

In the Midst
1 Samuel 18:10-30
Paul Cannings, D.Phil.

A. Overwhelming Challenges (vs. 10-11):

1. Now it came about – After David kills Goliath and the people loudly celebrated His victory, Saul’s dislike for David intensified. Saul’s actions toward David became more aggressive because God allowed an evil spirit to torment him (1 Sam. 16:14-16, 23; 18:10; 19:9).

2. Now it came about – Even though David was anointed to be king, had killed Goliath, and the people praised God before him, David still came to play for Saul and respected him as God’s anointed king. This demonstrated that David’s motive for fighting against Saul was pure.

3. Now it came about – Relationships don’t always go badly because one person has done something to another. It could be external circumstances. Based on the text’s mood, these circumstances would not change.
 - a) The statement and similar ones in Scripture indicate that evil spirits are subject to God’s control and operate only within divinely determined boundaries (Jdg. 9:23; 1Ki 22:19-23; Job 1:12; 2:6; compare 2 Sa. 24:1 with 1 Ch. 21:1). Saul’s disobedience continued to be punished by the assaults of an evil spirit (vv. 15-16, 23; 18:10; 19:9).

(NASB Notes)

4. Evil spirit from God came – How can an evil spirit come from God? Remember Satan goes to heaven day and night; Job (Job 1:6-22). Unlike what took place with Job, the evil spirit can endlessly torment Saul.

a) So enraged was Saul at the diminishing of his glory that he, inspired by the demonic spirit (v. 10; cf. 16:14–16; 19:9), tried to spear David (18:10–11; 19:9–10). But God delivered David and gave him even greater popularity (18:12–16).^[1]

b) The wages of sin is death – spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1-3) or physical (Ecclesiastes 11:9-10; 12:1-2, 13; 1 Corinthians 10:21-22; 12:29-32; 1 John 5:16).

c) Demons can influence even a believer's life (Acts 5:1-11).

d) Letting anger remain for a long time can lead to Satan getting a foothold in our lives (Ephesians 4:26).

e) Using common sense can lead to the influence of demons (James 3:13-15).

f) False doctrine can lead to the influence of demons on a church (1 Tim. 4:1-4).

5. Raved in the midst of the house – The word raved means that Saul continuously kept speaking out false prophecies while David played before him. I cannot imagine how frightening this could have been for David.

a) The term denotes one under the influence either of a good or a bad spirit. In the present instance it is used to express that Saul was in a frenzy—a violent raving (cf. ch. 19:24).^[2]

6. Saul hurled the spear – Saul’s jealousy of David was inflamed by the evil spirit, which caused him to decide to kill David. Saul took the spear he had in his hand and forcefully threw it directly at David with every intent to kill him.

a) Saul’s spear appears to have been a sign of his kingship, somewhat like a scepter (also see 22:6; 26:7). Saul stood with spear in hand with his troops in 22:6, in much the same way as the Egyptian monarch is artistically depicted with a scepter. The Assyrian kings were often depicted with weapons in their hands, which were occasionally spears.^[3]

7. Smite/pin – Saul wanted David to be impaled into the wall with the spear so he would die.

a) Later David’s assistant Abishai wanted to pin Saul to the ground with his own spear, thus forming a fit reprisal for this incident (26:8). David, however, rejected the idea.^[4]

8. Escape from his presence – You can do good things (David killed Goliath), but it does not mean everyone would appreciate what you do. In some cases, it infuriates some people because your success makes them more envious.

B. Mature (vs. 12-13):

1. Saul was afraid of David – Saul knew that God’s anointing was withdrawn and saw God’s blessings on David, making him think that David could harm him, especially after he saw David kill Goliath (1 Samuel 24:16-22).

a) Proverbs 14:30 rightly calls it “the rottenness of the bones.” Envy is the pain we feel within when somebody achieves or receives what we think belongs to us. Envy is the sin of successful people who can’t stand to see others reach the heights they have reached and eventually replace them. ^[5]

2. Saul was afraid of David – No matter how much Saul sought to destroy David, David was not afraid of Saul. David’s commitment was to obey God and to live by faith and not by sight; faith conquers fear (Joshua 1:5-9).

3. The Lord was with him – The Lord was completely and forever committed to empower, protect, and bless David (1 Samuel 16:1-13), so there was no possibility that He would ever return to Saul.

a) The Lord protected His servant David from Saul's murderous hand, a fact that frightened Saul even more (vv. 15, 29). Surely Saul knew he was fighting a losing battle, for the Lord was on David's side but had departed from him. ^[6]

4. The Lord had departed from Saul - The Lord had completely turned away from Saul, removing His protection, power, and blessings from him. An evil spirit having full access to Saul to do what he wanted with him is evidence that the Lord no longer covered him. It was only a matter of time before he goes from a lot of success (1 Samuel 14) to defeat (1 Samuel 24:1-15; 26, 31).

5. The Lord had departed from Saul. God may allow an evil person to live,, but only after the full measure of their sins has been accounted for (1 Thessalonians 2:14). Once that is complete, there will be a day of accountability.

6. Appointed David over thousands- he went out and came in before the people – Saul, knowing that the Lord was now with David, understood that David could not be touched, so he established David to be a commander of a thousand men and because of the Lord's protection over David he was able to freely move about without anyone being able to harm him.

a) If David was killed in battle, it was the enemy's fault; and if he lost a battle but lived, his popularity would wane. But the plan didn't work because David won all the battles! After all, the Lord was with him and the power of God was upon him. Instead of eliminating David or diminishing his popularity, Saul's scheme only made him a greater hero to the people, and this increased Saul's fear of David all the more. ^[7]

b) David is said to be given rule over “one thousand,” but the term probably refers to the military division supplied by a clan, with the number varying dependent on the size of the clan. Later in history these companies were standardized as having a thousand, but early on there may have been as few as ten in a division. Apparently Israel’s army was divided into these “clans” (Num 31:5; Josh 22:21, 30; Judg 5:8). The army was further divided into “hundreds” (1 Sam 22:7) and even fifties (see comment on 1 Sam 8:12). David is now being put on active duty with a field command.^[8]

7. The people loved David – The people of Israel had an unspeakable affection, a covenant relationship with David.

a) While David spoke to Saul, Jonathan listened and fell in love (vs. 4) with David. This is after David killed Goliath and routed the Philistines. One of the attributes of a friend is that when God blesses you, they rejoice with you. A person who is an enemy but acts like a friend becomes more angry at you.

b) “Going out” and “coming in” are common cliches meaning to fight battles, and to go out and come out “before” someone means to be the leader in fighting (cf. Num 27:17; 1 Sam 8:20; 2 Sam 5:24). Imagine Saul’s disappointment when the new and presumably more dangerous position led to greater success (vv 14 and 15; cf. 18:5 and 30). David detected a gradual escalation in Saul’s anxiety from mere fear (v 12) to awe (v 15) to yet more fear (v 29). Not only David’s own tribe of Judah, but all Israel (v 16; cf. vv 6 and 28) hailed David for his military prowess. Reference to Israel and Judah may express the two main constituencies of the United Kingdom. These tribes’ love for

David is a kind of de facto recognition of him as king (cf. Moran, *CBQ* 25 [1963] 77–87, and the love of Jonathan noted in 18:1).¹⁹

8. The people loved David. When we maintain our commitment to do the will of God, no matter who may be against us, it stimulates respect and admiration from others.

a) God's blessings became the enemy of Saul. It was not that David did anything to hurt Saul; it was David's success that caused Saul to be jealous of David.

9. The people loved David – People may not ever like us, but our steadfast commitment to the will of God should cause them to respect us, and for this, the Lord will bless us.

10. David was prospering in all his ways – David was constantly making wise decisions that blessed those around him, and whatever he put his hands to, the Lord blessed it. This is because David chose to make decisions based on the divine will of God, even when it came to how to respond to Saul (1 Samuel 24).

11. The Lord was with David – When we are saved, the Lord's presence is continually in us because He lives inside us (1 Corinthians 6:19; Titus 3:4-8). When we abide in His Word no matter what the external pressures, the Lord may love us (John 15:7-10) and disciplines us (Hebrews 12:4-11). Practicing the Word causes us to experience the full movement of the Holy Spirit so that we no longer walk in the flesh but in the Spirit (Ephesians 5:15-18). So, no matter what external pressures we may experience, the power within strengthens us so that we can

overpower the attacks of the enemy (Ephesians 3:14-21; 1 John 4:4). What David experienced is no longer unique for him.

12. When Saul saw – With the people loving on David, David continuously made prudent decisions that benefited those around him. Saul fixed his attention back on David with no intention of ever completely engaging himself in what David was doing.

13. When Saul saw – Our good behavior may not only bless us but also attract negative attention. Christ did good every day but was nailed to a cross.

14. Suppose to be dreaded but strong give us, Sojourn – David's success caused Saul to continuously find ways to be around David.

15. All Israel loved David – It does not matter what evil a person may intend for us to experience; when the Lord decides to bless us, there is nothing they can do to prevent blessings being bestowed on us.

C. Faith is the Victory (vs. 17-18, 28-30):

1. Then Saul said here is my daughter Merab – Because Saul could not get to David (the people loved him), Saul approached David in a different manner by constantly telling him to have his daughter as his bride. Please note this was supposed to have already been completed when David killed Goliath, but Saul did not fulfill his promise to David (1 Samuel 17:25). Saul was now focused on a new strategy in his attempt to kill David.

a) David was entitled to have Saul's daughter as his wife because of his victory over Goliath (17:13). This promise had not been kept and is now conditional on further military service, in which Saul hoped David would be killed.

b) God's favor on David is revealed not only in his military accomplishments but also in Michal's love for him- now, added to Jonathan's. Everything Saul seeks to use against David turns to David's advantage.

2. Then Saul said here is my daughter Merab – Satan never backs off. Remember Peter, who Christ said was being sifted like wheat (Luke 22:31), well because Peter did not remain sober (1 Peter 1:13-16), Satan got to him. This is why Peter says, "Satan is a roaring lion seeking someone to devour." Notice Peter did not say 'seeking someone to tell a white lie;' no devour. Satan had an evil spirit influencing him.

a) David's status as the king's son-in-law is repeatedly emphasized throughout the rest of the chapter (vv 21, 22, 23, 26, 27). Ahimelech also refers to David as the king's son-in-law, via Michal, in 22:14. [\[10\]](#)

b) Saul's ulterior motive for offering his daughter (again probably a thought and not a word spoken aloud, cf. vv 11 and 21) is repeated in v 21. Saul wanted to put David in danger with no blame coming to himself (cf. the appointment of David as a commander over a thousand, v 13). [\[11\]](#)

c) David meets Saul's challenge twice over, presenting two hundred foreskins (v. 27). Saul views this success as evidence that Yahweh is with David (v. 28), and his fear of him grows into full-blown enmity (v. 29). [\[12\]](#)

3. Be a valiant man for me and fight – Saul complements David and then commands him to go and fight the Philistines when there is no need to do so. Saul acted as if he had confidence in David's ability.

4. Be a valiant man for me and fight – Satan's strategy is to get us to depend on our own strength rather than the inner power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 3:16-17; 6:10). Remember what Satan said to Christ when he tempted Him "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here...." (Luke 4:9). The same with Eve. He told her she could be just like God (Genesis 3:1-7).

5. When Saul saw and knew – Saul carefully inspected all that David accomplished and clearly understood that all David achieved was empowered by God (the same took place for him; 1 Samuel 14:47-52).

6. Saul was afraid of David – Saul, a tall, strong, and valiant warrior (1 Samuel 9:2; 10:23-27), was now terrified of David.

a) David never considered Saul to be his enemy (Ps. 18 inscription), but Saul remained David's enemy until the day he died on the battlefield. [\[13\]](#)

7. Saul was afraid of David – It does not matter what evil people seek to bestow on us; the Lord *‘is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.’* (Ephesians 3:20).

8. Saul was afraid of David – It does not matter what traps people set for us; “....greater is He who is in us.....” (1 John 4:4). This may infuriate some, cause others to become more sophisticated with their traps against us but remember; “in all things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.” (Romans 8:37) Even if they mean it for evil, the Lord can turn it for good (Romans 8:28). “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31)

^[1] Merrill, E. H. (1985). [1 Samuel](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 449). Victor Books.

^[2] Jamieson, R. (n.d.). [A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Joshua–Esther: Vol. II](#) (p. 184). William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.

^[3] Matthews, V. H., Chavalas, M. W., & Walton, J. H. (2000). [The IVP Bible background commentary: Old Testament](#) (electronic ed., 1 Sa 18:10). InterVarsity Press.

^[4] Klein, R. W. (1983). [1 Samuel](#) (Vol. 10, p. 188). Word, Incorporated.

^[5] Wiersbe, W. W. (2001). [Be successful](#) (pp. 101–102). Victor/Cook Communications.

^[6] Wiersbe, W. W. (2001). [Be successful](#) (p. 102). Victor/Cook Communications.

^[7] Wiersbe, W. W. (2001). [Be successful](#) (pp. 102–103). Victor/Cook Communications.

^[8] Matthews, V. H., Chavalas, M. W., & Walton, J. H. (2000). [The IVP Bible background commentary: Old Testament](#) (electronic ed., 1 Sa 18:13). InterVarsity Press.

^[9] Klein, R. W. (1983). [1 Samuel](#) (Vol. 10, pp. 188–189). Word, Incorporated.

^[10] Klein, R. W. (1983). [1 Samuel](#) (Vol. 10, p. 189). Word, Incorporated.

^[11] Jamieson, R. (n.d.). [A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Joshua–Esther: Vol. II](#) (p. 184). William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.

^[12] Walton, J. H. (2009). [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary \(Old Testament\): Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel](#) (Vol. 2, p. 354). Zondervan.

^[13] Wiersbe, W. W. (2001). [Be successful](#) (p. 104). Victor/Cook Communications.