did not replace his perspective.

1 Samuel 18:5 "And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, [and] behaved himself 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."

The phrase “he behaved wisely” is used two other times in this chapter to describe David’s character (18:13-14). David’s success began when he killed the giant, but it continued in everything else he did because he did not let prosperity blind him to his need for God’s wisdom.

Whatever David did, he did well. He did not have any enemies among the men he worked with. He did what Saul directed him to, and with the blessing of the LORD upon him, he did everything well. It appears that the servants of Saul liked David. Saul set him over the men of war, because of his bravery in war, and because the men all respected him.

1 Samuel 18:6 "And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music."

The armies of Israel, with their commanders at the head of them.

"When David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine": Either from the slaughter of Goliath, with his head in his hand, going to Jerusalem, and Saul accompanying him; or rather from the slaughter of the Philistines at some other time. The singular being put for the plural; since, according to the order of the history, this seems to be done after David was brought to

court, and had been made a captain. And had been sent out on military expeditions, and had been successful therein, and from one of which he now returned.

"That the women came out of all the cities of Israel": Through which they passed: singing and dancing; as were usual after great victories obtained, and deliverances wrought, the female sex being generally greatly affected with such things; since when things go otherwise they suffer much, and their fears rise high in time of battle. And when victory goes on their side, it gives them great joy, and which they used to express in this way.

"To meet King Saul": The commander-in-chief, with his other officers, and David among the rest.

"With tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music": With pipes or flutes, which they both blew with their mouths, and played on with their hands, and other musical instruments exciting joy; the last word is, by the Targum, rendered, "with cymbals"; and so the Septuagint version. It signifies a musical instrument of three cords, according to Kimchi; and others, as Ben Gersom, understand it of principal songs, in which things wonderful, excellent, and honorable, were spoken of (see Exodus 15:20).

It really does not matter, whether this was one Philistine giant spoken of here, or whether this was speaking of the Philistines he had killed in the several battles after the incident with Goliath. The people became aware that God was with David. They greatly admired him for what he had done for the Israelites. It was customary to make merry, when they won a great battle. That is what happened here. These women were shaking their tambourines and playing their musical instruments, in celebration of the battle they had won.

Verses 7-9: With the Lord's authority removed from him, Saul's authority rested almost entirely on his military achievements. To maintain his position, he had to be recognized as the strongest man in the kingdom. The women's song sparked Saul's insane jealousy of David, marking the turning point in their relationship. "That day and forward", Saul would seek to remove David as a threat to the throne (18:13, 17, 21; 19:1).

1 Samuel 18:7 "And the women answered [one another] as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

The meeting of victors returning from the battle with music and dancing was traditional in ancient Israel (Exodus 15:20; Judges 11:34). The use of ascending numbers in parallel lines of poetry (e.g., half, three quarters, 20/30, 77/88, 1,000/10,000, etc.), was a common poetic device in Old Testament poetry and the literature of the ancient Near East (compare Deut. 32:30; Job 5:19; Psalm 62:11; Prov. 30:15; Eccl. 11:2; Micah 6:7).

"David his ten thousands": This is a song that Saul grew to hate (21:11; 28:5), because it exalted David over him.

It seemed, the women made up their lyrics as they went along. They were singing about the wonderful feats of David in battle. They were still singing of Saul's victories, but glorifying David over Saul. There is no king who would like that. This would cause Saul to be jealous of David.

1 Samuel 18:8 "And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed [but] thousands: and [what] can he have more but the kingdom?"

“The kingdom”: Saul’s jealousy and malice toward David were now explicit. By his own statement, Saul acknowledged that David was the rightful heir to the throne and the one of whom Samuel spoke in Gilgal (15:28).

1 Samuel 18:9 "And Saul eyed David from that day and forward."

From the hour on which the king listened to the people’s lilt in honor of the young hero, in Saul’s distempered mind hate alternated with love. He still in his heart longed for the presence of the only human being who could charm away his ever-increasing melancholia, but he dreaded with a fierce jealousy the growing influence of the winning and gifted man whom he had taken from the sheep-folds. Now through the rest of the records of this book we shall see how the hate gradually obscured the old love. All our memories of Saul seem bound up with his life-long murderous pursuit of David.

Saul feared losing the kingdom to David, if he were this popular with the people. Saul watched David's every move to make sure he would not mount a revolt against him. David had no intention of doing this, but Saul did not realize this.

1 Samuel 18:10 "And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and [there was] a javelin in Saul's hand."

“The evil spirit” The painful descent and eventual demise of Saul was marked by the persistent vexing of this spirit (see 16:14).

“Prophesied (raved)”: This means to speak before people, not predict the future. Saul’s speeches in the midst of the house were the ravings of one troubled by an evil spirit like other false prophets (1 Kings 22:19-23).

1 Samuel 18:11 "And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall [with it]. And David avoided out of his presence twice."

“David avoided ... twice”: As Saul’s behavior was becoming increasingly violent; he made more than one attempt on David’s life with the javelin. It was evident that God was with David as it would be no small feat to dodge a javelin cast by such an experienced warrior as Saul.

This evil spirit that came into Saul caused him to want to kill David. This is the spirit of hate and murder. Saul had been thinking about what the women had sung about him and David. He feels the only way to stop David is to kill him. David was playing to calm Saul down and make him feel better. Saul threw the javelin at David two different times. It did not hit David, because he was quick enough to dart out of the way. Really, God protected him.

Verses 12-29: Recognizing that “the Lord was with David” only served to make Saul more jealous and fearful. Nevertheless, he refused to humble himself and repent.

1 Samuel 18:12 "And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul."

“Saul was afraid of David”: Saul faced with the same conclusion reached by Jonathan (in verses 1-4), reacted with fear. Saul, a man who viewed life from a human perspective rather than a divine one, could view David only as a personal threat, rather than a blessing to Israel.

Saul remembered what Samuel had told him earlier. He knew the kingdom had been taken away from him by God. It just had not physically happened yet. The blessings of God were not with Saul. He also knew that the blessings of God were upon David. It was the power of God within David that made him strong enough to kill Goliath.

1 Samuel 18:13 "Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people."

“Captain over a thousand”: Saul gave David a military commission, intended as kind of an honorable exile. But this duty only served to give David opportunity to display his remarkable quality of character and strengthen his hold on the people’s affections.

Saul had David to leave his home and go out with the people. He made David one of his captains of his army. David was over just 1,000 men. Saul thought he would put David in a dangerous situation in battle and he would be rid of David. Saul was very jealous of David.

1 Samuel 18:14 "And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD [was] with him."

He headed them in all their expeditions, with a bravery and conduct equally distinguished; greatest in command, but greater in his example. He behaved in such a manner that no exception could be taken at any of his actions.

“The Lord was with him”: Made all his undertakings prosperous. Saul’s fears, however, increased in proportion as he saw David still behave so well.

The blessings of God were upon David. He had already been made king in the sight of God. David was very respectful of the office of king. He would never harm Saul, because he was God's anointed. David was not aware that God had removed his blessings from Saul.

1 Samuel 18:15 "Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him."

So that he could get no advantage against him and he succeeded and was prosperous in all his enterprises; and was more and more in favor with the people.

"He was afraid of him": Lest the time was drawing near that the kingdom should be rent from him and given to David.

Even the loyalty of David concerned Saul. He wanted David to rise up against him with just this handful of men, so he could kill him. David did not rise up against Saul however.

1 Samuel 18:16 "But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them."

"Loved David": The writer of Samuel, inspired by the Holy Spirit, offers an editorial comment full of truth.

He was out with the people and they learned to love David. They knew how brave he was in battle, and they also knew of his loyalty to the king. They greatly admired David, because of his high principles.

1 Samuel 18:17 "And Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD'S battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him."

"Merab": Literally "compensation" or "substitute" (14:49). Saul's later retraction of the betrothal to Merab (verse 19), was similar to Laban's trickery with Jacob and Rachel (Gen. 29:25).

"Fight the Lord's battles": A phrase Saul knew would appeal to David. Saul made the offer out of a treacherous heart, desiring evil and calamity for David. Notice the similarity between Saul's treachery and that of David with Uriah (2 Sam. 11:15).

We remember from a previous lesson, that Saul had promised his daughter to anyone who would kill the giant, Goliath. When David, who was just a youth, killed Goliath, no more was said about it, until now. Saul did things for selfish reasons. He was not just keeping his promise, but assuring himself of a little more safety from David. He felt his son-in-law would not attack him, because of his daughter. He really wanted David to be killed by the Philistines, so his blood would not be on his hands.

1 Samuel 18:18 "And David said unto 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?"

“Son in law”: The familial lineage was crucial when marrying into the king’s family. David asked, “Who am I ... *or* my father’s family in Israel, that I should be the king’s son-in-law?” Saul had asked of David’s lineage three times previously (17:55-56, 58).

David thought he was from a family not worthy of marrying the king's daughter. He was more humble than Saul. In a sense, David is saying, marrying Saul's daughter would not be a help to her father.

1 Samuel 18:19 "But it came to pass at the time when Merab Saul's daughter should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife."

“Adriel the Meholathite”: Merab married this man and bore children, 5 of whom were sons later executed by David as punishment for Saul’s disregard of Joshua’s covenant with the Gibeonites (2 Sam. 21:8; compare Joshua 9:20).

Perhaps David was too young for Merab. For some unexplained reason, Merab was given to the Meholathite. It could have been that David and Merab had no attraction for each other.

1 Samuel 18:20 "And Michal Saul's daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him."

“Michal”: Literally “Who is like God?” Michal sincerely loved David and perhaps was aware, as Jonathan, of his certain ascent (and right), to the throne. Ironically, Saul offered her to David, not from a benevolent heart, but as a “snare” (verse 21).

We must remember that David had played in their home to keep Saul feeling better. In fact, he lived with them for a time. I am sure this attraction started during that time. When this daughter of Saul told that she loved David, this pleased Saul.

1 Samuel 18:21 "And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son in law in [the one of] the twain."

The cause and occasion of his fall and ruin, by means of what he should propose to him as the condition of marriage; but instead of proving a snare to him, as he hoped, she was the means of his deliverance, when Saul sent messengers to slay him, (1 Sam. 19:11).

"And that the hand of the Philistines may be against him": Provoked by what he should put him upon doing to them. The scheme he had in his head after appears, and what he now said was not openly said before his servants and courtiers, whom he did not trust with his secrets, but this he said within himself, conceived and contrived it in his own mind.

"Wherefore Saul said to David": Who was as yet at court, or whom he sent for on this occasion.

Thou shalt this day be my son in law in the one of the twain": By marrying one of his two daughters; signifying, that he would not defer the marriage, or put it off to a longer time, as he

had done before, but that he should be married immediately to one or other of his daughters. And seeing he could not have the eldest, she being disposed of, he should have the youngest, and so be equally his son-in-law.

Saul would even use his daughter to destroy David. He does not give her to David in good faith. He wants David to get killed, trying to pay the dowry that Saul requires. He believes, even if the marriage takes place, that she will act as a spy in David's home.

1 Samuel 18:22 "And Saul commanded his servants, [saying], Commune with David secretly, and say, Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee: now therefore be the king's son in law."

And persuade him to marry Michal, and assure him of Saul's real regard to him, and good intention towards him. For it seems that David being ill used in the affair of his eldest daughter, did not listen to the proposals of Saul as to the youngest, and therefore Saul took this method to bring him into them.

"And say, behold, the king hath a delight in thee": Bears a good will towards him, had a high opinion of him, and it would be a pleasure to him that he should be his son-in-law.

"And all his servants love thee": Which might be true in general, excepting some few; which was no small mortification to Saul, though he here pleads it, and puts his servants on making use of it to gain his present purpose.

"Now therefore be the king's son in law": Accept of the proposal he has made, and marry his youngest daughter.

Saul is deceiving David into believing that he loves him, so he can get him killed. David is not so unwise, that he knows some conspiracy is going on.

1 Samuel 18:23 "And Saul's servants spake those words in the ears of David. And David said, Seemeth it to you [a] light [thing] to be a king's son in law, seeing that I [am] a poor man, and lightly esteemed?"

David dwells upon this fact of his utter inability to give the expected costly offering for the princess. He evidently attributes to his poverty and his successful rival's wealth his former disappointment in the case of Merab.

"And lightly esteemed": David looked upon himself as a mere successful soldier of fortune among the wealthy chiefs who surrounded Saul. His father, though, no doubt, "head man" or sheik in tiny Bethlehem, was, when compared with the elders of Israel who formed the Court of Saul, a poor man.

David is telling them again, of his upbringing, and the fact that he would not have enough money to pay for the king's daughter. They must pay a dowry to the father of the bride.

1 Samuel 18:24 "And the servants of Saul told him, saying, On this manner spake David."

Such and such words were spoken by him, to this purpose; the sum and substance of them were expressive of his unworthiness to be a king's son-in-law, and of his inability to bring a dowry suitable to her quality.

Saul wants to be as distant from David as he can in all of this. He does not want to be blamed by the people when David is killed. He forgets the special protection that God has upon David.

1 Samuel 18:25 "And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth not any dowry, but a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines."

“Dowry”: Literally “rice.” Saul resorted to the same treachery in his offer of betrothal to Merab, plotting to eliminate David by placing him in jeopardy with the Philistines. David, already having proved himself wise in many things (16:18), was aware, to some extent, of Saul’s intent and acted obediently, valiantly, and wisely.

“Hundred foreskins”: Such mutilations of the bodies of slain enemies were commonly practiced in ancient warfare.

This would not be in an ordinary battle in war. This would be a special raid on the Philistines. This would not be the whole army that would go out, but the few men that David had under his control. Saul felt sure that David would be killed in this raid. Saul did not want to kill David himself, because of the love of the people for David. He was aware that he might not win, if he tried to kill him. He wanted the Philistines to kill David for him. The 100 foreskins would be proof David had killed them.

1 Samuel 18:26 "And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son in law: and the days were not expired."

That the king desired no other dowry than a hundred foreskins of the Philistines:

"It pleased David well to be the king's son in law": On such conditions; partly because of the honor of it, and partly because of his love for Michal. And chiefly because it would give him an opportunity of destroying the enemies of God, and of his people, as well as such a match would lead the way, and be a step in Providence to ascend the throne designed for him in due time.

"And the days were not expired": Neither for the bringing in of the foreskins, nor for the consummation of the marriage.

It appears that, David wanted to marry Michal. He loved Jonathan as a friend, too. He would be pleased to be in their family. Perhaps, David thought that Saul's hate for him would diminish, if he were David's father-in-law. David let no time pass, until he goes on this raid to kill 100 Philistines.

1 Samuel 18:27 "Wherefore David arose and went, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son in law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife."

“His men” (compare 22:2; 25:12-13; 2 Sam. 23:8-39).

“Foreskins”: The number indicated the extent of the victory. Saul’s intent was to expose David to deadly danger by engaging in such an extensive and hazardous task.

We see in this, David brought twice as many as were required for the dowry. God was with them against the wicked Philistines. Saul indeed, gave his daughter Michal to David in marriage.

Verses 28-29: The people closest to “Saul”: Even his own “daughter”, were choosing David over the king. It was obvious to everyone that the Lord was present in David’s life. And when God is evident in a person’s life, he or she is bound to make enemies, especially among those who are not living right. John the Baptist lived a holy life, and it caused people to fear him. Jesus lived a holy life, and it caused people to hate Him. David’s success created a new foe, and for the rest of Saul’s life, he would create troubles for David.

1 Samuel 18:28 "And Saul saw and knew that the LORD [was] with David, and [that] Michal Saul's daughter loved him."

This he perceived by the favor the Lord gave him among men, by overruling all the steps Saul took to do him hurt, for his good, and in giving him success in all that he engaged in; the Targum is, "that the Word of the Lord was for the help of David."

"And that Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him": And therefore, could entertain no hope of making use of her as an instrument of his ruin. But, on the contrary, would, out of her great affection to her husband, betray the designs of her father against him, and do all she could to preserve him.

Everything Saul had done to get rid of David had backfired on him. Even Saul's daughter truly loved David. It becomes more and more apparent to Saul, that David is protected by the LORD.

1 Samuel 18:29 "And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually."

“Saul became David’s enemy”: All of Saul’s plans came to naught. Saul asked for 100 Philistine foreskins; David brought 200. Saul offered Michal as a “snare”; Michal loved David as did Saul’s own son, Johnathan. There remained nothing else for Saul to contrive except open hatred toward David.

1 Samuel 18:30 "Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, [that] David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by."

Despite Saul's jealousy, trickery and oppression, David's conduct remained exemplary. He supported properly constituted authority (1 Pet. 2:13-20), and "behaved himself ... wisely," not repaying evil for evil (Rom. 12:17, 21; 1 Pet. 3:8-17).

Saul's fear of David had to do with the fact that Samuel had told Saul he would not remain king. He knew that God would anoint another to take his place. He becomes more aware that God's anointed is David. Saul believes, if he can get rid of David, he can remain the king. David became more and more popular with the people with each victory in battle. Even this, was not what Saul planned.

1 Samuel Chapter 18 Questions

1. How much did Jonathan love David?
2. What probably, started Jonathan thinking of David as a close friend?
3. Where did Saul require David to live?
4. Why did Saul require this?
5. Jonathan and David made a _____, because he loved him as his own soul.
6. They would be true to their friendship, regardless of _____.
7. What did Jonathan do for David that greatly honored him?
8. What did Saul set David over?
9. When David came back from fighting the Philistines, who came out to sing and play instruments of music?
10. What did they say about David that would anger Saul?
11. Saul repeats what the women have said, in verse 8, and then says, and what can he have more but the _____?
12. Why did Saul watch every move of David?
13. What happened to Saul, just before he prophesied in the house?
14. How many times did Saul throw the javelin at David?

15. Why was Saul afraid of David?
16. Saul removed David, and made him captain over a _____.
17. David behaved himself _____.
18. But all _____ and _____ loved David.
19. How did they learn to love David?
20. Who did Saul offer to give to David for a wife?
21. Who did Saul want to kill David?
22. Saul had promised his daughter to anyone who would kill _____.
23. How did David reply, when Saul offered him Merab?
24. Who, actually, was Merab given to in marriage?
25. Which of Saul's daughters loved David?
26. Saul was willing to give his daughter to David, that she might be a _____ to him.
27. Who did Saul send to speak to David about the arrangements?
28. Why does Saul want to be distant from these arrangements?
29. Saul wanted David to fall at the hands of the _____.
30. What was the dowry for Michal's hand in marriage?
31. How many Philistines did David kill?
32. Why did Saul fear David so greatly?
33. David became more and more _____ with the people.