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March 12, 2017

1 SAMUEL 18:1-12

1 Samuel Series

[PRAYER] Lord, our hearts are challenging places. As we look into them we often don't like what we see in ourselves. So we really need you living inside and empowering us to bring about the change necessary to grow us to be the people you want us to be. Lord, I pray that you would help us to have humility in response to the challenges that we experience. To recognize our own weakness and to recognize your power. Lord, we need that power, we need that strength. We're grateful for what you're doing and who you are in our lives. We ask that this morning you would renew that in some new ways, maybe even in some surprising ways inside of our hearts so that we would be challenged anew to live this life that you've called for us to live and serve you this week. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

I'm really glad that you young people are in here with us. As I was preparing this message, I did so with young people in mind. There's a truth in this passage that is so important for our lives and if you can grasp this at a young age, then it will really help you as you're getting older. Of course it's not just a message for young people, but I have this burden for young people that young people would grasp the truths of God's word early and be able to use them in some powerful ways. God wants to do some amazing things in our hearts and lives. If we can start that early in our lives, good things can happen.

We just came off of a study of David and Goliath. A study that was about fighting the giant battles in our lives. Was anybody blessed by the last three sermons about fighting the battles? Okay look. I just have to tell you, go and listen to the sermons. If you didn't hear them, they're online. We're just talking about fighting giant battles in our own lives. I think there's such rich material in that passage in 1 Samuel 17. That's why we spent three weeks there. God's hand was on David in the midst of that and God was doing some amazing things.

I think that God has a testimony in every one of our hearts that wants to come out. It's through those battles that we experience that He often brings that out in our lives. So take a look at that.

But now we go on in chapter 18. God wants to do some amazing things in David's life. He wants to do some work in his heart. I think the heart work that happens in our lives is messy sometimes. So today we're going to look at some of that heart work and understand what it looks like. God is going to create one of the greatest kings in human history, David. He's building into him a heart that is after God's heart. He's going to mold and sharpen him in his life. He's going to do it in David's life the same way that He does it in our lives. He's going to do it in the crucible of relationships.

In the midst of relationships God has something He wants to do inside of your heart and that He wants to do in my heart. We're going to see this, especially in the challenging relationships that we find ourselves in. So if you have a challenging relationship that you're in right now, I just want you to allow God to speak to you in the midst of this experience as we look at David. We're going to find that God is going to mold him to be a man after God's own heart. Young people, I suspect that some of you are in challenging relationships right now. God wants to do an important work in your life.

When I was a young person I used to think I was a pretty righteous guy. I did a lot of good things. I used to think I was pretty good. Then I got married. I married a really godly woman who loved the Lord. That was a great decision that I made. But in the midst of that relationship I realized how much selfishness I have inside of my heart. When you have to work together with someone and you have to partner with someone and you have to live in the house with someone and share things and cooperate, life is hard. I just realized how much selfishness I really needed to address in my own heart.

But that was nothing compared to having kids. I'm telling you, when I had kids my selfishness just went over the top and I had to learn some hard things about my own anger and my own challenges and just the way I love. Because I realized I tend to love people the way I like to be loved. So there was a selfishness in that love that God had to change in my heart so that I could have a giving kind of love. That's the kind of thing we're going to see in the midst of this passage today. In the next few weeks we're going to see how David is challenged in this way in relationships and we're going to watch what happens.

David had just accomplished this remarkable victory on the battlefield and now he's going to be in this challenging place in relationships. God is going to do something great. This is the sequel to the giant killing. Now we're in the middle of these relationships and these challenges that he's going to face.

So open with me 1 Samuel 18:1-2. We're going to see who the characters are in this story. These characters are very important because these are the ones that are going to help David grow in his own heart. So watch the characters in verses 1-2 of 1 Samuel 18. *After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return home to his family.*

The two characters we're going to look at are Jonathan and Saul. We're actually going to compare those two today because they're going to represent two different ways of handling emotions, handling their love. But both of them, the Bible said, loved David greatly. In 1 Samuel 16:21 (that's a couple chapters back) it says that *Saul loved him greatly*. So we know that Saul loved David and we know that Jonathan loved David. But Saul loved David for what David could do for Saul. Jonathan loved David in this pure giving kind of love, no matter what David did. Saul had a selfish love and Jonathan had a giving love.

I first want to look at Jonathan because he's the first one that's amplified in the passage. But in verse 1 do you see the actual words in the NIV are they are *one in spirit*. But really the literal translation there is that Jonathan's soul was knit together with David's soul. They were soul

mates, in essence, the connection that was there. We're going to see how that took place in the next verse.

Watch this in verse 3. *And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.*

Now this is a delightful friendship that we have in the Bible. If you have a good friend, you know what this is like. There's this underlying commitment that solidifies their relationship. Notice that there's so many differences between them. I think we make a mistake when we try to build relationships based simply on compatibility. I'm like this person. Rather there's this underlying commitment that Jonathan has that just demonstrates what a real friendship is like. It's out of this commitment, this covenant that he makes with David, this commitment that he has is where the giving comes. He gives him his bow and he gives him his sword and he gives him his tunic and his cloak. He's doing this and he has nothing to gain.

In fact I would suggest if you think about it he has everything to lose. Why? Because Saul has already been told that he's going to lose the kingdom. Now who would be the next person in line if Saul died? It would be his son Jonathan. That's the Jonathan we're talking about. He would be the next one to become a king. But Saul has already given the kingship to David and he's already been anointed as king. He's not going to get the kingdom for many years. So it could be that Jonathan would have a rivalry with David and they could be competing together. Man, that is amazing. Instead they have this committed relationship.

I would suggest this: One of the greatest ways to get rid of your enemies is to turn them into friends. That's what Jonathan does. He has this great relationship.

I just wonder... David has a son eventually. His name is going to be Solomon. When Solomon gets older he's going to write these proverbs, many of which we have in the book of Proverbs and he writes this proverb. I wonder if he's thinking about the relationship between his dad and Jonathan when he writes – *A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born at a time for adversity.* Friendship is a very important part of what God has for us. You can have such a friendship.

In fact, young people I want to tell you this. It's very important that you understand this. If you're a Christian you have within you a God-given comradery with others who are Christians. God has put that inside of you and it makes friendships much easier to find. When you're a Christian and you meet someone else who's a Christian there's an automatic kind of button that's pushed. You start to form that bond rather quickly. Recognizing that is so important. When two people are committed to Jesus Christ that friendship can grow significantly because what we have in common we have that relationship in Jesus Christ that we can enjoy. It's the quality of friendship that's so valuable.

It's different than Facebook. Facebook is great. I love Facebook. But Facebook is kind of this sharing of information. But when you look at someone across the table, you look into their eyes, there's this relationship that's much more significant than you'll ever find on Facebook. So if

you're on Facebook, young people for a moment, turn off your Snapchat, turn off your Facebook because we want to look at the first text message that was ever written. It's right here in God's word. So we'll look at God's word as the text message that God wants to have for us this morning.

There's a need inside of every one of our hearts to have friends and to be a friend. We see this beautiful picture of what God is doing in Jonathan and David's life that's an image for us that we should long for, we should seek out, and we should enjoy.

Well let's look at Saul now. He's the next one described in the passage. David could have initially thought that Saul was his friend. After all, David played the harp or the lyre. It's kind of like a guitar. He played that guitar for Saul and Saul had this problem, which we'll talk about in a moment. He had depression that would leave him when the instrument was played. So David could have initially thought that Saul was his friend. Furthermore, David went out and killed the Philistine giant, winning the battle for Saul. So maybe David could have thought that Saul was his friend for that reason.

But Saul viewed David as a threat. Saul's emotions, I would suggest, are fleshly emotions. I suppose if you would've asked Saul about this, he would say, "Oh I love David. I really enjoy him." I think sometimes in our hearts we think we love, but it's a selfish love. It's about me. Saul has that kind of love. I want you to see how that progresses in his life because it turns into some very difficult things inside of his heart.

Look at verse 5. *Whatever mission Saul sent him on, David was so successful that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This pleased all the troops, and Saul's officers as well.*

Saul began with this love that he had for David that was pretty selfish love and we're going to see it kind of turn into something that's not very good. We're going to see him get angry, we're going to see him get jealous, we're going to see him become afraid and suspicious. It really then becomes an obsession in his life. When fleshly emotions get in control of us they turn into an obsession. You're going to see that there in the passage.

Look at verse 6. *When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with timbrels and lyres.*

In those days when there was a successful battle and all the warriors came back, there would be a parade and the ladies would come out and they would sing the songs and play their instruments. Unfortunately there's a song and the lyrics we have in our passage that was irritating to Saul. When he heard it he became jealous and because of his selfishness bad things started to happen inside of his heart.

Let's look at the lyrics to this song that are in verse 7. *As they danced, they sang: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."*

In verse 8 notice what's happening in his emotions. *Saul was very angry; this refrain displeased him greatly. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?"* Notice verse 9. *And from that time on Saul kept a close eye on David.*

I think that what happens now is that everything is colored for Saul. Now because of his emotions that started with this selfish love, it goes to anger and we'll see it goes to fear in a little bit. When he sees this happen inside of him it colors the way he thinks about people. David isn't doing anything wrong, but his emotions start having his eyes on David and he's looking at him in a particular way. That's what happens in our lives. When fleshly emotions start to control us we start thinking the wrong kinds of things about ourselves, about people, and that's what's going to happen to him as well.

I think we have to ask ourselves an important question today. Are we like the Saul or are we like the Jonathan? Now I'm going to suggest that all of us have a little bit of the Saul in our lives. We all have a tendency to the fleshly emotions that might cause great harm inside of us and to other people in relationships that we have. So I think we have to take this passage and be very humble about it and look at it and say, "Wow, this could be me in this passage," and seek then to choose to be more like the Jonathan, the righteous kind of emotions that he has here.

If we compare the two, Jonathan and Saul, let's just look at that for a moment. Saul refused to let David into his own family. Do you remember the decree went out that *whoever kills this Philistine will receive my daughter in marriage*. It didn't happen. Saul did not welcome him into his family, whereas Jonathan gave freely to him. Saul makes this public kind of disgraceful statement about David, and Jonathan makes this very public statement of appreciation. Do you remember Jonathan gives to him his sword, his tunic, his coat, his bow. He gives those things freely, not expecting anything in return. Saul loaned his armor to David at one point. Why? So that David could do something for him.

There's a very different expression allowed in here and I think Saul allows his emotions to become fleshly and they take on this obsession in his life that is quite I would say scary for us if we're not careful. The selfish love goes to anger, goes to jealousies, goes to suspicion, to fear.

Now in verse 10 let's just watch it develop here. In the passage it says in verse 10 – *The next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully on Saul. He was prophesying in his house, while David was playing the lyre, as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his hand and he hurled it, saying to himself, "I'll pin David to the wall."* But David eluded him twice.

I think some of you were distracted by the first words in there – *the evil spirit from the Lord*. So let's just pause for a moment and talk about that. This is the fifth time in this passage starting in chapter 16 until now that the writer here is talking about this as an evil spirit from the Lord. So in order to understand it, we have to go back to the beginning in chapter 16 where it's mentioned three times. We have to understand that in chapter 15 the Bible tells us that Saul did not obey God. God gave specific instructions to Saul on an assignment that he was to do and he came back and he didn't do it. He was prideful, he was arrogant, and so Samuel makes this prophecy or this proclamation that arrogance is like idolatry, like the sin of divination. So he rebukes Saul

in that moment and the Bible says that the *Spirit of God was removed from Saul, and this evil spirit came on him* which takes this form of this massive depression, terrible emotional experience that he had in his life.

Here's what we know about the story and about the situation. One is the problem was caused by Saul's disobedience. We have to recognize that sometimes God allows painful things or bad things into our lives in order to, by His mercy, provoke us to make the right choices and come back to Him and to do the right thing. So we see this experience happening in this story and we see that in the midst of it Saul is struggling because now this is day to day for him. David is playing the lyre in the midst of this and usually when the music is played he is soothed, but not in this case. Now he is not. It is not having the same affect as it has before. So it's getting worse in the situation.

I want to show you another passage of scripture that as I looked at it this week, I believe that if I were the counselor for Saul I'd say, "I've got to take you through this passage, Saul, so you can understand what God would have for you." This is a passage written by Peter in 1 Peter 5:6-11. I underlined some key words here that I think will be helpful for us so that we can prevent ourselves from engaging in the same kind of behavior or lifestyle or problem that Saul had.

Notice right off the bat it says *humble yourselves*. That's going to be a primary success point for Saul. *Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand*. Now *God's mighty hand* or in the Old Testament *God's arm* refers to God's plan. God's mighty hand, God's arm. God has a great plan for you. *So humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand that he may lift you up in due time*.

And then he goes right into emotions. Do you see that? Here Peter is going right into emotions. *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you*. What is the middle letter in the word anxiety? *I*. What is the middle letter in the word pride? *I*. Not that that has all that significance, only in English, but I want to point out that *I* is right in the middle. It's all about me. *I, I, I, I, I*. Pride puts that right in the middle. Pride sometimes causes great anxiety in our lives. So the passage is saying here's the solution. Be careful. Here's what you need to do.

Notice he says – *Be alert and of sober mind*. What's the opposite of being sober? Come on. It's a church, but you can say it. Drunk. Captivated and engrossed by your emotions. Be alert and sober minded, not so captivated by your emotions that they're driving you into this emotion like Saul that we're going to see.

Now it turns into a spiritual battle. *Your enemy the devil*. Now we're going to talk about the devil. He's real. You got to know this and he wants to hurt you. *Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour*.

Now imagine a lion and the lion roars. When you hear it, the roar is like the warning I'm coming to get you. What is your typical response? If you heard a roaring lion, what would you do? Run! But notice what the next words are because these are the key to dealing with this tough situation that you're in right now. *Resist him*. How do you resist him? It gives you the key right in the next passage – *standing firm in the faith*. Your faith is so important.

I was talking this week with a lady. I was saying we are committed in our church to passing the faith onto the next generation. That's what I said. She said, "Oh that's not enough. You can't just tell them Bible stories." I'm saying to myself I don't think she's getting it. We're not just telling Bible stories here. We're passing the faith onto someone. We want these kids to understand what the faith is. Faith is taking these Bible stories about David and Goliath and taking them home and learning how to put them into practice. We want to use that to resist the Satanic attack.

Can Satan attack us through our emotions? The answer is yes. In fact Ephesians 4 says – *Do not let the sun go down on your anger and do not give the devil a foothold.* Do you know what that tells me? If you're letting the sun go down on your anger, you're giving the devil a foothold. It's pretty logical, that's what the passage says. So what we're seeing here is Satan wants to destroy us. The attack is real. He's trying to attack us.

Notice what the rest of the verse says. *Standing firm in the faith because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.* Do you think you're the only one who lost a loved one? Do you think you're the only one going through physical pain? Do you think you're the only one who's having financial crisis? You're not the only one. We live in a family of people who are suffering.

Notice this: *And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.* So you don't have to have these emotional challenges that drive you into compulsions. *To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.* Wow. I just love that and I wish Saul could have heard that message or maybe he was hearing the message, but he wasn't responding to it.

So as we go to his understanding of his own life and his fleshly emotions, we get to verse 12. Young people, I just want you to know the devil wants to destroy you. He would love to destroy your life before it even gets started. If he can give you an addiction to drugs or alcohol or pornography or anger now, wow, that would ruin your life for the rest of time. You've got to know that there is a way to stand firm now and to do what God has called you to do and move forward. That's so valuable and important.

While we're moving through the emotions, if you're tracking me on the emotions here, you're seeing emotion words right in the passage in 1 Samuel 18. Here's the next one. *Saul was afraid.* He's progressed to this fear in his life *because the Lord was with David but had departed from Saul.*

I don't know if you see this pattern that exists in Saul's life as he's going through. It used to be that David who would write these psalms, they would be inspired by the Lord, and then he would sing these psalms to Saul. Saul would be pricked in his heart and the evil spirit, the depression, would go away for him. But now in our passage it's not happening the same way. It's not happening because Saul is becoming more and more tensely involved in his emotions and not trusting what God would do in his heart. So it gets worse and worse.

I just want to say that if you refuse to allow God to be the source of your authority for life (that's what He wants to be) then you're going to end up with problems and it's going to get worse. It's God's authority that we rely on.

Notice what's happening in Saul's life. It got worse. He's getting so mad as he's listening to the harp music that he takes whatever is around him and he throws it. That's what happens. It happens in relationships, doesn't it? When we get angry we start throwing things. Maybe it's not physical things like swords, or maybe it is in some homes. Maybe it's the words that we use that are barbs that are meant to attack and hurt the other person. He takes whatever he can find and he's throwing it at David to try to harm him. Wow.

When it gets to that place where fear starts to overcome us and we start to become paranoid of everything the other person is doing, everything we look at, our whole life starts to be kind of bound by fear.

It reminds me of the story of the two gasmen who were walking through the alley checking all the gas meters on the row houses in the back and checking them all in the alley. They get to the last one, which is way down at the end of the alley, and the lady looks out her window, they wave, she sees who they are. They're checking the gas meter and everything is fine. So the older guy says to the younger guy, "Hey, I'll race you back down the alley to the van." So they take off running as fast as they can. They're puffing and running and all of a sudden they see the lady right next to them running and puffing. They say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. Let's stop here. What's wrong? Why are you running?" She says, "Whenever I see two gasmen running as fast as they can away from my house, I'm going to run too!"

I think sometimes that's what we do. We start looking around and everything has got a problem and we start taking that same fear into our lives.

Saul is in trouble here and the trouble that he's in is a very painful place. I think David is watching all of this and he's learning.

I'm going to read to you a psalm in a moment, one of the shortest psalms in the Bible that was written by David, but before I do I want to show you where I get this idea that I say fleshly emotions. Because I want to go to this passage in Galatians 5, which talks about the deeds of the flesh versus the deeds of the Spirit.

When you look at the deeds of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21, it says – *The acts of the flesh are obvious*. That's why I use the word fleshly to describe the emotions that we sometimes experience and I underlined some of them that are emotion words – *sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like*. I warn you, as I did before, that *those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God*.

But the beautiful word is the next word. It's just one word, but the next word is such a beautiful one that I love it. It's the word *but*. *But the fruit of the Spirit*, and three God-filled emotions are right there. Do you see that? The first three parts of the Spirit are God-filled emotions. Wouldn't

you rather have the love and the joy and the peace instead of the fear, the anger, suspicion, and those kinds of things? *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace.* So that's why I use the term fleshly emotions to describe what we're seeing inside of Saul versus this righteous emotion that we're seeing inside of Jonathan to describe what's going on.

Christians respond differently than non-Christians when we are mistreated or abused or there's a terrible person in our life. Does it mean we don't take action? No. We do sometimes take action in those situations. We're not passive in our approach to injustice and pain and so on. However, Jesus taught us that we are different when it comes to being mistreated. Do you remember what He said about how we should treat enemies? The word is *love your enemy*. Do we just love the enemies because we want the world to be a nicer place? Maybe. I'm sure God has this bigger picture than just for me. But I know that when we love our enemies it does something inside of our own hearts. It breaks down that bitterness, resentment, anger, fear, suspicion, jealousy, all those things.

So God is doing this internal therapy in our lives. I would suggest that the challenging relationships that we find ourselves in now are opportunities that God wants to do in our heart. He wants to do work inside of here. It's a messy place that we have.

So now I'm going to show you the psalm. This is the psalm that David himself wrote. David is going to go through a lot of experiences, but maybe he wrote it in response to the very message that he's learning from Saul in the midst of this painful situation. It's Psalm 31. It's just three verses, but look at what it says.

My heart is not proud, Lord, my eyes are not haughty. So he starts with this humility. Lord, that's where I want to be in humility. *I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have calmed and quieted myself.* Given all the turmoil that David's going to experience in the next many years, these words are very significant. And given the pain that many of you live with or experience on a regular basis, these words are very important.

I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother. When a child sits on a mom's lap and feels comforted by the contentment of being in mom's lap, that's the picture that we're describing here – *like a weaned child I am content.* And here comes the command or the application or the 'take Jesus home' statement that David makes for all of Israel. He says – *Israel, put your hope in the Lord both now and forevermore.*

So if we take the humility of a person and the greatness of God and put the hope in there, then the challenges in the middle we're able to calm inside of our hearts and God can do something amazing and powerful. That's why I've created this kind of logo or screenshot or whatever for this particular part of our study – "My heart is under construction. Please excuse the mess." God wants to do a deep work inside of us. He wants to do that.

So if God is speaking to you today, I'll trust that you will take away from this something that He wants to do now inside of your heart. How is He speaking to you? Could it be that the current situation that you're experiencing now is part of God's construction program for you and building into you a heart that follows after the Lord?

Let's pray together.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word and the power that it has to cut right into our hearts. I pray for each of us today. You know there's a Saul in each one of us that struggles with emotional challenges. We all need your grace to be able to deal with the difficult experiences that we have every day. So I pray, Lord, that you would give us your grace. Teach us how to trust in you and hope in you. Teach us what that means tangibly when we're in the midst of the challenges, the difficulty of the painful experience, and we'll give you all the glory and credit for any results that come out of that. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.