



Studies in the Life of David

Text

First Samuel 18:1-16

Topic

Saul's jealousy of David becomes obvious
as he tries to kill him with the spear

Title

"King Saul, in the Music Room, with the Spear"

Introduction

The "line of succession" defines who may become or act as President of the United States upon the incapacity, death, resignation, or removal from office (by impeachment and subsequent conviction) of a sitting president or a president-elect.

In 1981, when President Reagan was shot, Vice President George H.W. Bush was traveling in Texas. Secretary of State Alexander Haig responded to a reporter's question regarding who was running the government by stating, "Constitutionally, gentlemen, you have the President, the Vice President and the Secretary of State in that order."

Not quite, Al! Constitutionally the order is Vice-president, Speaker of the House, President Pro Tempore of the Senate, then Secretary of State. To put a face on it, the order is Joe Biden, Nancy Pelosi, Robert Byrd, and Hillary Clinton.

The nation of Israel was not a republic, it was a monarchy. The line of succession ought to have been King Saul, then his son, Jonathan. God

intervened by having the prophet Samuel anoint David as the next in line to be king.

David hadn't been announced as the next king but he was gaining in popularity. Saul and Jonathan had very different reactions to David's popularity in Israel. Saul wanted to maintain his grip as king while Jonathan immediately relinquished his claim to the throne.

In their reactions we see something illustrated for us as Christians awaiting the return of Jesus Christ.

David was the anointed king, but not yet reigning. Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is God's anointed King but not yet reigning.

Thus everyday we have a decision to make. Will we try to maintain our grip on our own lives, like Saul, or will we relinquish claim to our own lives and submit to the future King, like Jonathan?

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 If Jesus Is Your King You'll Gladly Clothe Yourself With Humility, and #2 If You Are Your King You'll Madly Clothe Yourself With Pride.

#1 If Jesus Is Your King
You'll Gladly Clothe Yourself With Humility
(v1-4)

The apostle Peter wrote to us and said, "all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "GOD RESISTS THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE" (First Peter 5:5).

Perhaps he was thinking about the night Jesus took-off His outer garment and gird Himself like a servant, then stooped to wash the disciples feet. He had demonstrated for them that they ought to clothe themselves with humility as servants of God, bow down and submit to one another, in order to further the kingdom of Heaven on the earth.

The Old Testament has no better example of clothing yourself with humility than that of Jonathan, the son of Saul who was next in line to be king.

1 Samuel 18:1 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.

David was now about 20 years old. Here's a question for you: How old do you suppose Jonathan was? I've always thought of him as David's contemporary, thought of them as two young men developing a friendship around similar life experiences.

According to the best Bible chronologies I could find, Jonathan could have been as much as thirty years older than David! He was certainly older. Though much has been written about their friendship, their relationship was more like father and son, or like a mentor relationship.

Here's something to consider: Do you ever long for there to be a Jonathan in your life, a mentor? Instead pray you would be someone's Jonathan and look for a David.

1 Samuel 18:2 Saul took him that day, and would not let him go home to his father's house anymore.

David's life radically changed in a moment of time. I've been stressing faithfulness in the little things as we've watched David. It's because you never know when your life is going to radically, dramatically change in a moment of time - for joy or for sorrow. If you are faithful you will be ready.

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

1 Samuel 18:4 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.

I feel obligated to reluctantly mention that there are those who twist this text trying to prove that Jonathan's love for David was something other than a pure, spiritual love. It's an example of looking for something, of reading something into the text, in order to justify sinful behavior rather than letting the Bible speak for itself.

If you were making a movie about Jonathan and David, it wouldn't be *Brokeback Mountain*. It would be something more like the original *Karate Kid*, a mentor movie.

Jonathan's actions were remarkable since he was in line to be king after Saul. Instead he gave to David the outward clothing of his right to succession, humbling himself before God's choice, clothing himself with humility in order to see God's kingdom furthered.

Remember that David was not yet reigning. David himself was clothed with humility.

There's no doubt Jesus Christ is coming back as King of kings and Lord of lords. But for now He, too, is clothed with humility. The majority of the world doesn't acknowledge Him as King, doesn't recognize Him as Lord. They don't understand His mission to humble Himself even unto death on the Cross in order that men's sins can be forgiven.

It can therefore be tough to clothe yourself with humility in submission to the Lord that most people ignore. When you are called upon to act as Jesus acted, to for example return blessing for cursing, it can seem as though you are being defeated in this life. You are passed over for promotion, you are ridiculed as the 'Jesus-freak.'

In other words, everyday you are like the disciples in the room with Jesus. You ought to clothe yourself with humility, get up as it were and wash someone's feet with the love, mercy and grace of the Gospel. But it's a tough choice because no one seems to recognize what you're doing.

Jesus does and it is to Him that you ought to do these things. The Lord said,

Matthew 23:12 And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Jonathan had a choice. Try to hold on to his own kingdom or humble himself to further the kingdom of Heaven.

When Jesus is truly your King, sitting squarely on the throne of your heart, the choice is always humility.

Saul refused humility and in his decision we see the awful effects of trying to maintain your own rule of your life.

#2 If You Are Your King
You'll Madly Clothe Yourself With Pride
(v5-16)

How can you really know if you're humbling yourself or exalting yourself? It's an important question because we have the ability to deceive ourselves.

One way is to simply look at your behavior, at your actions. We can therefore look at Saul, at his attitudes and his actions, to see if we are thinking or doing anything similar.

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.

David had humbled himself, now he was being exalted. Let the Lord exalt you in due time.

Recognize, too, that when you are exalted, it's not always going to be easy. In fact, it's to continue your discipleship and things may get rough. They certainly did for David. But that's the way God grows you. Fourteen chapters of the Bible are dedicated to a mere eleven years in David's life as a fugitive, compared to the thirty-eight chapters that describe his forty-year monarchy.

1 Samuel 18:6 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.

1 Samuel 18:7 So the women sang as they danced, and said: "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands."

1 Samuel 18:8 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?"

1 Samuel 18:9 So Saul eyed David from that day forward.

I can certainly understand Saul's reaction... And that's not good for me! I can understand it because I still find jealousy in my heart, I still have an evil-eye at times towards other servants in God's Kingdom.

Take a look at what was said of Saul. "Saul has slain his thousands." That is really quite a compliment, quite an achievement. They didn't sing, "Saul is a loser," or, "Saul has been removed," or, "Saul disobeyed."

It reminds me, in the New Testament, of the Parable of the Minas in the Gospel of Luke (19:11-27). In the story, the Lord gave each of His three servants ten minas to invest. Two of them were faithful; one was not. The first faithful servant turned his ten minas into ten more. He was rewarded with "authority over ten cities." The second faithful servant turned his ten minas into five more. He was rewarded with authority over "five cities."

Same equipping, different results, but both were rewarded. Saul had slain his thousands, but God had something more in mind for David. It didn't have to throw Saul into jealousy.

Be faithful with what the Lord has given you. Don't grow jealous of what He might be doing in someone else's life or ministry. Enjoy investing in the kingdom of Heaven and you will be rewarded.

1 Samuel 18:10 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.

1 Samuel 18:11 And Saul cast the spear, for he said, "I will pin David to the wall!" But David escaped his presence twice.

We dealt with the identity of the "distressing spirit" in a previous study. It was a demon sent to torment Saul after the Holy Spirit had left him.

Don't be confused by the words, "and he prophesied." I'm told by those who study Hebrew that the word used here has more to do with actions. It wasn't that Saul brought forth a verbal prophesy from the Lord. It was that he acted manically, in a way sometimes associated with prophets, and especially false prophets.

More striking is that Saul tried to kill David. It's an outworking of what was within him, in his heart. We can all be glad that our thoughts don't always translate into actions or each of us would be guilty of murder!

One point to make from this is that when you refuse to humble yourself, the only other option is to exalt yourself. When you exalt yourself, you do your best to destroy, rather than build-up, others.

Did you catch that this happened twice? If I'm David, I think once would have been enough! But David himself was clothed with humility. This was God's assignment and he would see it through.

1 Samuel 18:12 Now Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, but had departed from Saul.

Saul had shipwrecked his life through disobedience. He was an empty shell of a man. In our case, though the Holy Spirit will not depart from us because He permanently indwells us, we can nevertheless quench Him and grieve Him in such ways that our lives make no spiritual impact upon those around us.

1 Samuel 18:13 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.

Why promote David further? Well, on a practical level, Saul had little choice. The people expected it. On another level, it was a good way to get David killed.

I wonder if later in his own life, after his adultery, David didn't recognize that putting Bathsheeba's husband, Uriah, at the head of the hottest part of the battle wasn't exactly the same strategy Saul had employed against him?

1 Samuel 18:14 And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the Lord was with him.

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

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

Earlier Saul had said to himself, "Now what more can he have but the kingdom?" Saul was afraid that David would take-over the kingdom.

Well, he would, but that's not the point. The point is, the kingdom is God's, not Saul's or Jonathan's or David's. The Lord is the rightful King. Saul's fear indicated that he did not understand the rightful place of the Lord in his life.

Here's another way of putting it. You can't be afraid of losing something if it's not yours to begin with! Perhaps Job said it best when, in his suffering he declared, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord" (1:21).

In the truest spiritual sense of things, it's not your ministry, or your job, or your family. ***It's not even your life!*** You gave all that over to the Lord, Jesus Christ, when you asked Him to save you, to forgive you your sins, to give you eternal life. Now your life belongs to Him. He's working to perfect you, to complete the work He's begun in you.

Check to see you are dressed appropriately. Clothe yourself with humility. Humble yourself so that God might exalt you in due time.