

1st Samuel

Lesson 40

As we ended the last lesson, I was not through giving tribute to men who have latched on to me like a father figure. I want to continue in those thoughts and memories. I am reminded of Benton Cain who latched on to me as a twelve-year-old boy, the year after my father died, and would not let me go until I left for college. He had only a daughter. I was like a son to him. He put me in my first ministry position leading music at a nursing home every Sunday morning where he delivered a message. His daughter played the piano. When I got my driver's license, he did not let the ink dry for the following week he resigned from the nursing home, told me I would be picking up his daughter to continue playing the piano, and I would be leading the music and presenting the message. It was because of that, that I spent several weeks at his kitchen table as he mentored me in how to prepare a lesson. With all my education, I have never changed how he taught me to prepare a lesson. You are the beneficiary of his love for me like a son that transpired from 1968 to 1974. One more step backward in time to Jewell Stroope of the Stroope honey family. At eleven he gave me a job working honey bees. I worked for him for seven years. He taught me how to work, lift heavy items, how to drive in a 1956 Chevy pickup with the starter on the floor. He taught me how to do business with the public each holiday season at a firework stand. He taught me how to load trailers for weight distribution, tie knots in ropes, pull cars out that are stuck in the mud, and take a break when needed for a short rest each day. He truly looked at me like a son. I must confess, there are dozens more men that I have had long Godly, loving relationships, who I should list here. I am greatly blessed by many men who were like father figures in my life and I was like a son to them. I understand what it means to be knit together, soul to soul in relationships. No jealousy, no envy, no strife, only good, even in bad times for we all have bad times sometimes. Each of these men, and many more, love me, as they loved their own selves. Each of these men gave many gifts to me from what they had that I did not deserve.

So, too, Jonathan gave David that day from his own royal wealth. He gave David his royal robe, his armor, his sword, his bow, and his belt. David was part of Jonathan's family now.

But, from that day, "*Saul ... did not let him return to his father's house.*" Saul's character was not like Jonathan's character. This statement by the writer has much meaning behind it that shows the true character of Saul. He "*did not let him return to his father's house.*" Saul latched on to David and would not let him go. He did not do this in a father, son, knit together way like the relationship with Jonathan and David. Rather he did this in a selfish way. He wanted David nearby so he could keep his eye on David. As we will soon see the reason for this; the people will elevate this young seventeen-year-old man above the king, at least in the eyes of the people. It will make Saul sink into great despair and anger towards David. He was not a son to Saul; he was a possession for Saul's own purposes.

b) A Summary of What Saul Did (18:5)

The writer continues to give a summary of what Saul did. Verse 5.

"So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and prospered; and Saul set him over the men of war. And it was pleasing in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants." (18:5)

Notice that whatever task Saul sent David to do, David was successful. Notice also that the people were pleased with David, Saul's servants were pleased with David, but the writer does not tell

us that Saul was pleased with David. Not to get too far ahead in the storyline, David's successes will irritate Saul, not please him.

c) A Summary of What the Women Did (18:6-7)

The writer sped ahead to tell us about David's future successes in verse 5, but here in verse 6 the writer gives a summary of what the women did as David was restricted to be with Saul on the journey back to Gibeah, Saul's capital city and home. Verse 6.

"It happened as they were coming, when David returned from killing the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy and with musical instruments. ⁷ The women sang as they played and said, "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands." (18:6-7)

For this to have happened, the story of David's victory over Goliath had to have been spread like wildfire by the warriors of Israel who had already returned to their homes when camp broke back at the Valley of Elah. In those days, when battles were over, the men did not march in formation back to a military base. There were no military base camps. When men were needed, the summons was sent by couriers with the place of the gathering included. The commanders never knew who would show up to fight until they showed up to fight. In the same way, when the battles were over, all the warriors would simply disburse from the camp to go home in no required order. This passage also tells us what the warriors thought about David, even though it does not tell us anything. How else would the women in the cities between Socoh and Gibeah know about David's victory if the men had not spread the news. The men had stood in fear of the giant; David had ended that fear. We must also remember that if the men had returned with a disparaging report of David's victory, the women would not have responded in this way. The men were happy; the women were happy. In addition, the men must have had more respect for David than Saul and that was reflected in the songs of the women. David had not slain ten-thousand at all. But he might as well have slain ten-thousand in their eyes. He had saved Israel from a renewed Philistine oppression.

d) A Summary of What Saul Thought (18:8-9)

When Saul heard the songs of the women, the writer tells a summary of what Saul thought. Verse 8.

"Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?" ⁹ Saul looked at David with suspicion from that day on." (18:8-9)

From Socoh, in the Valley of Elah, it was only a long day's journey back to Gibeah, about twenty-five miles. So it would have taken Saul no longer than two days at the most to get home. What the writer is telling us is that Saul was happy with David on one day and eternally suspicious of David a day or two later.

e) A Summary of Saul's Derangement

(1) The Attempt to Kill David with a Spear (18:10-11)

Our title for this section is the story of the sickness of King Saul. The writer is about to tell us the reason for that title with a summary of Saul's derangement with the attempt to kill David with a spear. Verse 10.

"Now it came about on the next day that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul, and he raved in the midst of the house, while David was playing the harp with his hand, as usual; and a spear was in Saul's hand. ¹¹ Saul hurled the spear, for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall." But David escaped from his presence twice." (18:10-11)

Let us set the scene for this passage. A day or two before, David killed Goliath. David has arrived at Saul's home in Gibeah. Saul did not let David return to his home in Bethlehem after killing Goliath. David is playing the harp for Saul, as he was assigned to do before killing Goliath.

While hearing the music, Saul remembered what women said about David the day before, and Saul became angry. He was angry because the women esteem David more than they esteemed him. Saul was smart enough to know that if that was the opinion of the women, it had to be the opinion of the men. Saul became so angry at David that he tried to kill him with his spear. But David escaped.

While the writer is specific about the day after the women praised David, because this is a summary, the writer alludes to the interaction of Saul and David more than once. The writer tells us that David played the harp for Saul *“as usual.”* In other words, David played the harp for Saul on a regular basis. In addition, the writer tags the spear event by telling us that David *“escaped from his presence twice.”* In other words, Saul tried to kill David when he was playing the harp with a spear again at some time after the third day since David killed Goliath. Mine you, David is still about seventeen years of age when this happens; he is but a youth. We will learn of Saul’s second attempt to kill David with a spear in chapter 19, verse 10.

(2) The Order to Make David a Commander (18:12-16)

Because of Saul’s anger with David, and because of his fear of David, the writer tells us of the order to make David a commander. Verse 12.

“Now Saul was afraid of David, for the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul. ¹³ Therefore Saul removed him from his presence and appointed him as his commander of a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. ¹⁴ David was prospering in all his ways for the LORD was with him. ¹⁵ When Saul saw that he was prospering greatly, he dreaded him. ¹⁶ But all Israel and Judah loved David, and he went out and came in before them.” (18:12-16)

Because the writer is giving us summaries of the things that happened, and not all in order, it is difficult to determine how long Saul waited to make David a commander. As a seventeen-year-old, David was too young to legally be in the army. Yet, he had killed Goliath in battle. The men could have been willing to follow him as a youth because of that victory. However, the writer has confused the timing in the past. Do you remember when David cut off the head of Goliath and he told us that David took the giant’s head to Jerusalem before he told us that he showed the head to Saul back at the base camp? The writer sped ahead to tell us the eventual instead of staying in the moment. The writer just told us that David fled from the spear of Saul twice, when he was only describing the first time. It is therefore possible with this passage, that the writer is telling us that Saul made David a commander when he reached the age of twenty. Or, perhaps, it is as it is written, and Saul made David a commander on the day he threw the spear at him. But then we have to ask, “which time.” It really does not matter when, but when David became a commander, he far exceeded the expectations of Saul and made matters worse.

(3) The Offer of Saul’s Oldest Daughter in Marriage

(a) Saul’s Plan (18:17a)

Saul had made a promise in the reward that he would fulfill with David. The offer of Saul’s oldest daughter in marriage. We come to Saul’s plan. Verse 17a.

“Then Saul said to David, ‘Here is my older daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife, only be a valiant man for me and fight the LORD’S battles.’” (18:17a)

We have lost a sense of timing with our writer’s report. No doubt, Saul has tried to kill David. No doubt, Saul is fearful of David and made him a commander. No doubt, Saul is trying to crawl on his promise to give his daughter to David as a wife. How do we know that? He sent David into battle before he made the decision to fulfill his promise. It is found in Saul’s words, *“I will give her to you as a wife, only be a valiant man for me and fight the LORD’S battles.”* Saul is saying he will give his daughter in the future if David will be a valiant warrior now. The next verse supports this conclusion.

(b) Saul's Thought (18:17b)

The writer tells us Saul's thought process. Verse 17b.

"For Saul thought, 'My hand shall not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him.'"
(18:17b)

Let us translate what Saul is thinking. He is thinking, if David goes out to fight the Philistines and they kill him, then he is out of Saul's hair and Saul will not have to give his daughter to David as a wife.

(c) David's Question (18:18)

But we come to David's question of the king concerning the king's daughter as a wife. David, in his innocence, took the position of humility with Saul. Verse 18.

"But David said to Saul, 'Who am I, and what is my life or my father's family in Israel, that I should be the king's son-in-law?'" (18:18)

Family wealth may be passed down from generation to generation, but family wealth is not always sustained from generation to generation. Boaz was a wealthy man of great honor and prestige when he fell in love with Ruth and took her as a wife. Together, they had Obed. Eventually, Boaz died and Obed inherited the fortune. Obed and his wife had a son named Jesse. When Obed died, what Obed had was passed to Jesse. Notice that I did not say Obed's wealth was passed down, for we do not know how Obed handled the inheritance that he received from Boaz in light of all of life's circumstances that occurred. We do not know how wealthy Obed was when he died. At his death, what he had was passed to Jesse and we do know something about his wealth. He may have been wealthy in sons, but he was not wealthy in flocks. How do we know that? The eldest son of Jesse told us that when David arrived at the battleline with Goliath when the oldest son thought David had abandoned the only flock his father had. Eliab said at that point, *"Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness?"* Few sheep. David was not even a shepherd of a large flock as we often think. Rather, it was only a few sheep. This point gives us an insight into David's family wealth. It was only a few sheep. Oh, they still had the land that once was owned by Boaz. But by this time, Boaz's land had been divided among all the descendants of Boaz. With each new family that came along, a small chunk of land was divided off to the new family. The wealth of Boaz was passed on to the next generations, but that did not mean the next generations continued to enjoy the wealth that Boaz enjoyed. As for David's family, they may have been large in numbers, but humble in means. What in the world had David done, or his family done, to deserve to be the son-in-law of the king? Even though David knew about the reward, this statement by David seems to indicate that David killed the giant for the national good of Israel instead of the personal good of the reward. David showed his humility in words.