

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 13**

**FIRST SAMUEL
CHAPTER 18**

INTRODUCTION

The Psalmist testified that God is a sun and a shield -- He will give grace and glory; and no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly before Him (84:11). This promise of God is clearly illustrated in this chapter.

David, a shepherd boy, the youngest of Jesse's eight sons, a totally unknown and unimpressive entity, but one who loved and walked close to the LORD was protected from the despicable and wicked Saul. In later years, David could testify that "the arm of the wicked shall be broken, but the LORD upholdeth the righteous" (Psalm 37:17).

This lesson has two main anchors -- the friendship between Jonathan and David, and the character and conduct of David in the face of danger. It highlighted the marks of a true friendship that was based upon a common and deep love for the LORD. It epitomized what to look for in forging lifetime friendships. If we can find one such true friend, we can be considered to have been specially blessed by God.

The ability to be true and faithful to God in the face of betrayal is extremely hard especially when the betrayal comes from your own king. David did no wrong but was hated nonetheless. This baseless hatred was a result of an obsession gone amok! When God's servant remains true, all things will work out for the better. His heavenly Father will ensure that.

There is also a warning for us -- watch out for people who present themselves as "angels of light" but are actually devious and wicked like king Saul. We can see God's providential hand in the affairs of man. Man can never stop the plan of God from becoming a reality. Man will either fall into the desiderative or punitive will of God in the process. Man can never outwit or out-will God.

COMMENTARY

Marks of a True Friend—vv. 1-5

When David defeated Goliath, he was brought before Saul. Saul had forgotten the young lad who had played the harp before him to relieve him of his depression. Saul recruited David that very day and restrained him from returning home to his father. David was now a prized soldier and a musician. It was easy to understand why Saul wanted this courageous young man as his bodyguard and court musician -- he was not only Israel's champion but he was also capable of soothing him in times of his depression.

In the court of the king, David found a friend in Saul's son, the crown prince, Jonathan. By divine providence, this young crown prince took a strong liking for David. The soul of Jonathan was knitted with the soul of David (18:1). Jonathan had witnessed David's defeat of Goliath which helped the Israelites gain a resounding victory over the Philistines. The word soul encompasses the idea of breath, life, desire, craving, yearning, love and service.¹ It speaks of the very inner being of a person. The verb "knit" which literally means to be inseparably bound together refers to their true affection for and faithfulness to one another. They made a covenant together. As proof of the bond between them, Jonathan gave

¹*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, reference 1395.

his robe and garments to David. The “garments” included his armour, sword, bow and girdle. Indeed, Jonathan loved David as his own soul.

Saul Was Jealous of David—vv. 6-9

David soon proved himself to be an able war general. He submitted to Saul’s command and went wherever the king sent him. In this regard, David exemplified himself as a good and wise leader — one who submitted to his superior just as he expected his subordinates to submit to him. His successes in all his military battles brought greater safety and security to the land and won him the hearts of all the people and the respect of his fellow soldiers.

On one occasion when the Israelites and David returned from fighting the Philistines, the women came out of all the cities singing and dancing with tambourines and three-stringed instruments to greet the returning soldiers. They sang as they danced: “Saul hath slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands” (18:7b). The chorus was not intended to belittle or disparage king Saul but Saul took it personally. The adulation stated the truth but they displeased (literally, quivered, trembled) Saul: “They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?” (18:8). Saul displayed a lack of maturity and security. His heart was filled with anger and jealousy. Samuel’s words to him that the LORD had rejected him increased his suspicion that David was to be his replacement. This suspicion began to poison his relationship with David.

Saul Feared David and Attempted to Kill Him—vv. 10-11

The day after the return of the victorious armies of Israel, Saul was oppressed by the evil spirit and was afflicted with mental depression. He

“prophesied (Hebrew, *vay-yith-nab-be--a hithpael* stem indicating reflexive action) in the midst of the house (family)” -- the verb-form of “prophesied” is significant in that it shows intention on the part of the subject for himself. In other words the evil spirit played no part in his prophesying – Saul was still in control of his senses. He pretended to be beside himself, and prophesying gave an impression of religious piety in the midst of his family – that is, he tried to hide his murderous intention under the cloak of religion, and at the same time kept David unsuspecting. Saul was a hypocrite who used religion to hide his selfish and evil schemes.

He called David to play the harp before him as at other times. When David presented himself, Saul hurled the javelin in his hand against David. He disclosed his intention to “smite David even to the wall.” He tried twice but failed, partly because of his spiritual condition, and partly because David was alert and agile – above all, David was under God’s protection.

His failure to kill David caused him to be more afraid. Being an excellent warrior himself in handling the spear, he must have sensed that David’s deliverance was by divine intervention. He realized that the LORD was with David and that the LORD had departed from him. He removed David as his personal bodyguard and assigned him as captain over his soldiers. Through this action, he sought to distance David from him, from his advisers, the support of his son Jonathan and the palace courtiers. He thought that keeping David near the throne was dangerous. But Saul’s “banishment” of David in fact worked in David’s favour for he could spend more time mingling with the people. David behaved admirably and wisely. The expression “he went out and came in before the people” is a Hebraic expression which meant that he was in touch and in communication with the

people. All Israel and Judah loved David. Once again, Saul's secret scheme backfired. Thus he became more afraid of David. David was invincible as long as God's divine purpose for him was not completed.

Saul Schemed Again—vv. 12-27

After his direct attack on David had failed, Saul tried an indirect way to dispose of him. He had promised his daughter in marriage to the person who could defeat Goliath. This promise was not immediately fulfilled probably because David was too young. Now, Saul offered the hand of his eldest daughter, Merab (*increase, abundance*), to David. His only condition was that David continued to be brave and fight "the LORD'S battles" (18:17). Again, Saul used religion to advance his schemes. He hoped that David would be killed in the battles against the Philistines.

David modestly declared himself unworthy of Merab's hand. He refused the marriage offer not because he knew of Saul's evil intentions. At this point in time, David thought that Saul was fulfilling his promise. Before the marriage day between Merab and David, however, she was given to Adriel (*flock belonging to God*). Saul had to give David an explanation. We are not sure of the real reason. It was possible that Saul had no real intention of marrying his daughter to him, or it could be that Merab did not love David. This act of marrying the elder daughter to another man implied that if Saul died, the next in line would definitely not be David.

Saul was informed that his daughter, Michal (*accumulation, reservoir*), loved David. This was good news to Saul. He saw this as a means of luring David and getting him killed. He told his servants to tell David secretly that the king was pleased with him, that all the servants in the palace loved him, and that he should therefore be the

king's son-in-law (18:22). David still did not know of Saul's hidden agenda. He assessed the situation and remarked that it was not a trifle thing to be the king's son-in-law seeing that he was from a poor and lowly family. When Saul was told of David's response, he had a solution. He told his servants to tell David that the king did not want a monetary dowry but had asked for "an hundred foreskins of the Philistines." Saul's hidden intention behind this difficult request was to get David killed by the Philistines. The suggestion pleased David. He did not feel any malicious intent on the part of Saul and fell in easily with the plan.

"And the days were not expired" (18:26b) which meant that before the due date of fulfilling the dowry as requested by Saul, David got his men together and slew 200 Philistines men -- he brought a double portion of what Saul stipulated. Saul had no choice but to give his daughter in marriage to David. Michal became David's first wife.

Saul Was Unrepentant—vv. 28-30

Saul knew that the LORD was with David. Michal loved David. David became Saul's son-in-law and was a step nearer to the throne. Instead of repenting, and treating David as a son-in-law and an ally, Saul continued to view him as an enemy. The Philistines "went forth" and made periodic attacks against Israel. David and his men always got the better of them. David's military skill and treatment of Saul's servants were much esteemed. In contrast to Saul's increased fear of David, David became wiser and more popular.

PRACTICAL VALUE

The chapter opens on a happy note. The soul of Jonathan was knitted with the soul of David. Jonathan, who was socially and materially superior to David, showed his sincerity in their

covenant by sealing it in concrete terms. Jonathan portrayed a good example of a true friend. Such a strong bond between friends is rare nowadays but not impossible among Christians. Christians who faithfully live in obedience to the commandments of the Lord will be able to build strong lasting fraternal links with other Christians.

David's behaviour was exemplary. He was honest and loyal. He excused Saul's first attempt to kill him (with the javelin) on the grounds of Saul's mental malady. In the other attempts, he did not know that Saul had secretly schemed to dispose of him. Neither did he know that Saul was afraid of him and his popularity. So, David continued to do what was expected and required of him by the king. David's ignorance was due to his innocent and trusting character. He was honest and godly and thought that the first king of Israel was like that too. God protected His own even though he was not even aware that he needed protection! The amazing care and providence of God in the lives of His children is very comforting to all God's children who desire only to fulfil His will.

The outcome of it all was much blessing. David increased in his military skill as a soldier and was soon promoted to be captain over thousands. His demeanour earned him the respect and loyalty of his subordinates. His successes in the battlefield won him the respect and love of the soldiers. He was also rewarded with a wife.

On the other hand, king Saul's behaviour was despicable. He was jealous of all the praises that David received from the people. He suspected that David might replace him. His attempts to kill David showed his hypocrisy, deceptive heart and wickedness. He used his illness to cover up his evil intent. He used flattery when he offered Merab to David so that he would fight more battles for him hoping that he would be killed. He presented

himself as a fair and understanding person before his servants and David when he offered Michal to David but his exaction in place of a monetary dowry was unreasonable. His secret wicked agenda was totally unbecoming of the king of God's people! He had become a coward, a hypocrite and a schemer.

In all this, we see the hand of God providentially working in the affairs of men. Nothing happens by chance. The LORD had chosen David to be the next king. He prepared him for that position. Before killing Goliath, David was not known at all. He was a shepherd boy, the youngest of Eliab's brothers. He learned the ways of the court when he served the king as a musician and personal bodyguard. All attempts to have him killed failed. God protected him because he was to be the next king. The statement that the LORD was with David (vv. 12, 14, 28) was mentioned three times in this chapter. When God is with His children, nothing and nobody can harm them. This is a wonderful truth that is so clearly demonstrated in this chapter.

AMEN.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: 1 Samuel 18:1-4; Proverbs 17:17; 18:24; 27:10.

Tuesday: 1 Samuel 1:9-11; James 4:1-10.

Wednesday: 1 Samuel 18:10-16; Numbers 14:9.

Thursday: 1 Samuel 18:17-27; Psalms 119:113-115.

Friday: 1 Samuel 18:28-30; Psalm 84:11; Proverbs 14:26-30.

Analysis:

Text	Practical Value
1 Samuel 18:1-5	
1 Samuel 18:6-9	
1 Samuel 18:10-11	
1 Samuel 18:12-27	
1 Samuel 18:28-30	

Discussion Questions

1. Have you experienced the type of friendship that was evident between David and Jonathan? Do you think that all Christian friendship should be like this?

2. What were the causes of Saul's enmity against David?

3. Do you think that a genuine Christian will ever behave like king Saul?

4. What can we learn about Saul's and David's behaviour in relation to pride, praise and sin?

5. What can we learn about the will of God in the believer's life?
