

## Session 3

August 4, 2024

David

1 Samuel 18:5-16

Israel wanted a king, just like all the other nations (1 Sam. 8:5). So that's exactly what God did: He gave them a king just like the other nations had...a lost man to lead them! Sadly, there is no evidence in the life of Saul that he was truly saved. So what kind of leadership does a nation get from a lost man? Erratic, shortsighted, and selfish. And poor David was stuck. In this week's lesson, we see what can happen when a bitter king turns against one of his biggest supporters. While the emphasis is on Saul's decline, think of David's implied reactions. The story unfolds in three scenes.

**Notoriety (vv. 5-7).** Slaying giants is a sure way to gain recognition! And while there is no indication that David the shepherd boy was seeking approval from the king or fame among the people, he was rewarded both when he slew Goliath. Verse 5 begins with a general accolade: whatever David did in his service to the king was a success. The end of verse 5 explains the context. Following the victory over the Philistines, David was awarded a leadership position in the army. This was not over the entire army, but it marked the beginning of David's military career. At this point, everyone was happy! Abner, the army's overall commander was happy (see 17:55ff); King Saul was pleased, for the Philistines had been routed; all the king's "servants" (his court officials and military leaders) were pleased; and most notably, "all the people" were pleased. A new hero was emerging, and everyone was basking in the victory he had won. As word spread that the army was returning home, people lined the streets to greet them. The air was filled with music and the streets were filled with dancing (v. 6). For reflection: *To see the celebration in perspective, read the story of David and Goliath in 1 Sam. 17. Can you understand the significance of this victory?*

**Animosity (vv. 8-11).** Even the untrained eye can see the trouble brewing in verse 7. Commentators, looking at the historical context, point out that the song was likely a common one, the names filled in at the moment depending on the circumstances of the fight. In other words, the significance of the song's inclusion is not that the ladies were trying to stir up trouble, but rather to indicate the pettiness of Saul and the sudden change in his attitude. From celebrating a great victory, Saul turned to fearing for his kingdom (v. 8). His pettiness is clearly stated in the words that follow. Saul was "furious;" he "resented this song;" he "complained;" and he "watched David jealously from that day forward" (v. 9). Saul's mental condition was worsened the very next day. The evil spirit from God that previously sent Saul to sulking (see 16:14) now manifested itself in rage (v. 10). The words used indicate the king was acting and speaking irrationally or unintelligibly. David, whose music was normally soothing to the king, held a lyre in his hand; but the king held a spear. For reflection: *Many are troubled at the thought of God sending "an evil spirit" to torment Saul. How do you respond to this?*

**Consistency (vv. 12-16).** Notice the irony here. Saul attempted to kill David twice with a spear (v. 11; see also 19:10), but Saul is the one who is afraid! (v. 12). And now the reason is spelled out. Even as a lost man, Saul had enough discernment to know that God's anointing had left him and been given to David. What looked like an honorable promotion of David in verse 13, was

actually an “honorable exile.” By assigning him a distinct command, David would be sent out from Saul’s presence, out of sight and hopefully out of mind. Unfortunately for the king, David’s fame only spread. The Lord was clearly with him, and the nation clearly loved him. For reflection: *Throughout this narrative, we have to wonder what David was thinking. What can we discern about David’s character when we read between the lines?*