

07-16-17 – Conflict Among Kings – 1 Sam 18-19

“Have you ever had to wait for something? Minutes can seem like hours and hours like days. Patience, someone has said, is learning to idle your engine when you would like to strip your gears. God often goes to great lengths to teach His servants how to wait.” (Growing Through Conflict – Erwin W. Lutzer – p. 39)

I don’t know about you, but I hate waiting. I can wait while I’m deciding what to do, but once I decide, I want it now. I will do anything to make it happen now.

In our story today we have a situation... Saul knows God has rejected him as king, but he doesn’t want to accept this decision. David has been anointed the new king, but he can’t assume this role yet. God has everyone and everything in a hold pattern. How will this mess be resolved? God has a plan – and it is perfect, even if we don’t think so as we read.

God was in no hurry to fulfill His plan. For TEN long years, Saul pursued David and tried to kill him because of jealousy. David, the anointed king by God, was running for his life from Saul and his army. David did many things to evade Saul – he posed to be insane – he joined the Philistine army – he tried to appeal to the senses of his leaders (Saul and his men).

During this time, God was working to perfect David, and at the same time, working to bring Saul down to submission. Yet, in the midst of this story, a new character is introduced – Jonathan.

Jonathan was King Saul’s son and the rightful heir to the throne of his father, but he was not so aggressive to take it once he met David. They became friends immediately. David had something about him (the Holy Spirit) that won Jonathan over to him in relationship. I hope you have experienced this in your life. If you are a believer, you have the Holy Spirit within you. This is an attraction to others you come in contact with. People will see or recognize you are different in some ways, and they will notice what you have to say about some things or how you react to some situations. This is the work of God in your life to attract others to Christ.

1 Sam. 18:1-5 (MSG) - *By the time David had finished reporting to Saul, Jonathan was deeply impressed with David—an immediate bond was forged between them. He became totally committed to David. From that point on he would be David’s number-one advocate and friend.*
² *Saul received David into his own household that day, no more to return to the home of his father.*

³⁻⁴ *Jonathan, out of his deep love for David, made a covenant with him. He formalized it with solemn gifts: his own royal robe and weapons—armor, sword, bow, and belt.*

⁵ *Whatever Saul gave David to do, he did it—and did it well. So well that Saul put him in charge of his military operations. Everybody, both the people in general and Saul’s servants, approved of and admired David’s leadership.*

The friendship between David and Jonathan was remarkable. Today we have acquaintances that we pick up from time to time to augment our relational needs, but the kind of spiritual kinship between David and Jonathan that was energized by affection and sealed by covenant is rare... This David-Jonathan sort of friendship is a love that sets the other free to be himself or herself. It's a commitment with no demands. In a culture like ours in which there is widespread avoidance of commitments because they are confining, this story of commitment is as freeing as fresh air. For healthy relationships don't restrict our lives; they expand them. – Eugene Peterson

Jonathan and Saul were totally different. The children do NOT have to follow in the footprints of the parents. Jonathan gladly let go of the Kingdom and his “rightful” place as leader. Saul, however, clung to it with everything he had, even to the point of murder to keep it. “David was caught in the middle between Jonathan’s love and Saul’s hate.”

Jealousy Versus Humility

Saul started off great. He was anointed King by Samuel and the Holy Spirit came upon him in power. He met up with a group of prophets and began prophesying along with them. Surely he was God’s man for the job of ruling over Israel. At times he was a powerful leader.

“Saul had one fatal flaw... He saw the kingdom as belonging to himself and not to God.”

He was more concerned about his reputation than obedience. Eventually, he became self-deceived.

He realized his errors and sin. He promised to do better, but he continued to return to his old ways. He couldn’t truly change, because he relied only on his own strength and determination. It’s that same way with us. The only way anyone can truly change is to repent before God and have His Spirit work in our lives. Saul continuously refused to see things God’s way.

Jealousy is a funny thing. It sneaks up on a person at a weak moment, and then it sinks its roots in deeply and won’t let go. Saul loved David, even after David slew Goliath. David saved the day. But then soon after, the people had a parade and sang songs with instruments,

“Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands.” (1 Sam. 18:7)

Saul was infuriated and opened the door to serious jealousy. Jealousy burned within Saul’s heart.

(v. 8) – “They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?”

After he allowed jealousy to enter his being, he looked on David with suspicion and anger to the point that he entertained the thought of murder.

David, on the other hand, never saw his popularity as anything special. He was not obsessed with success. He knew that God had the final say in his life. *“He willingly trusted his fate to God who gives the kingdoms of the world to whomever He wills.”*

Waiting for God becomes difficult when we see other people succeed at the very point where we are failing.

Envy is found everywhere.

“If we don’t confess and forsake the sin of envy, we will find it difficult to trust God.”

How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God? – Jn. 5:44

“We aren’t submissive until we can give thanks to God for those who are more successful than we are.” (And mean it).

“Saul simply would not recognize God’s authority as owner of the kingdom. He would not resign even though the Almighty had spoken. He acknowledged his own kingship and none other.”

Manipulation Versus Trust

1 Sam. 18:10-11 - ***The very next day a tormenting spirit from God overwhelmed Saul, and he began to rave in his house like a madman. David was playing the harp, as he did each day. But Saul had a spear in his hand,¹¹ and he suddenly hurled it at David, intending to pin him to the wall. But David escaped him twice.***

Saul manipulated this time with David into an opportunity to kill David.

Then Saul tried to set David up to be killed by the Philistines in battle offering his daughter, Merab, as a wife. Yeah, that didn’t work either. You can’t defeat the plans of God by manipulation. You can’t defeat the plans of God period.

Saul kept planning and manipulating. Next he thought to offer his daughter, Michal, who loved David, as his wife, but with a price. One hundred Philistine foreskins – I don’t know how people come up with these things. Saul was hoping that David will be killed by the Philistines while attempting this unreasonable feat. However, David and his men brought back double the request, and were unharmed. (v. 27).

v. 28-19 – ***“When Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David, and that Michal, Saul’s daughter, loved him, then Saul was even more afraid of David. Thus Saul was David’s enemy continually.”***

You would think that Saul would come to his senses and repent before God, but NO. His next attempt to kill David was through his own son, Jonathan.

1 Sam. 19:1 - ***Saul now urged his servants and his son Jonathan to assassinate David. But Jonathan, because of his strong affection for David...***

He didn't fall for his father's manipulation. Rather than putting David to death, Jonathan helped him escape – true friendship all the way.

“Despite his schizophrenia, there were times when Saul still exercised his spiritual gift of prophecy.”

I really can't get my brain around this fact. How could God use Saul to prophesy, when he was rejected, His Spirit was removed from him, and he was out of the will of God. But God is sovereign, and He has a plan that goes beyond our understanding.

Saul sent troops to the area, and they all started prophesying rather than root out David.

1 Sam. 19:22-24 – (MSG) -

22 Fed up, Saul went to Ramah himself. He came to the big cistern at Secu and inquired, “Where are Samuel and David?”

A bystander said, “Over at Naioth in Ramah.”

23-24 As he headed out for Naioth in Ramah, the Spirit of God was on him, too. All the way to Naioth he was caught up in a babbling trance! He ripped off his clothes and lay there rambling gibberish before Samuel for a day and a night, stretched out naked. People are still talking about it: “Saul among the prophets! Who would have guessed?”

The prophetic frenzy that came upon Saul eludes our understanding, but the thrust of the story is clear enough. The same Spirit from God that overwhelmed Saul at the outset of his kingship also marked the end of it. And that's the same Spirit who saves the day for you and me. He overcomes the evil in our hearts with his goodness. And he saves us from saying and doing things that would hurt those around us. – Eugene Peterson

Contrast this with David's trust...

Sometime later, Saul went looking for David with 3000 men. Saul came to rest in the cave David was hiding in. David was so close that he cut off a piece of Saul's robe. David's men couldn't believe that he didn't kill Saul while he had the chance and end all this.

1 Sam. 24:6 - ***He said to his men, “The LORD forbid that I should do this to my lord the king. I shouldn't attack the LORD's anointed one, for the LORD himself has chosen him.”***

The reason David didn't kill his enemy when he had the chance, the reason he would not use his might against the Lord's anointed, is that David understood that the kingdom belonged to God – not any man, not even himself. He trusted God over everything. We all have our Goliaths, but we also have our Saul who never seems to go away. It could be in your family, your marriage, your job. If God were to remove our obstacles, we may miss out on His blessings in our lives and circumstances.

David struggled for ten years on the run from Saul. Yet God had everything under control. David couldn't see it then. But David trusted in God for his deliverance and outcome.

Manipulation, in whatever form, is proof that we do not really trust God.

Saul was anointed by God and had Spiritual gifts, yet he didn't trust God for leadership of the kingdom.

David thought the Lord had forgotten His promise to him, but God was teaching David to wait. If David had not gone through what he did over these ten years, he might have become Saul II.

Saul's impatience revealed a heart that was in direct opposition to the will and purpose of God.

The Holy Spirit and an Evil Spirit

"Between the conflict of David and Saul was a battle between God and Satan."

1 Sam. 18:10 tells us, ***"Now it came about on the next day that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul."***

Why does God allow some to prosper and continue in their role when they are opposed to God? God allows this to reveal who they really are in His time. *"God is still in the business of revealing human hearts for what they are."*

Saul had repented numerous times, but they were half-hearted attempts to gain God's favor.

1 Sam. 15:30 – ***"I have sinned but please honor me now before the elders of my people."***

WHAT? I have sinned... but honor me? What is he thinking? If Saul had truly repented, he would resign from the throne and allow David to reign. He knew God had chosen David to rule over His people – why argue – why hold back – why refuse to obey God's will?

Even his repentance was manipulative – He repented to get what he wanted, and not to get what God wanted.

"The only answer is the one that Saul did not accept: total repentance. He should have realized that God had a right to give the kingdom to whomever He wished."

Lessons About Repentance

First - "If we repent with only half a heart, God will no longer come to our aid."

We cannot be double-minded in our approach to God and our spiritual life...

Jas. 1:8 – ***"being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways"*** – We should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

So when Saul became desperate, he did not seek God but Satan – he visited a witch instead.

Saul went to the witch and asked to speak to Samuel from the grave. She must have freaked out when Samuel actually appeared to Saul. God performed a miracle to allow Saul to get the

final word on the subject. The Kingdom had been taken from him and given to another. Stop fighting God, Saul. It's a done deal. Even the witch was terrified over all this.

Saul said some of the saddest words ever uttered by a human being:

(1 Sam. 28:15) - *“Why have you disturbed me by calling me back?” Samuel asked Saul. “Because I am in deep trouble,” Saul replied. “The Philistines are at war with me, and God has left me and won’t reply by prophets or dreams. So I have called for you to tell me what to do.”*

1 Sam. 28:16 - But Samuel replied, “Why ask me, since the LORD has left you and has become your enemy?”

“Either God will have your whole heart, or Satan will seek to get it all.”

Second – “repentance involves unconditional surrender, the acknowledgment that God, not man, is in charge.”

“What distinguished David from Saul was his understanding of submission. When Saul faced death, he went to a medium; when David faced death, he went to God.”

“David felt the full force of Saul’s death threats, but he left Saul’s future to God. In Ps. 59 written during his troubles with Saul, he prayed for God to rescue him, but then rejoiced in God’s faithfulness.

David knew that God would protect him and ultimately vindicate him...

Ps. 59:16-17 - But as for me, I will sing about your power.

Each morning I will sing with joy about your unfailing love.

For you have been my refuge, a place of safety when I am in distress.

¹⁷ O my Strength, to you I sing praises, for you, O God, are my refuge, the God who shows me unfailing love.

“Saul grasped for the kingdom but eventually God caused it to slip away from him. David refused to grasp it and it was given to him in God’s time. Saul was impatient with God and was abased; David waited for God and was exalted.”

Ps. 37:7 - Be still in the presence of the LORD, and wait patiently for him to act. Don’t worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes.

Jealousy is an evil root in the soul. Humility always wins God’s favor.

Manipulation to get what you want always loses. Trust in God always vindicates and wins.

The Holy Spirit in us, gives us the power to truly repent and get right with God.

Ps. 37:34 - Put your hope in the LORD. Travel steadily along his path.

He will honor you by giving you the land. You will see the wicked destroyed.