

## ***Session 9. David: Enjoying God in Difficulty***

### **INTRODUCTION**

This is the ninth session in our series on the life of David, and we will be talking about David finding his comfort in the Lord as many circumstances turn and twist. There are so many turns and twists in 1 Samuel 18, 19, and 20. We'll look at those three chapters and the many twists and turns that take place in this second season of David's life as he's moved from Jerusalem to Gibeah. This is his early promotion. He's enjoying the favor of the Lord. He's enjoying the favor of man, but jealousy strikes at the heart of King Saul.

### **TRAINED IN THE SCHOOL OF ADVERSITY UNDER THE TUTELAGE OF A DEMONIZED KING**

Of course there are two different angles; there are two different ways to view that spirit of jealousy that comes on Saul. There are two perspectives that are truth. The common perspective is, "The enemy is attacking me." It's an evil spirit that's motivating Saul. It's Saul's ambition. It's Saul's lack of character and jealousy that's driving him. At the same time, it's God's school to train David in the love of God. In this season, God wants David to discover the reality of God in an entirely different season of his life. He has known how to find God in the security, isolation, and solitude of the hills of Bethlehem, but a more difficult challenge is how to find God in a time of prosperity. With prosperity the Lord always allows a certain amount of pressure from praise and then a corresponding pressure on the other side from those who are jealous from the praise that you're receiving.

### **"IN THE DAY OF PROSPERITY BE JOYFUL, BUT IN THE DAY OF ADVERSITY CONSIDER"**

I remember writing this in my Bible once when I was reading the life of Joseph. It says that Joseph received a coat of many colors from his father. He was the favorite of the family. Joseph had many dreams and visions about his promises from the Lord and this story is going on so well. There's one verse in Genesis 37 that says Joseph told his brothers (Gen. 37:3-4), and when I read that I wrote, "Bad!" because wherever there's prosperity, there's someone who views that prosperity as belonging to them. They view that what God gives you belongs to them. In some distorted, concocted way, they imagine it as being taken from them. Then, in God's bigger economy, that's the safety net that God is putting around David. God wants David to enter into deeper realities of the beauty of the Lord. He wants David to be tested with praise, but he wants him to be tested with adversity at the same time.

### **THE REALITY OF DAVID'S LIFE IS THE EMBRACE OF THE BEAUTY OF GOD**

Because what God wants to manifest in David's life is that the reality of David's life isn't that he has favor or adversity, but rather that he's in the embrace of God. If He can get David to the place where David rejoices mostly in the fact that he's in the embrace of the beauty of God, then David is stabilized. So it's the work of the Devil, but the Devil is God's Devil. God has total control on the Devil. God can pull the Devil's chain anytime He wants. He can remove Saul any time He wants. The Devil's rage is being used as God's seminary for David. The Devil's rage is being used as God's seminary for King David, because God is training a king who can bring a nation into the knowledge of God and not just to bring them into material prosperity. He wants a generation to have the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. That's what's on the Lord's heart as He puts David into place.

1 Samuel 18, 19, and 20 turns and twists so many times; that's calculated by the Lord specifically to produce an impact in David's life. Someone says, "You know, I'm just trying to get to a place where things are stabilized," and what they really mean is, "I want to get to a place where I can count on favor and blessing without God"

having to be real and without me having to interact with spiritual reality.” There’s no such place. God is too jealous for the heart of His people. He will see to it that you’re in a situation even in a time of favor where you need to grab onto His heart to have reality and life.

### **THE CURIOUS CASE OF JONATHAN, THE SON OF SAUL AND DAVID’S CLOSEST FRIEND**

Remember 1 Samuel 17, the great battle against Goliath, leader of the army of the Philistines. The national crisis has been brought to a resolution. The power of God is on David. David’s life is about to go into so many turns and twists here.

“Now when he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul” (1 Sam. 18:1). The king’s son is absolutely enamored with the heart of integrity that David has with God and man. This is a very wonderful thing. It’s a fruit of the favor of the Lord to have the king’s son in that sort of connection to you. It proves itself to be both a blessing and a source of tremendous turbulence in David’s life in the days to come. This is the very king who wants to protect his son’s position. He says later on, “Jonathan, don’t you understand? I’m doing this for you. Quit being so committed to him.” Jonathan is an interesting study in and of himself. I’ll just go on a little bunny trail, since we won’t really have time to develop the theme of Jonathan in this course later on. Jonathan knows who David is. He’s the Lord’s anointed. Jonathan is loyal in the natural to his father, and it’s biblical to be loyal to your father, but Jonathan went beyond the line of biblical loyalty and he slipped over into what I call “unsanctified loyalty.” Jonathan had a loyalty to Saul, though he had a revelation of the anointing on David. Instead of going with David into the wilderness, in the time of testing, he stayed in a place of security with his father Saul, who had lost the anointing. He stayed in the palace; he stayed in the comfort zone; he stayed in the place of security. He stayed in the place of honor where he knew it was safe, though he knew the anointing was on David in the wilderness. Jonathan should have left the palace and went with David, because he knew by revelation who David was. He spoke it a number of times; he said, “I know who you are.”

Of course the logical question then is, “Why are you not standing with me?”

“No, I’m waiting for that opportune situation where I can turn Saul’s heart and change his whole army.” Beloved, it doesn’t work that way.

### **THE DANGER OF STAYING IN THE PALACE WITH SAUL IN THE HOUR OF DECISION**

God wanted Jonathan to be trained in the grace of God in the wilderness with David, not in the security of the safety zone in the palace with the favor of man, with Saul. What happens is that Jonathan stays with him all the time and keeps his father’s favor and never, ever causes too much trouble. Once and once only he confronted his father, as we will see, and then he backed off and held his peace. He entered back into the safety zone, never to disrupt his father again. Though Jonathan looks like a really good man in his love and his loyalty, there was a paralyzing fear of man at the core of Jonathan’s life. David, his best friend, is being pursued for the purpose of being killed by his father, and Jonathan challenges it one time and then forever holds his peace. He says, “Well, I guess the Lord will have to save David.” The tragedy is that Jonathan died in the wilderness as a young man with his father instead of reigning second to David on the throne of Israel. He died in the wilderness with his father, and as far as I’m concerned, out of the will of God. He should have been under the persecution with David in the wilderness, and then promoted, reigning and ruling over God’s people with David in a long and lengthy life of prosperity. He never, ever could make those choices early on. Right here he’s committed. He’s in love. He knows who David is. The heart is there, but he doesn’t quite have what it takes to make the difficult

decisions in the hour of crisis. You don't want the spirit of Jonathan on you. You don't want to have revelation on where God is taking the Church but fear too much rocking the boat and clinging to all the arguments to stay safely in the palace in the favor of man, in the safety zone, because at the end of the day you'll die with Saul. Unless the Lord gives you another chance in His mercy, you'll end up in that very, very precarious position of beginning to acclimate yourself to Saul's arguments. Sooner or later Saul's arguments seem to make more sense after you stay in the counsel and the fellowship of Saul. When David is out of sight and out of mind, he arguments of David seem to grow weary in the heart of Saul.

This is probably as much as we'll cover on Jonathan in this whole twenty-session course, but I just wanted you to know about Jonathan's life a bit.

### **“JONATHAN AND DAVID MADE A COVENANT, BECAUSE HE LOVED HIM”**

“Saul took him that day, and would not let him go home to his father's house anymore” (1 Sam. 18:2). David had now left Bethlehem. He had moved to Gibeah, the nation's capital, if you will. It wasn't the official capital, because the kingdom was still newly-formed. Saul is the first king, and things aren't really established in the way that they will be, but it's the capital to the degree that they could function with a capital in that day. The king's court was gathered in Gibeah.

“Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul” (1 Sam. 18:3). The problem is, Jonathan didn't really keep the covenant, but David did. Jonathan broke it under pressure, but David didn't. Later David was to keep the covenant and honor Jonathan's handicapped child, Mephibosheth. Years after he made the covenant with Jonathan, he said, “Does anyone live in Jonathan's house and in Jonathan's family line?” Long after Jonathan had died it came to pass that Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, was still alive. He was crippled in both of his feet, but David kept his covenant, the covenant that Jonathan didn't keep as far as I'm concerned. He never tried to kill David, but he never, ever defended David after the first initial attempt failed with his father, Saul.

“And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt” (1 Sam. 18:4). There have been many eloquent sermons preached on covenant relationships based on this passage in 1 Samuel 18:1-4. They made a covenant of love in 1 Samuel 18:3. They took off their robe, which means they would unveil the secrets of their heart. They wouldn't hide themselves, but they would uncover themselves in one another's presence, which spoke of vulnerability. They gave their armor, meaning they wouldn't protect themselves or shield themselves from one another's life. They gave each other the sword, which is the covenant language of fighting for one another even unto death. The bow and the belt each possess their own symbolism, but those of you who are new to the life of David will undoubtedly hear those messages throughout the years. It's one of the classic passages of covenant relationships among humans. Some of them interpret the armor, the sword, the bow, the belt, and the robe differently, but basically it means, “I will fight for you, stick with you, and give you everything at the end of the day,” bottom line. The metaphors are interpreted a little differently by some, but it's actually a fascinating passage to develop.

### **DAVID BEHAVED WISELY IN THE PLACE OF FAVOR**

Now look at 1 Samuel 18:5. Things couldn't have gone better. “David went out wherever Saul sent him.” He was completely given to Saul's leadership. He “behaved wisely.” He wasn't taking advantage of his position, but this is what happens with a lot of people: If they get a little promotion, they then begin to broker the information with the king in a wrong way. They use that small amount of promotion in an unwise way. They

break and get themselves in all kinds of trouble in all kinds of relationships. David behaved wisely in the place of favor. He never, ever brokered relationships and information for his own favor. He acted wisely in the place of favor, which most people can't manage. It may be the marketplace: The man gets a new promotion and all of a sudden he can't stand not name-dropping and information-brokering: "Well, the bosses are planning that and all the little people..." It always comes back around to get him in big trouble sooner or later. But David behaved wisely in the place of promotion. It's a very, very difficult thing to do. As a matter of fact, the only way you really can do it is if your identity is in the Lord and not in your promotion. It's an almost irresistible temptation to use your new position and new relationship as an access to information, but it always burns you at the end of the day. It will always burn you at the end of the day. David's wise behavior is related to not using his promotion in any personal way.

### **SAUL SET DAVID OVER HIS MEN OF WAR, AND ALL THE STAFF OF HIS HOUSE**

"And Saul set him over the men of war" (1 Sam. 18:5b). That's a pretty significant promotion, wouldn't you say? As a young man, about twenty-one or twenty-two, he was set over the men of war. He was set over the army in a very high position. Of course, he was a national champion. He was fearless and guileless in his spirit. He was highly promoted and set over the men of war. Here is the staggering thing, though: "He was accepted in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants" (ibid). David was suddenly promoted beyond Saul's staff, and they liked him! The reason they liked him, and I believe this with all my heart, is because he never used his position to broker information or relationship or name-drop or manipulate or twist or turn things. He behaved wisely. The people under him, instead of being threatened by him for taking their positions, saw that their lives were enhanced by David treating them wisely, because David's identity was found in the Lord. For young men and women in a season where the Lord is about to promote them, I can't emphasize 1 Samuel 18:5 enough to you. I had a couple of promotions, and didn't always use them as wisely. I look back now and think, "Man, if I could go back there and do that differently, I would have said nothing. I would have taken nothing. I would have had about one-tenth of as many conversations as I had. I wouldn't have told the stories. I would have backed off, wisely acted like a servant, and received my identity from the Lord, not from the favor that men had given me." It was a very, very difficult thing. I have feeling when I look at that verse now. I look back and say, "Oh, I wish I could be twenty again and do a few things a bit differently." When you have favor, it's just so easy to start talking. It's just so easy to tell the stories, pass the information, name drop, and the whole bit.

### **"SAUL HAS SLAIN HIS THOUSANDS, AND DAVID HIS TENS OF THOUSANDS!"**

But here in 1 Samuel 18:6-7, everything is starting to turn. Here is the turning point: "Now it happened..." (1 Sam. 18:6). What a phrase. "Now it happened as they were coming home, when David was returning from the slaughter of the Philistines, that the women had come out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy, and with musical instruments" (ibid). The women sang and danced. Here was the song: "Saul has slain his thousands" (v. 7)—the anointing of God upon Saul is enough for thousands. This first verse, let's say it was a whole couple of paragraphs, and Saul's heart was swelling with pride. "They recognized the anointing of God on me over thousands! Yes. Yes. Thank you. The enemies of the Lord are slain before me. You're right."

Then: "The younger man has ten times the anointing you have!" That's trouble. Saul enjoyed receiving credit for the slaying of thousands, but the fact that there was someone in his sphere with more in God than him, he couldn't live with it. Some folks can easily accept the fact of a man already established having more than them, but when someone new comes into your sphere that has more than you that's when the testing of your heart

begins. Saul wouldn't have minded if someone else before him had more. That's not a problem. No one is troubled that Billy Graham has a bigger ministry—so what? Let me tell you this. I don't know if any of you have read the biography of Billy Graham. Billy Graham was probably the most maligned and persecuted man in the kingdom of God in twentieth century America. The folks that have only heard of Billy Graham in the '70's, '80's and 90's wouldn't know anything about that. But in the late '40's, '50's and '60's, whole cities of pastors, hundreds of them, orthodox, fundamental, Bible-believing, born again believers, joined together and called Billy Graham the most dangerous man to the kingdom of God in America. He was maligned beyond anything you could imagine. His star was rising; his numbers were bigger than anything you could imagine. No one has a problem with Billy Graham now because he's established, but when he was the new guy on the block he was disrupting every show in town.

That's what the Lord is doing with some of these revival centers. He puts His hand on a little church of a few hundred people whom no one has ever heard of in Toronto, and the pastor is John Arnott. All of a sudden, he has 2,000 a night for a number of years, and the whole nation is enraged against this young kid who came out of nowhere. The same thing happened in Pensacola, and it causes tremendous burden and hassle to established ministries. Then they begin to stand against them and find anything they can find that's wrong, because when someone who's new on the scene all of a sudden has more, we get so enlightened to what their errors are. If we were there, first we become tremendously enlightened as to the things that they continually do wrong, and why won't they change them? I just want to say this to you: That is the heart of Saul. I don't care if your sphere is ten people or ten thousand people, whatever your sphere that you're operating in, if someone new comes on the scene with more favor—beloved, it's absolutely going to happen to you. It happens to every Saul; it happens to every David. It happens to every man and woman of God in history. The Lord is testing you to see where you derive your identity. Someone comes on the scene who has more favor than you. We all imagine ourselves to be David, but there's more Saul in us than we ever imagined. We begin to eye them suspiciously. We begin to say, "Well, they're not as committed as they think they are." We find every loophole that we can find to come up with criticism to undermine who they are and what their claims are.

### **THE WRATH OF THE KING AGAINST THE NEW KID IN TOWN**

1 Samuel 18:8: "Saul was very angry." This is something I believe everyone in this room knows a little about. Maybe not very angry, but every one of us has been in a situation where a new person came on the scene who had a little more than we had in one or two of the areas in which we had blessing. The anger begins, and it only begins as anger, but the seed grows. If the seed isn't dealt with, it festers and grows and a full-scale demonic spirit lays hold of you. I don't say it lays hold of you, but it lays hold of the person who does it. I'm not putting that on you. It starts as anger. It starts as, "I don't like this kid." All of a sudden, arguments begin to lodge. Then it becomes despair and depression. We begin to have a fixation against them. It becomes murderous, and then it's actually walked out in Saul's case. He becomes full-scale demonized. It starts off right here with anger, anger with jealousy. "The saying displeased him" (ibid). "They have ascribed to David ten times more than me," is what he's saying. "What now can he have except for the kingdom?" (ibid, paraphrased). The fear begins. David could have looked at Saul and said, "Saul I don't want your kingdom. I want to be a lover of God. I don't care about being king. If I have to be king, I'll be king at gunpoint if God makes me. Being king isn't what I'm about. Being king is what you're about. That's not what I'm about. I'm not going to take it from you."

David lived to prove that out. Even when David's son, Absalom, rose up years later when David was king, David said, "He can be king. I never wanted to be king. I want to walk with God; that's what I want to do. If God makes me king, then I'll be king, but if He doesn't, then I don't want to be king."

Saul was afraid of nothing, but the issue here is that Saul's identity was in his position and not in his reality with God. God is training David so that he doesn't become Saul. That's what's happening. It's interesting that when David was young, he had an old king who was Saul, and when David was old he had a young king who was Absalom. The spirit of Saul came against him in every season of his life. When he was young, there was an old king Saul who was trying to wipe him out. When David was older, there was a young man with the spirit of Saul on him, Absalom, trying to do the exact same thing. In both situations David acted like David, when he was old and when he was young.

### **WHEN JEALOUSY TOUCHES US, WE BECOME INSANE IN OUR THINKING**

Saul eyed David with suspicion, with envy (1 Sam. 18:9). Put the word *envy* there. Anger is now turned to jealousy. Jealousy has got a power of rage, an insanity to it. When jealousy touches us, we become insane in our thinking. It's a very, very powerful spirit. It's waiting for us to say yes to it. It will dominate our lives if we allow it to grow. Of course, the way through it is simply good old-fashioned heart-wrenching repentance and honesty before God. "God, I'm jealous. I want stuff I'm not sure You want to give me, but I want it anyway. I'm sorry. Yuck, that felt terrible to say." That's how you root jealousy out of your heart, with ruthless, ruthless honesty in your heart before the Lord.

### **STRUGGLING WITH THE SPIRIT OF SAUL: A PERSONAL ANECDOTE**

I remember one time when I was a young pastor and I was struggling with jealousy. I had a church that had grown and was doing pretty good. I was twenty-four years old at the time, and the church grew to about 500 people in a few short years. There was a new church that started down the road. This man started it and it grew to about 1,000 in a year. He was a very fiery, anointed young preacher. Maybe, I don't know, 50 or 100 people from the church I was pastoring went down the way there. I went down to see what was happening. I went down and said, "Hey, I'm going to be David. This is good." I went down there and the man said some legitimately dumb stuff. It was just bad doctrine. It was off. I said in my heart, "This isn't even right." Oh man, did I feel that hot displeasure of the Lord. I was sick. I remember driving home that night and I was sick because I knew what was going on. I said, "No, I don't do this stuff..." Yet to my surprise, I did. I began to come up with arguments as to why my arguments were true. I couldn't press them, but they were true anyway. I said, "Lord, that was bad doctrine. It's hype!" But the Lord really pressed me on this. He wasn't going to let me go. So what happened is that He made me go to their midweek service for nearly a year. I don't know if it was a full year, but maybe nine months. It was a long time. Every Tuesday night I drove. It was about twenty-five minutes away. All the people who had left our church, about fifty or a hundred people who went there, said, "Mike, it's good to see you!" like we were all buddies. I was mad at everyone, of course. I was trying to sort through this, because the young man was definitely anointed of the Lord, there was no question, but there was also definitely some weird stuff that a few years later even he himself rejected as error. That wasn't the point, though; the point is that the Spirit of the Lord was calling this work together.

Here is where it got bad: The Lord made me pray for him. Well, that sounds predictable with the Lord. That sounds like something the Lord would make you do, but it got worse than that. Not only did I have to go every Tuesday night, and my time was so valuable. I went every single Tuesday night probably without fail. I might have missed one. It tortured me the first few times. I had to pray and bless him. I had to give a good report everywhere I went, because the pastors around the city were getting mad at him. Eventually the church grew to 5,000 people, and many of the pastors in the city rose up against him. The Lord made me bless him every single time, but in my heart I didn't like it. Here is where it really got bad. This was really the Lord making me do this.

I fought through for probably a week or two or three on every one of these issues. I couldn't let go of it. He made me tithe to him. I tithed to my local church already, but He said, "No, not that tithe, another tithe."

I said, "Lord, I don't have enough."

He said, "Tithe to him and I will bless you."

I said, "Lord, this is killing me. I won't say anything bad about him, I promise."

"No, tithe to him." In that place I warred with a spirit of jealousy that I didn't call jealousy. I called it "godly concern for the people who were getting hype." When I run into that with other people, I say, "Guys, I've been there and done that. I know what's going on. Just call it straight, OK? I've drunk that poison myself. I know it when I see it."

The amazing thing is that something broke through and we became intimate friends. Years later, after I had moved from St. Louis to Kansas City, I would go back in town and we would spend five to seven hours in fellowship. We became dear friends. It's amazing how the Lord at that hour rooted that evil seed out of my heart. I'm not saying that the temptation to jealousy was forever gone, but I am saying that was the crisis of my early ministry right there. Had I gone the other way, I assure you I would have a different spirit today, because that thing takes the life out of you. It dries up all your veins, if you will. This root saps all the energy of your life. It kills you. Your tenderness goes; your revelation in the Lord goes. The whole thing begins to diminish. I remember the struggle. It was a terrible struggle. I hated it. I hated the feeling of it. I hated admitting it, and then when I admitted it I hated that it was true. The whole thing was ugly. The Lord said, "I'm trying to heal you. I'm trying to take something out of your heart." The interesting thing at that time is that I was teaching the life of David. I was giving myself a nice little boost. I would preach myself right into just being sick. I would be up there to the church pastoring and telling them how they were supposed to be, and afterwards I would say, "Oh, I hate this..." It was at the very hour I was teaching it that I was going through this. Well, what do you know, the Lord just interrupted me by the audible voice of the Lord and sent me to Kansas City anyway and we started over.

### **NO SPIRIT CAN SEIZE YOU UNLESS YOU OPEN UP THE DOOR TO LET IT IN**

"And it happened on the next day that the distressing spirit from the Lord came upon Saul" (1 Sam. 18:10). It was a spirit that the Lord permitted to come upon Saul because Saul opened the door. If you will walk in persistent jealousy, the Lord will allow the enemy to energize you. If you walk in immorality and if you make those decisions, then you'll go to the places and open up whatever avenues of perversion that you put yourself in front of. The Lord will allow a perverse spirit to lay hold of you. No spirit can take hold of you unless you unlock the door and open it up; then they can come in, but you have to unlock the door. The way you get rid of the spirit is by locking the door. It's a lot more difficult to get rid of the spirit than it is to get it the first time. It's a lot more difficult, because you have to be so ruthlessly honest in the area of repentance to lock the door of entry that let this spirit lay hold of you. I'm talking about us as believers. I'm talking about feeling tormented with a certain thing. Typically its roots go back to repeatedly opening the door to bitterness, unforgiveness, jealousy, or perversion. We have to face that thing and begin to call it what it is to get forgiveness and then get free of the shame of it. I tell you, you don't want to get a demon, because getting rid of it is such a hassle. I know that sounds funny, but it's true. People just curiously walk right in front of demons. They play around with a little pornography, a little drugs, and just put their heart right in front of it. It's such a hassle to get rid of

that demon once you've invited it in. It really is. I remember reading a brochure twenty some years ago. It said, "Can a Christian have a demon?" That was on the cover of it, and at the bottom someone had written, "Who would want one?"

Saul cast a spear at David (1 Sam. 18:11). There it is, right there in the first act. It was the first act of rage. I tell you, once you do the first one, the second one comes a lot easier. He cast the spear. He said, "I'll pin David to the wall." David escaped from his presence twice. David is getting a little disillusioned right now. David is thinking, "Now wait a second..." The king, the anointing of God, the enemies of Israel; this was a great story. All of a sudden the king is enraged, but the king's son likes him. David thinks, "Well, maybe the man's in a bad mood..."

### **THE SINNER ASSESSES HIMSELF WITH UNWARRANTED FLATTERY IN THE JAWS OF SIN**

"Now Saul was afraid of David" (1 Sam. 18:12). There it is right there. Saul should have been afraid of the Lord. Saul was afraid that David was going to take something from him, whereas if he had feared the Lord, no one could have taken it. Even if David wanted it, he couldn't take it from Saul if Saul had walked in the fear of the Lord. Saul's fear was in the wrong position. He knew that the Lord was with David. He knew that he couldn't beat God. He couldn't defeat the Lord in this, and that enraged Saul. It's a curious thing why a man just won't break down and repent, isn't it? As we will see in the next session, David says that the sinner flatters himself in his own eyes. He always assesses himself so highly when he's in the jaws of sin. He so flatters himself and his esteem of what's happening. Saul was thinking all along, "This man is disloyal and he is about to disrupt my kingdom." He was flattering himself instead of repenting of his jealousy.

"Therefore Saul removed him from his presence, and made him his captain over a thousand" (1 Sam. 18:13). A year earlier, this would have been massive. He was a shepherd from Bethlehem. But now he was captain over thousands and thousands, so he was demoted right here. David was no longer in the king's court in the same way that he was before. His position had changed. David was experiencing a bit of turbulence right here. There are three injustices that happen in the chapter right here. Injustice one: he's demoted here in 1 Samuel 18:13. There is injustice pertaining to Saul's daughter. Saul promised David that he could marry his oldest daughter. He broke the promise and came up with a new idea right as the wedding day was approaching. He said, "I'll give you my troublesome younger daughter, the one who could end up getting you killed." He broke his promise and gave him another daughter for the purpose of destroying David's life. Thirdly: in the issue of the dowry. He told David, "You have to kill a hundred Philistines to have my daughter."

David said, "Fine." The Spirit of God came upon him and he killed two hundred Philistines. He said, "No problem."

Saul said, "I tell you what: I'll give you my bad daughter instead of my good one. I'll give you the one I know will bring you down." That's what it says, right here in the passage: "I know she will cause you trouble, because I raised that girl. She is troublesome" (1 Sam. 18:21, paraphrased). She was troublesome all David's life. She was troublesome. That's one thing Saul knew for sure.

### **DAVID STILL ACTS WISELY IN THE MIDST OF DEMOTION AND INJUSTICE**

The demotion begins in 1 Samuel 18:13. The injustice is beginning to set in but it escalates. These are baby injustices compared to what will happen in the days to come. Look at 1 Samuel 18:14: David still acts wisely as he did in 1 Samuel 18:5. David isn't running around telling everyone how badly Saul is treating him. When it

says that David acted wisely, it means he's holding his speech. That's what it's talking about. It says in 1 Samuel 16:18 that he was prudent of speech. He was prudent in his speech. He had a hundred stories against Saul. He wouldn't use a single one. He had a hundred promises broken, but he wouldn't tell one of them. He had a hundred injustices. He wouldn't make one of them known. He acted wisely in demotion in the same way he acted wisely in promotion.

**BLESSED IS THE PERSON WHO CAN ACT WISELY GOING UP AND COMING DOWN**

Why? What's the power of it? Was he just wiser than everyone else? No. He had his identity in something else. In the promotion on his way up he didn't lose his brains. He didn't get foggy in his thinking because he got a little new attention. Likewise on his way down he didn't get foggy because he lost the attention. The reason we lose our wisdom is because we get smoke in our eyes. We get fog in our eyes on the way up or on the way down and we can't see clearly anymore. The reason David could act wisely is because going up or coming down wasn't the trauma of his life. The power of his life was reality with God. Trauma in his life was what happened if God hid His face. That's what caused David pain, and not going up or going down. Blessed is the man or woman who can act wisely going up and wisely coming down. I assure you, when you go up you'll come down, and when you come down, you'll go up.

Some years ago our staff was in a good time and everyone was happy. Things were going really well in about five departments. I said, "This is great, but I guarantee you we are going down again. Don't get too used to it, but I guarantee you that after we go down a little, we will go back up. I don't just mean numerically, but in the momentum of the favor of God, the favor of man, and their manifestations." I said, "When we're down we'll go up, and when we're up we'll go down. Let's not get really connected to where we are. Let's get connected to something else, because when we go up I don't want to get dizzy going up and I don't want to get dizzy coming down. I just want to stay level all the way through it."

Right now in my life I'm in a season of favor, but I assure you in a few years, I don't know what will happen exactly, but I know how the thing works. I'm not really dizzy right now with a lot of open doors. I pray by the grace of God I won't get dizzy when a bunch of doors close, because they'll open again and they'll close again. The Lord is saying, "Mike, I'm just exercising your heart. I want you to love Me and let Me love you and I want us to live in that."

David acted wisely. That's so powerful. He didn't make himself a victim. He didn't tell the story about how good he was or how bad everyone else was. It was nothing like that. None of it mattered. People said, "Hey, what happened with you and Saul? You're not living over there anymore."

"Oh, I don't know. I'm just moving here now. It's in the Lord's hands. I'm not really worried about it."

"No, no, no, really, tell me. Tell me the real story."

"No, really, it doesn't really matter. I'm really OK."

"No, no, come on, we're friends. Tell me the real story. What's really happening? What did they do to you? What are they like? Tell me, I understand these things."

It takes nothing to find someone to carry that story from you. Everyone in the world is interested in a story like that, but David acted wisely. I've looked at those verses over the years, and they've tortured me in one way and challenged me in another. I look at them and say, "God, I want to do that."

He says, "Well, don't get dizzy going up and don't get dizzy going down, and you can hold your tongue on both levels."

### **SAUL WAS DISCONCERTED FURTHER BY THE RIGHTEOUSNESS IN DAVID'S HEART**

When Saul observed that David was behaving wisely, he was even more afraid (1 Sam. 18:15). He said, "Oh man, he's not acting crazy." If David had acted crazy, it would have undermined him, but instead he was stable right now. He was happy. He was stable in the joy of the Lord. Saul said, "This man is dangerous to me. He can't be bought and sold. He's different." Beloved, be different. Let some people say some bad stuff about you and treat you wrongly and don't go and whisper about it. The Lord will take care of it. That doesn't mean the Lord will beat them up; it just means that you'll get what the Lord has for you. You'll have a heart growing in love.

"But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them" (1 Sam. 18:16). In other words, he lived his life as an open book before them. That's the bottom line. He lived his life out in the open. There was no hypocrisy; he was guileless. He went out and he went in. He lived openly before them. There was no pretense. He wasn't living a secret life over here. He went in and he went out before the people, speaking of an open heart.

### **SAUL WITHHELD THE PROMISED DAUGHTER, AND GAVE HIM THE OTHER AS A SNARE**

1 Samuel 18:17-27 is the episode with Saul's daughter that I told you about. He said, "You can marry the first daughter," and then he said, "But you have to kill a hundred Philistines!" David killed 200 Philistines. Then Saul said, "No... I'm going to give my first daughter to someone else... She really has her head on together right. But you can have my other daughter!" Because he said, "I know she will be a snare to him" (v. 21, paraphrased). "I know she will bring trouble. She will hurt him. She will end up killing him at the end of the day." This was an evil act. This was an act of violence from Saul's point of view. This wasn't just a domestic mix-up; this was a determination to cause David trouble and to get him killed.

"Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David, and that his daughter Michal loved him" (1 Sam. 18:28). Saul was even more afraid now. Nothing is working. It's gone from jealousy in 1 Samuel 18:9 to being David's enemy continually. But here in 1 Samuel 18:29 it's gone up a notch. He's entrenched. You read these three chapters and you can discern the progression even more in depth. You can see the steps. He's now entrenched. He's locked in. "You're my enemy." I'm convinced when I look back to when I was twenty-four years old at that pastor and the 100 people who joined him, that if I hadn't obeyed the Lord in going to the meetings, which was hard enough on its own, and regularly praying for him and not speaking against him and tithing to him, that spirit would have gripped me. I would have found a way to validate some of the strange things he was saying. I would have made that the point, when that wasn't God's point at all. Beloved, when God is challenging you. I'm telling you, be ruthless. Be ruthless with yourself on these things. What happens is what happened in 1 Samuel 18:29: The person becomes your enemy continually. You're consumed with thinking about them. That's one of the ways you can tell. It's by how much you're thinking about them, this person who is moving in and disturbing your turf. If you're thinking about them a little too much, then you're on the verge of 1 Samuel 18:29.

### **SAUL CONCLUDES THAT IT IS HIS MISSION TO HUNT AND KILL DAVID**

In 1 Samuel 18:30, a new war breaks out and so everything gets distracted. A war breaks out with the Philistines, so this season settles down. The Lord is giving David a little time off here and letting things settle down. Look at what happens: David keeps speaking wisely. Acting wisely means especially speaking wisely. That's where the strength of lies. The strength of it is what he's doing with his mouth and his words. It's the way he's stewarding his relationships, the way he's presenting information, and the way he's handling other information given to him. He's acting wisely. It says it three times in this passage, in 1 Samuel 18:5, 1 Samuel 18:15, and then here in 1 Samuel 18:30. It's speaking specifically of his speech. He wouldn't use information to present anything in a way that brought him favor. That's so difficult, isn't it?

Here 1 Samuel 19:1, it has gone up a notch. Saul says, "He's not just my enemy; I'm going to kill him." The plot begins now. "He isn't just my enemy; I have to get rid of him." Then in 1 Samuel 20:33, one more word is added. He's *determined* now to kill him. He's planning it here in 1 Samuel 19:1. It's a pretty radical idea to kill the champion of your nation. You have to cover a lot of turf. "I think I'm going to kill him, yes? No, I can't kill him. Yes, I think I'm going to. No, my son would never go for that. No, I'm going to do it; I don't care. I'm doing it for my son." It goes on from that in-and-out dialogue in 1 Samuel 19:1-20:33. He's determined now, and then he never turns back. In 1 Samuel 20:33 we see that the thing never lifts off of him. In 1 Samuel 19:6 Saul heeded the voice of Jonathan and swore, "As the Lord lives, he shall not be killed." Jonathan speaks up for him this one time. He speaks up for him strongly here in this season. He says, "OK, OK, I won't kill him."

In the next verse David is restored back to the king's palace. David says, "Hi, Saul."

"Hi, David. Hey, come on over and have some fellowship."

"Saul, how have you been? Can I bring my guitar in case you get a funny feeling, a funny look in your face?"

### **SAUL WAS NEVER RUTHLESS IN NAMING HIS SINS FOR WHAT THEY WERE**

In 1 Samuel 19:8 there was war again. The pressure now comes on Saul. There's a new war. Sometimes months and months or even a year or two passes and things kick into neutral. It's the ebb and flow of how God trains us, isn't it? It's intense and then it lifts. It gets intense and then it lifts again. But in 1 Samuel 19:9 that distressing spirit comes back on him, which translates into the fact that Saul was never ruthless about the root. He never called jealousy, *jealousy*. He never called sin, *sin*. He just put it in remission. When the pressure came on him, the pressure of war, the pressures of life, then that demon spirit came on him again. When you have a root in you of jealousy and then the fatigue and weariness of circumstances, then a person just puts a bull's eye on their chest when they cross you. Weariness with a root of jealousy; spirits love to land on something like that. Then you get crazy in your thinking.

In 1 Samuel 19:10, Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear. Then in verses 11-17, they try to kill David using Saul's daughter, Michal. Saul says to his daughter, "Hey, we will come and kill him. I want you to do this and that."

Michal says, "I love the man. No." She helps David escape.

Saul is really angry. "How could you dare betray me?" He can't get it together. The point of the story is that the plot continues. It's off and on, hot and cold. Saul keeps coming up with ideas and way to kill him.

### **THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD COMES ON SAUL'S MEN WHEN THEY COME TO KILL DAVID**

In 1 Samuel 19:18 David flees and escapes to Samuel in Ramah. He goes down to Samuel and says, "Samuel, you anointed me. You anointed him, too. What's the deal with this man? He's trying to kill me. I tell you, he's trying to kill me! He hangs out with Samuel." It's a very interesting story, what follows in 1 Samuel 19:18-24. I don't know what to make of it except for what it says. I just think it means what it says and says what it means. Saul is going to send some men down there to kill David. They go down there and the spirit of prophecy comes on them. They're going down to kill him. They don't care about David, because they're going to get a reward from Saul. They care about getting a reward from Saul. "David, you know, we've seen you at a distance. We kind of like you. We don't really know you, but hey, we'll get a lot of money if we kill you." That's what's going on in their minds. "Nothing personal, David, but we really need the money."

They go down there and the spirit of prophecy comes on them. They say, "Oh, thus saith the Lord," and they start prophesying who He is and what's going on and the defeat of the Lord's enemies. They come back and Saul says, "Well, did you get him?"

They say, "No. No, we were happy to. The Lord was with us and our spirit was invigorated. It was wonderful. Is that what that feels like, Samuel?"

"Yes, yes, it happens to me all the time."

### **GOD SHOWS DAVID HE CAN TAKE SAUL AWAY BY A HUNDRED DIFFERENT MEANS**

Anyway, a few more teams go down and the same thing happens. Eventually Saul says, I'm tired of you men flipping out like this. He goes down and the spirit of prophecy comes on him, too. God stops Saul. God is telling, "David, David, I can stop this anytime I want. Your problem isn't Saul; your problem is that you need more schooling in the life of the school of adversity to find who you are before Me so that you can be a good king. Your problem isn't Saul. I can get rid of Saul by the spirit of prophecy. I could kill Saul. I could cause a war from the Philistines to divert him. I can take care of Saul any way I wish. Saul isn't your problem, David. Your problem is that I have a design on you being a mature lover of God and a good king that brings the knowledge of God to others. I won't let you off the hook, because I know you will go the whole way with Me." All through David's life God shows David how God can take Saul out of the picture anytime He wants in a hundred different ways. He's trying to let David know that Saul isn't David's problem. David's problem is that he's immature and God is jealous for him to be mature. That's his problem, if you will, and that God is jealous and David is going to win.

### **DAVID HITS THE WELL OF DESPAIR FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS LIFE**

In 1 Samuel 19:20 David is really confused. He says, "What's the deal? What are my iniquities?" He's talking to Jonathan. He and Jonathan have a private meeting and they make few more oaths and vows to one another. As they're making these oaths and vows, it's powerful, but here is the first time despair hits David. At the very last he says to Jonathan, "Truly, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death" (1 Sam. 20:3). This is the first time despair got hold of David. He says, "I'm going to die." Jonathan has faith enough for David, but not enough faith for himself. He knows who David is, but has not faith enough to stand up against his father. He did once or twice, but not in a way that was persistent. David says, "I'm going to die, Jonathan. There's just a step between me and death." It's the first negative thing. Jonathan tries to talk him out of it. He vows to him, prophesies to him, and everything else. It's really something else.

### **JONATHAN REFUSED TO STAND AGAINST HIS FATHER IN THE DAY OF TESTING**

In 1 Samuel 20:33, the determination to kill David is come. Here in 1 Samuel 20 Jonathan stands up the second time, and actually he does this twice, not merely once like I said earlier. In 1 Samuel 19 and 20 he stands up against his father, but never again for the next ten to twenty years. Well, I guess he dies in maybe seven or eight years after this, but he won't stand up against his father again. This is it. On the two occasions when Saul found out, it got him in trouble. When he found out, it got him in trouble and jeopardized his relationship with his father; then he refused to stand for the Lord's purpose. Beloved, that's powerful. When he knew it jeopardized his position with his father, his status, he refused to take a stand for the Lord's anointed, and for the Lord's purpose.

So we have the determination right there in 1 Samuel 20:33. I'll end with this. David says, "I know I'm going to die this time for sure." Anyway, there's one more time, and I wrote the wrong one down, where David said, "I know I'm going to die." It goes beyond what he said in 1 Samuel 20:3. He takes it up a notch and says, "This is it. It's over. It's over. I know I'm going to die. It's over for me." Despair gets hold of him. There it is in 1 Samuel 27:1. "David said in his heart, 'Now I shall perish some day by the hand of Saul.'" It lodges in him in the most powerful way. It takes a while, but finally the lie lays hold of him. Despair gets hold of him in a very, very powerful way there.

Amen. Let's stand.