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## When Life's Not Fair I Samuel 18

**Intro:** In **ch17**, we watched a teenager take down 1 of Israel's most formidable enemies simply b/c it was important 2 him 2 uphold **YHWH's** honor. In **ch18**, we'll see that Goliath's fall shook more than just the ground. After the initial relief of deliverance & compulsory glad-handing that follows, begins 1 of the longest & most convoluted conflicts in the biblical record. The main characters of it are Saul & David but the conflict isn't between really between them, it's between Saul & **YHWH**. "If that's the case, why doesn't **God** just get rid of Saul?" B/c the conflict itself is revealing: it reveals the true wickedness of Saul's heart in the conniving, murderous actions he takes. More importantly, the difficult circumstances that **YHWH** allows into David's life exist 2 show David (& us) what it actually looks like 2/b a man (or woman) after God's own heart. Saying you have it doesn't make it true; this heart attitude must be revealed. **Heb 5:8** How could **J**, as God, **learn** anything? It's not that He learned how 2 obey but what's involved in obedience.

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**1-4 Jonathan-** We've seen him as a remarkably brave man of faith; willing 2 fight a 1-man war against the Philistines on 2 different occasions. After his debrief w/ Saul, Jonathan is immediately taken w/ David & its not hard 2 see why. They were a lot alike: both had a great trust in God, were men of action & both had a real relationship w/ God. But, there were also some important differences between the 2. Jonathan was older than David & a seasoned soldier. Jonathan was also the 1<sup>st</sup> born son of a king & David was the last born son of a farmer. This means Jonathan wasn't **just** a prince, he was the crown prince & by everyone's expectation, Jonathan would be the next king of Israel.

In **ch14**, Jonathan had, in essence, become the savior of Israel; showing himself 2/b great royal material. He'd make a **wonderful king**! The **tragedy** is: he'll never get that opportunity. Sure, he's the crown prince but he's already been rejected as king w/ **YHWH's** rejection of Saul's dynasty (**13:13-14**). Jonathan is perfectly suited 4 a kingship he can never have. The questions fly thick & fast: **Why couldn't he be king instead of Saul? Why does he have 2/b removed? Why does he have 2 miss his big break b/c of his father's bad choices? Why play 2<sup>nd</sup> fiddle 2 David?**

These questions are normal & revealing – they reveal us & the 21<sup>st</sup> century western culture we are infused w/. 2 us, self-fulfillment is a **right**! We strongly believe if a person has ingenuity & discipline, their efforts should be rewarded w/ success. If we're Christian, we'll happily confess that **the Lord** helped in our endeavors (**we always need the help**). But Jonathan seems 2 know better. He doesn't view the kingdom as belonging 2 his father or himself, it was **YHWH's** kingdom. 4 Jonathan then, the kingdom wasn't his 2 seize or his 2 rule but his 2 **serve**! Could it be that **a tragic life really isn't tragic if it is lived in faithfulness 2 what Jesus asks of us in the midst of the circumstances He gives us?**

**covenant-** Jonathan's taken w/ David & initiates a binding covenant between them. Literally: **cut a covenant** – **severe an animal in half** & both parties walk between the halves indicating they are willing 2 meet the same fate as the animal if they are unfaithful 2 uphold their side of the agreement. But initiating a covenant wasn't all Jonathan did. He also removed his robe, armor, sword, bow & belt & **gave** them 2 David. This was both significant & surprising b/c clothes signify the person & his position. So, in this act, Jonathan renounces his position as crown prince & transfers the right of succession 2 David (**as far as he's concerned**). No one in that culture would do that! You don't surrender your crown rights 2 an upstart, you eliminate him! But Jonathan refuses 2 bow 2 the boring expectations of his culture. DeGraaf, "**This deed on his part was an act of faith. Only faith makes us willing 2/b the lesser. Faith causes us 2 surrender the rights we pretend 2 have over against the Christ, who is truly Israel's king.**" Jonathan's faced w/ the same dilemma we all face at some point: what to do when life's not fair? Do we fight & scratch 2 have our way? Do we question God's love & check out of the fight? Or do we like Jonathan, recognize God's providence & roll w/ it? Most of us have lived long enough 2 know that life's not fair & yet, we constantly expect it 2/b just that. In this chapter we're going 2 see a couple of great examples of how 2 deal w/ the seeming unfairness of life & 1 really bad example.

**5- accepted-** David's response was 2 act wisely (not proudly) & b/c of this, he was accepted by all who saw him. Saul may've been pleased that his new assistant was so well received but David's popularity was just taking off.

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**6-9-ascribed-** as they were making their way home from Operation Big Lug, all the women in all the cities they passed came out 2 sing the new hit song that was topping the charts. Everybody really seemed 2 like it, except Saul. It wasn't so much the melody as the lyrics that bothered him. The song wasn't meant 2/b political or a slight against Saul; it was a victory song! But Saul is the older brother at the prodigal's party, "**But what about me?**" In this we see the depravity of Saul's heart. The song **did** praise Saul; it ascribed 2 him thousands of enemy slain. What's wrong w/ that? Isn't it enough 2 slay thousands? Not 4 Saul, not as long as someone else was being ascribed 10 thousands! Saul was **envious & resentful** when he should have been **grateful** b/c they were treating him better than he deserved! Goliath stood in the valley & ridiculed Israel's army & God while Saul was on the sideline sitting on his hands.

Why was Saul so **angry**? B/c he didn't have a right relationship w/ **YHWH**. All Saul had 2 affirm his wicked heart was the praise of men & when David received more praise than him, it ate at him. Saul's also **insecure**: "**Now what more...**" this was a sign of a **guilty conscience**. He recalled Samuel's words, "**The Lord has rejected you from being**

**king over Israel.**” He knew it was his own sin that disqualified him from being king & he was hanging onto the throne in the energy of his flesh & it was killing him. An honorable man would have stepped aside & allowed the Lord’s anointed to take his rightful place on the throne, but if Saul had been an honorable man, he wouldn’t be in this mess! This was also a dangerous time for David. The 1<sup>st</sup> time in his life, he was popular! When everyone’s singing your praises – you’re popular. How did he react to it? He received it well. In this environment of **praise & popularity**, it would have been easy to let it go to his head but David still **behaved wisely**. I’m sure he was glad to hear the affirming words of the song but he didn’t allow it **dominate** his thinking or **change** his opinion of himself. He kept the heart & mind of a **shepherd** even during this season of **great success**. This couldn’t have been easy for someone who was so recently considered insignificant by his own family. This was actually a test, a test that Satan wanted to use to bring David down & a test **YHWH** wanted to use to build him up. He never got this kind of recognition while tending sheep. They never danced & sang his praises, even after he risked his life to save them from a predator! But now he’s facing the challenge of success. Many that can handle adversity well enough can stumble over the challenge of success.

How did he manage? Despite the dangers inherent in being a shepherd & the obvious lack of praise & popularity, David was content & happy as a shepherd b/c he was doing it as unto the Lord. He loved the Lord & he knew his reward was from Him. B/c his heart was right out in the field, he **behaved wisely** when praise & popularity came. God had built a character in David out in the shepherd’s field, Now David lived his life for the Lord, not for others. Not that he didn’t care about people or what they thought, he just cared more about God’s opinion than the opinions of men.

**10-11- escaped-** apparently, being court musician was dangerous too! Saul’s having 1 of his fits again, only this time, he has a spear in his hand. Tho he may’ve made it seem like he wasn’t in his right mind, Saul clearly tried to kill David. This is another test for David: how would he react? Would he pick up the spear, would he throw it back? Could you blame him if he did? I’m not sure I wouldn’t have: “**Hey, you want me to show you how to throw that thing?**” David didn’t do any of that, he just **escaped**. He could have easily claimed self-defense & probably gotten away w/ it but David had a different agenda. It wasn’t a matter of **what he could get away w/**, all that mattered was **what God wanted**. David was determined to leave the matter in God’s hands & not take the throne for himself. **YHWH** would have to take care of Saul in His own time & His own way b/c David was determined not to lay a hand on him. In so doing, David dodged a spiritual spear as well, a spear of bitterness that could pin him to a wall of selfishness, maliciousness & murder. He knew that to take matters into his own hands would make him no better than Saul.

**twice-** most disturbing word of all. This means after the 1<sup>st</sup> miss, David came back & played for Saul again! Seriously? I think once is enough for me. I draw the line at 1 near miss. Once is submission to the Lord but twice is just stupid! But you could say that David’s submission to the Lord didn’t really start until he sat back down to play after the 1<sup>st</sup> attempt on his life. Now he knew the danger, now he knew Saul’s capabilities & now he had to **trust God**. This is what it looks like to be a **man after God’s own heart**: to let **faith & obedience** take precedence over **fear & self-preservation**.

**12-16- afraid-** Saul had the spear but David had the Lord. Saul knew he was outmatched. All the spears in the world could defeat David b/c the Lord was w/ him. Unfortunately, this only made Saul fear David, not the Lord! This reality sets the tone for the rest of the book. David is the object of **YHWH’s favor** & Saul’s **malice**. Saul’s schemes to eliminate David remain secret in **ch18** & David seems unaware of the danger. What is obvious to us (if not David) is that the Lord’s Spirit is being graciously poured out on David along w/ His **goodness, provision & divine protection**.

**17-19- Merab-** Why would Saul offer his daughter to David? He was hoping that the law of averages would be on his side. If he couldn’t kill David, m/b the Philistines would. They didn’t. **YHWH** refused to honor Saul’s evil manipulation. Eventually, Saul reneged on his promise, possibly hoping David would lash out in anger & tarnish his reputation. Not!

**20-26-** Saul thought Michal’s love for David could be useful. He had his servants talk it up but David’s not sure. It’s no small thing to become a son-in-law to a king & David’s strapped for cash. Saul says, “Don’t sweat it, man. Just bring in some trophies!” He’s trusting in his law of averages again but David’s had that beat – he’s trusting in the Lord. Now, David could’ve said, “**There’s a 9 ft grave in the Valley of Elah that says the dowry has already been paid. I demand my rights!**” But he didn’t, he kept his heart pure & humble in the face of Saul’s “unfair” demands & evil manipulations.

**27-30-** Saul demanded 100 foreskins but in his humility, David believed a king’s daughter was worth at least 200. His pure, humble heart seems to be blind to Saul’s cunning manipulations. How can a simple man like that hope to survive? **B/c God is w/ him!** Here’s where God’s favor shines most brightly, protecting David in dangers he’s unaware of. The spiritual principle: **God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble**. He protects David & foils Saul’s evil schemes. The reality of David’s life at this time: **YHWH’s favor** & Saul’s hatred; thankfully 1 was stronger than the other. Don’t think this was written just for David’s sake. The fact that we have this record today teaches us that **this same quiet protection of God is the heritage of all His humble servants** & tho most is unseen by us, we can still praise Him for it.

What a contrast between the love of Jonathan & the hatred of Saul for David. If you think about it, Jonathan had the most to lose from David’s success & yet he loved & respected David’s heart & his anointing. Why? B/c what they had in common (**a real relationship w/ the Lord**) was more important to them than all the differences they might’ve had. But the story of Jonathan’s love for David is simply just a picture of the real love that exists between God & His people.

**Real love wants a commitment** & that commitment will **show** itself in a **covenant**. God demonstrates love (**Rom 5:8**)

Real love won't hide the covenant commitment. **J** hung on the cross in public shame 2 make the covenant possible.  
Real love gives & receives **gifts**. **His divine power has given 2 us all things...** (II Ptr 1:3) What do we give 2 Him?  
Real love clothes the poor w/ **robes of royalty**. Real love gives **armor** 2 fight (Eph 6) Are we holding up our end?☺