



Studies in the Life of David

Text

First Samuel 19:1-17

Topic

Michal pretends David is sick in bed and incurs Saul's wrath when the king realizes that David is gone

Title

"Bed, Wrath & Be Gone"

Introduction

Every Christian is a witness. It isn't something we choose; it is something we are. The moment we are saved we become witnesses of the grace of God through Jesus Christ to forgive sins.

In a court of law some witnesses are more credible than others. One thing lawyers will try to do is to impeach the credibility of a witness in some way so that the judge or the jurors will disregard his or her testimony.

As Christians we certainly want to be credible. We don't want anything to impeach our credibility as witnesses. We don't want our testimony to be disregarded.

What kind of things would impeach our credibility? I'm sure we could come up with a long list. **Or we could see it illustrated for us in our text.**

King Saul was trying to kill David. He enlisted the help of both his son, Jonathan, and his daughter, Michal. Brother and sister both had mad love for David:

- Jonathan had a pure, brotherly love for David.
- Michal loved him with a strong marital love.

They both acted commendably to save David's life but their methods were very different:

- Jonathan confronted the situation directly and told the truth.
- Michal used deceit and told a lie.

In both cases David was spared. But Jonathan's witness was unimpeachable while Michal's was not.

There is one glaring fact in the text, one big difference, between Jonathan and Michal. You see it in verse thirteen where it says "Michal took an image and laid it in the bed..." The word for "image" in Hebrew is *teraphim*. It was a household god, an idol, that she kept handy.

I'm sure there were many other differences between Jonathan and Michal. But the one the Holy Spirit wants to focus our thinking upon is that Jonathan kept himself from idols while Michal kept idols for herself.

In the New Testament we are encouraged to keep ourselves from idols. An idol is any person or anything that takes the place of our affection for the Lord. An idol will impeach our witness because it is obvious that our affection for Jesus is less than it ought to be given all that He is and has done for us.

I want, then, to approach this text in a way that will encourage us to be Jonathan's rather than Michal's. I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 Your Witness For Jesus Christ Has Weight When You Keep Yourself From Idols, and #2 Your Witness For Jesus Christ Is Weakened When You Keep Idols For Yourself.

#1 Your Witness For Jesus Christ Has Weight When You Keep Yourself From Idols

(v1-7)

Let's get right into the story:

1 Samuel 19:1 Now Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David; but Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted greatly in David.

Jonathan was faced with a moral dilemma. Saul wanted David dead. It may seem an easy situation to us as armchair ethicists, but it was pretty tangled for Jonathan:

- For one thing, this was the order of the king.
- For another thing, this was the will of his father.
- For another thing, Jonathan was next in line to be king, but that would never happen if David remained alive. It was in Jonathan's best earthly interest for David to be killed.

Jonathan determined to tackle the problem head-on.

1 Samuel 19:2 So Jonathan told David, saying, "My father Saul seeks to kill you. Therefore please be on your guard until morning, and stay in a secret place and hide.
1 Samuel 19:3 And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak with my father about you. Then what I observe, I will tell you."

I'm pretty sure Saul would have seen this as a betrayal. On Jonathan's part, he continued to respect the office of the king, as well as his father, while doing the right thing in warning David.

And he put his own life in jeopardy by determining to talk honestly to Saul about the situation.

If you are ever faced with a moral dilemma, you should do the right thing, putting yourself on the line, in a way that shows respect even for the wrongdoers. It's a simple yet biblical model.

1 Samuel 19:4 Thus Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father, and said to him, "Let not the king sin against his servant, against David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his works have been very good toward you.

1 Samuel 19:5 For he took his life in his hands and killed the Philistine, and the Lord brought about a great deliverance for all Israel. You saw it and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood, to kill David without a cause?"

Jonathan had a boldness in talking to Saul. Twice he told Saul that what he had planned against David was “sin.” He didn’t water-down the message one bit.

At some point in our testimony as witnesses for Jesus, we must tell people they are sinners. Jesus came to save us from sin. All have sinned and fall short of the perfection God requires. But through faith in Jesus a person can be saved.

Jesus “took His life in His hands and killed” not just a Goliath but **all** the ‘Goliaths’ that were marshaled against the human race. On the Cross He overcame sin and death and the devil. It brought “great deliverance,” not just for Israel but for the entire human race, for “whosoever will believe in Him.”

That’s our testimony as witnesses. It gains credibility if our lives are consistent. Our lives don’t affect the facts. Jesus came, He died, He rose, He ascended, He is coming again. But whether or not we are heard and it makes a difference *is* affected by our lives.

Jonathan gave his testimony. He put it all out there. He was an unimpeachable witness.

1 Samuel 19:6 So Saul heeded the voice of Jonathan, and Saul swore, "As the Lord lives, he shall not be killed."

For the time being, Saul was swayed by the testimony of Jonathan. Later in their relationship he will try to kill Jonathan, throw a spear at him, for defending David.

1 Samuel 19:7 Then Jonathan called David, and Jonathan told him all these things. So Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as in times past.

Not exactly kumbaya. “In his presence as in times past” meant David would again be called upon to play the harp when Saul was troubled by an evil spirit. It meant he would be dodging the spears that Saul was throwing at him. Both Jonathan and David were called upon to do the right thing, putting their lives in jeopardy, but showing respect for authority.

So are you. Hopefully not in so dramatic a situation as to threaten your life. Your livelihood, maybe. But whether at home or at work or in school, somewhere you will face a moral dilemma.

If your life is all about Jesus, it will be easier to do the right thing, put your livelihood in jeopardy, and still show respect for authority. You will immediately realize that there is something more going on, something spiritual. The situation is not about you as much as it's about the Lord in you, about your witness to His power to sustain you.

There was nothing else in Jonathan's life to compete with his love for the Lord. But there was something else in Michal's life and it would impeach her as a witness.

#2 Your Witness For Jesus Is Weakened When You Keep Idols For Yourself (v8-17)

As a piece of Bible trivia, commentators point out that Michal is the only woman in Scripture who is said to love her husband. Others certainly did, but it's only mentioned of her.

It's an important detail to the point we are making. She loved David, but still kept an idol hidden in the house. As an illustration it tells me that I can love Jesus but still be drawn away by idols. Hence the warning of the apostle John at the end of his first letter, "little children, keep yourself from idols" (1John 5:21).

1 Samuel 19:8 And there was war again; and David went out and fought with the Philistines, and struck them with a mighty blow, and they fled from him.

1 Samuel 19:9 Now the distressing spirit from the Lord came upon Saul as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand. And David was playing music with his hand.

1 Samuel 19:10 Then Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he slipped away from Saul's presence; and he drove the spear into the wall. So David fled and escaped that night.

How long would you go on working for Saul? There came a point at which David had to remove himself from the situation, to save his life, but he hung in there as long as he could.

We must cultivate the understanding that our lives are no longer our own. They belong to the Lord. Thus He must release us from serving in a particular situation before we can leave. It's not up to us to analyze the circumstances and conclude, on our own, that we're not gonna take it anymore.

In World War II, at the Battle of Iwo Jima, it's estimated that 33% of the landing party was killed. Fully one-third of our brave men died. Do you think they understood the odds as the amphibious vehicles were approaching the shore? They did, but put themselves in harms way nonetheless. They didn't analyze the situation and decide there must be a better way. Their lives no longer belonged to them. They were part of a greater cause, a greater effort.

How much more can we, as believers, submit to the authority of the Lord? When we find ourselves in times of trouble, we are part of a greater cause, the exemplifying of the Gospel and of the power of a transformed life.

1 Samuel 19:11 Saul also sent messengers to David's house to watch him and to kill him in the morning. And Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, "If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed."

1 Samuel 19:12 So Michal let David down through a window. And he went and fled and escaped.

Michal was a lot like Jonathan. Both stood in relation to Saul. Both loved David. Both determined to warn and help David at great personal risk.

Then suddenly we are given a detail about Michal that alters our opinion of her.

1 Samuel 19:13 And Michal took an image and laid it in the bed, put a cover of goats' hair for his head, and covered it with clothes.

Let's talk *teraphim* for a moment. There's lots of conjecture about exactly what they were. The implied size and the fact that Michal could pretend that one was David led the Rabbis to think that they were heads, possibly mummified human heads. According to at least one ancient source *teraphim* were made from the heads of slaughtered first born male adult

humans, shaved, salted, spiced, with a golden plate placed under the tongue, and magic words engraved upon the plate. It was believed that the *teraphim*, mounted on the wall, would talk to people. (Sort of like those talking fish!). During the excavation of Jericho by Kathleen Kenyon, evidence of the use of human skulls as was uncovered, lending credence to the rabbinical conjecture.

Did David know about this? Did he tolerate it? We're not told. *It's not the point the Holy Spirit wants to make.*

What is the point? Well, the idol took the place of David in the bed. We might say that Michal kept idols for herself that took the place of the one she loved.

An idol by definition takes the place of the One you love. Since any person, or any thing, can be an idol, I can't really make a list. But neither can I ignore the New Testament warning to keep myself from idols. I must therefore honestly allow the Holy Spirit to search my heart and mind to reveal to me what things have become or are becoming idols competing for the affection I owe the One I love, Who loved me before the foundation of the earth.

1 Samuel 19:14 So when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, "He is sick."

1 Samuel 19:15 Then Saul sent the messengers back to see David, saying, "Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may kill him."

1 Samuel 19:16 And when the messengers had come in, there was the image in the bed, with a cover of goats' hair for his head.

Because she started with the idol, everything surrounding Michal's testimony was a deceit, was a lie. She was trying to do the right thing but went about it the wrong way.

Can a Christian ever lie, e.g., to save a life? If you are interested in answers to that ethical question you can go to our website and find the archived video of the Cal-T.E.C. class we taught that describes three Christian responses.

The Holy Spirit is not here answering that question. He's not giving what we would call an apologetic. He is doing something more foundational, showing us that our answer when in the heat of the moment has a lot to do with where our heart is set at that moment.

In other words, you can have your opinion about how you might act or react to a moral dilemma based on your study of the Word and the suggested Christian responses. But your actual response when faced with the decision will have more to do with whether or not the Lord is your first, true love.

1 Samuel 19:17 Then Saul said to Michal, "Why have you deceived me like this, and sent my enemy away, so that he has escaped?" And Michal answered Saul, "He said to me, 'Let me go! Why should I kill you?' "

Michal saved David's life but listen to her testimony about David. She insinuated that David threatened to kill her.

Coming from a place of idolatry, Michal's testimony was false, impugning the character of David.

If we harbor idols, our testimony will be in some measure false and it will impugn the character of Jesus. On a very basic level, if we are telling people Jesus can change their lives then they ought to see evidence that our lives have been changed.

For example, let's say I'm in one of those difficult situations at home or at work or in school. If my reaction is the same as a person who doesn't know Jesus, then how is my testimony validated? If I grumble, complain, seek to be released, rather than patiently endure, returning blessing for cursing, then those looking on will wonder what difference does it make to have the Holy Spirit indwelling a person?

It still makes all the difference in the world and especially in the world to come! But the nonbeliever may not see it and, therefore, not be convinced that Jesus can help them.

How do you recognize idols in your life? One Christian author suggests the following:

- Any enjoyment forbidden by God, when indulged, is an idol.
- Great desire for non-great things is a sign they are becoming idols.
- When something tends to make me not think of God it has become an idol.
- When something or someone causes me to abandon my duties and responsibilities it is idolatry.

As I said earlier, the list of things is endless. It's more about the place Jesus occupies in your heart.

Your witness is weakened when you keep idols for yourself. Instead, keep yourself from idols - from any person or any thing that competes for the affection you have for the Lord Who saved you and Who loves you.

