



Studies in the Life of David

Text

First Samuel 18:17-30

Topic

David is told he can marry Michal, the king's daughter, if he goes out and kills a number of Philistines and brings back their foreskins as proof

Title

"Foreskins and Two-hundred Philistines Ago"

Introduction

The 2010 Major League Baseball season is not yet half over and there have already been three no-hitters, the last one being Phillies pitcher Roy Halladay's perfect game against the Florida Marlins.

It's a big deal statistically because there have only been 266 no-hitters since 1875, an average of less than two per season.

Most of you could probably know who holds the record for throwing the most no-hit games. It's Nolan Ryan with seven. Only Ryan, Sandy Koufax (4), Cy Young (3), Bob Feller (3), and Larry Corcoran (3) have pitched more than two. (Larry Corcoran is not a household name only because he pitched in the 1800's).

Such feats of pitching prowess are a big deal and these pitchers deserve the recognition they've received.

Behind every pitcher who no-hits the opposition is a catcher. Generally speaking, the catcher receives little or no recognition. As a former Little League backstop myself, I say, *just try to throw a no-hitter without a good catcher calling the game!*

"Most people remember who the pitcher was, not the catcher," said catcher Joe Girardi, who caught Dwight 'Doc' Gooden's no-hitter on May 14, 1996, and David Cone's perfect game on July 18, 1999, both with the Yankees.

Whether it's Major League Baseball or the ministry, you and I may not always get recognition and reward. It can definitely affect you if you let it. It can lead to discouragement, to grumbling and complaining, to bitterness, and can even to cause you to quit serving the Lord.

The lesson I want to draw from the life of David in the end of chapter eighteen is how to properly react to recognition and reward, both when it's withheld and when it's granted.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Maintain Your Joy In Serving The Lord By Having No Expectation Of Temporal Recognition Or Reward, and #2 Maintain Your Joy In Serving The Lord By Having Appreciation For Temporal Recognition And Reward.

#1 Maintain Your Joy In Serving The Lord
By Having No Expectation Of Temporal Recognition Or Reward
(v17-19)

Before Jesus was crucified His closest disciples were prone to arguing about who among them would be the greatest in the kingdom. The mother of James and John even asked Jesus to grant that her two boys be seated on either side of His throne.

After the Lord was crucified, and after He rose from the dead, and after He ascended into Heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit upon those guys. Not long into the ministry of the twelve apostles, persecution broke out against them. On one such occasion, after being arrested then beaten, you read that

“they departed... rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for [Jesus’] name” (Acts 5:41).

The presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives dramatically changed their expectation of what it meant to serve the Lord. They were no longer looking for, or even interested in, temporal recognition or reward. They were looking past those things to what awaited them in Heaven.

David had been anointed by the Holy Spirit. He thus had that same ‘no expectations’ attitude about serving his Lord.

1 Samuel 18:17 Then Saul said to David, "Here is my older daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife. Only be valiant for me, and fight the Lord's battles." For Saul thought, "Let my hand not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him."

We are still in the aftermath of David’s victory against the Philistine giant, Goliath. King Saul had promised to give his daughter in marriage to whomever slew Goliath. David had fulfilled the condition. But now Saul upped the ante, telling David that in addition to having killed Goliath he needed to “be valiant” for Saul and “fight the Lord’s battles.”

Saul reneged. He did it because he wanted David dead and he saw an opportunity to get him killed fighting against the Philistines.

The question isn’t whether or not recognition or reward has ever, or will ever, be withheld from you. The real question is, “How are you going to respond when it happens?” It’s an important question because we tend to expect those things, to be motivated by those things. In the secular spheres of our lives, recognition and reward have their place. Not so much in the spiritual sphere. They are on hold until we see Jesus face-to-face.

1 Samuel 18:18 So David said to 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?"

David had no expectation that Saul would follow-through on his offer of recognition and reward. It wasn’t so much because he knew the wickedness of Saul as it was that he understood the goodness of God.

You see, David didn't go out against Goliath to earn anything. As we said when we read the story, David was a little incensed that any reward had been offered. He thought that the opportunity to serve the Lord was its own reward.

Serving the Lord **is** its own reward. When you serve the Lord, He recognizes you. He will reward you. That's all you need.

David did not consider it a light thing that he, from a humble family, should become related to the king. How much more ought we to be humbled by the understanding that God has adopted us into His family as believers in His Son, Jesus Christ! Who am I, really, that the maker of the universe would treat me the same way He treats His own beloved Son, Jesus?

The humility of that realization ought to be enough to cancel out any thought that we need or deserve recognition or reward from anyone but God.

David's reward was not just withheld; *it was given to someone else.*

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

It appears from the wording that definite plans had been made to give Merab to David for his wife. Instead she was given to "Adriel the Meholathite." Where did that guy come from?

Just when you think you're OK with not receiving recognition or reward, it's given to someone else. What are you going to do about it?

Nothing, if you are serving the Lord for the joy of it and have no expectation other than that.

In the world you're climbing the ladder. There are plateaus to reach, peaks to conquer, plaques to accumulate. In the Lord you are always stooping lower and lower, humbling yourself and trusting that Jesus will in due time exalt you.

There's no suggested method or program in this account as to how you achieve this freedom to maintain joy serving the Lord. It's a by-product of walking in the Spirit. You are enabled to do it, empowered to do it, when you yield to the Holy Spirit.

Here's another way of putting it. You're not told *how* David accomplished this, but *why* he did. He did it because he was a Spirit-filled man, and "that's how the Spirit rolls."

In the remaining verses, David does become the king's son-in-law. It may be that you *will* receive recognition and reward in this life. How should you respond when you do?

#2 Maintain Your Joy In Serving The Lord
By Having Appreciation For Temporal Recognition And Reward
(v20-30)

David is going to be offered a different daughter to wed. Would you trust Saul, after what just happened?

Instead of getting all worked-up about it, he would express a sense of appreciation for the gesture. It would inspire him to serve with even greater zeal. It's a really remarkable illustration of joy in serving the Lord.

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

1 Samuel 18:21 So Saul said, "I will give her to him, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him." Therefore Saul said to David a second time, "You shall be my son-in-law today."

It was more of the same from Saul, but with a few additional twists. For one thing, Saul enlisted the aid of other "servants" in order to try to trip-up David.

1 Samuel 18:22 And Saul commanded his servants, "Communicate with David secretly, and say, 'Look, the king has delight in you, and all his servants love you. Now therefore, become the king's son-in-law.' "

Let's assume they were sincere and not in cahoots with Saul. Still, they were exerting a subtle pressure on David to accept recognition and reward as if David had earned it or deserved it.

Well-meaning fellow servants don't always give you the best spiritual advice. They may encourage an easier path because they don't want to see you struggle or suffer. Instead of being well-meaning, be Word-meaning, and let the Lord use you to give the kind of advice and counsel that is consistent with a life of discipleship, a life in which you take up your Cross daily.

1 Samuel 18:23 So Saul's servants spoke those words in the hearing of David. And David said, "Does it seem to you a light thing to be a king's son-in-law, seeing I am a poor and lightly esteemed man?"

Way to go, David! He held fast to his 'no-expectations' policy.

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

1 Samuel 18:25 Then Saul said, "Thus you shall say to David: 'The king does not desire any dowry but one hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to take vengeance on the king's enemies.' " But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.

Dowry?? Whoever said anything about "kill Goliath and come up with a dowry and I'll give you my daughter"?

A king's daughter had been promised. Then a new condition had been added, that he "fight the Lord's battles." Then the king had reneged. Now there was another daughter, but with yet another condition added.

All the while David continued to go out and fight against the Philistines. Not for Saul; not for Israel; not for himself. For the Lord. He is an amazing example of looking past people and to the Lord.

Instead of the usual "dowry," Saul would accept "one hundred foreskins of the Philistines." These were not readily available at the 'foreskin shop.' The Philistines weren't going to donate them. They would need to be acquired the old fashioned way, **by first killing them.**

1 Samuel 18:26 So when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to become the king's son-in-law. Now the days had not expired;

1 Samuel 18:27 therefore David arose and went, he and his men, and killed two hundred men of the Philistines. And David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full count to the king, that he might become the king's son-in-law. Then Saul gave him Michal his daughter as a wife.

If I had been David, treated like this, I'd have quit, or have been looking for a transfer. If I couldn't make a move, I'd be doing the bare minimum. And I'd be grumbling and complaining to anyone and everyone.

David seemed instead to genuinely appreciate the opportunity to become a king's son-in-law.

He showed everyone just how much he appreciated it by doubling his service. He did twice as much as he had been asked to do.

When you feel overlooked or slighted, you should respond by serving twice as much, twice as hard.

How is this attitude even possible? It is made not only possible, but normal, by the Holy Spirit who indwells us.

1 Samuel 18:28 Thus Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David, and that Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him;

1 Samuel 18:29 and Saul was still more afraid of David. So Saul became David's enemy continually.

The results of receiving recognition and reward were that Saul was even more against him.

1 Samuel 18:30 Then the princes of the Philistines went out to war. And so it was, whenever they went out, that David behaved more wisely than all the servants of Saul, so that his name became highly esteemed.

The verse is written with the understanding that David went out against these marauding bands of Philistines. The Law of Moses said that a newly married man should not go to war in his first year of marriage (Deuteronomy 24:5). Perhaps knowing this, the Philistines went out

against the Israelites, thinking their champion, David, would be prohibited from fighting by the Law.

David went out. Was he therefore a Law-breaker? No, he wasn't. He is described as behaving "more wisely than all the servants of Saul."

So what was going on? Remember that David had been anointed, and that the Holy Spirit had come upon him.

The Holy Spirit led David, not to set-aside the Law, but to supersede it with what was more righteous at the time. David had a keen understanding of the true spirit of the Law and not just the letter of the Law.

Jesus was confronted with many letter-of-the-Law dilemmas. The woman caught in adultery, in the Gospel of John, ought to have been stoned to death. He agreed but pointed out that there was none in the crowd of accusers worthy to cast the first stone. He applied the spirit of the Law, bringing conviction to the accusers and forgiveness to the accused.

Without violating God's precepts, His commands, we want to be Spirit-of-the-Law people. It isn't a license to sin, but to be gracious.

Who is it we serve? We serve the living God, the risen Savior, the Lord, Jesus Christ. He recognizes our service, even its motive. He will reward us when we stand before Him in that glorious day.

Mean time, have no other expectation of recognition or reward from man. If you do receive either, be appreciative and double your serving to show that you believe it came from Jesus.