

**I & II Samuel**  
**“Love & Hate”**  
**Samuel 18-20**  
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Well, we are now in a section of the Book of Samuel that outlines the rise of David as well as the fall of Saul. And we'll be covering chapters 18 through 24 this evening. But for the scripture reading, I'd like to just read I Samuel 18: 1-16. So if you have your Bibles with you, please turn with me to I Samuel 18: 1 - 16.

Receive now God's Word.

*As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, and the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day, and would not let him return to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him, and gave it to David and his armor, and even his sword, and his bow and his belt. And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him, so that Saul sent him over the men of war. And this was good in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul servants. As they were coming home when David returned from striking down the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing to meet King Saul with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments. And the women sang to one another as they celebrated. Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him. He said, they have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands. And what more can he have? But the kingdom? And so I, David, from that day on the next day a harmful spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house while David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day, Saul had his spear in his hand, and Saul hurled the spear. for he thought, I will pin David to the wall. But David evaded him twice. Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, but it departed from Saul. Saul. Saul removed him from his presence and made him a commander of a thousand. And he went out and came in before the people. And David had success in all his undertakings for the Lord was with him. And when Saul saw that he had great success, he stood in fearful awe of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, for he went out and came in before them.*

This is the word of Lord. You may be seated.

I learned this past week that there is no shortage of articles ranking the best Iron Bowl games of all time, and according to one source, the number one Iron Bowl game, the Iron Bowl game of

all Iron Bowl games. I just want to say I am simply a neutral observer here. Fun fact about me I didn't even know what the Iron Bowl was before coming here.

That's how much I care about this. But the greatest Iron Bowl game of all time, according to this source, is the 2013 Iron Bowl. Some of you may remember that at the very end of that game, the score was tied, but one second was put back on the clock, which allowed Alabama to attempt a 57-yard field goal for the win. But alas, the kicker fell short and Auburn's punt returner Chris Davis caught it in the end zone and ran it all the way down to the other side with the clock expired for the game winning touchdown for the Tigers. Amen. Amen.

There is nothing quite like a great victory that makes an impression on our minds and shapes our communal memory. And in the narrative flow of the Book of Samuel, everything that transpires in chapters 18 through 20 is caused by the precipitating event of David's victory over Goliath, which quite clearly lived on in Israel's communal memory immediately afterwards. And of course, even to this day.

The narrator himself, in first Samuel 18, verse six, doesn't even have to name Goliath anymore. He can simply refer to him as the Philistine and so to Jonathan in chapter 19, verse four, when he recounts how David took his life in his hand, and he struck down the Philistine. And the Lord worked a great salvation for all Israel.

This was the significance of that victory. It was a great salvation for all Israel. In fact, David's victory over Goliath goes down in Israel's history as their greatest victory. Second, I would say only to the crossing of the Red sea. This was an instant classic, and our section this evening tells the story of how two people in particular, Jonathan and Saul, responded to this great salvation that had been worked out by David, the Lord's anointed one responds with love and the other responds with hate.

And herein lies the significance of our passage for us as well. For the text invites us to observe these two men, and to wrestle with the same question that they asked of David, only of his greater son Jesus. Who is this Messiah, and will I be for him or against him? You see, the Hebrew word for anoint is my shock, from which we get the word Messiah.

Messiah literally means the anointed One. And I think you all know this, but so too does the word Christ. That is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Messiah. And a couple of weeks ago, we saw Samuel anoint David as God's chosen king so that it would be an accurate statement to say that currently David is the messiah King of Israel. Lowercase m.

As we continue to go through the Book of Samuel in our evening series, bearing that in mind will help you understand that David's life and reign anticipates the arrival of the Messiah of Jesus, and it teaches us something about Christ's humiliation as well as his exaltation. The story before us unfolds in a fairly straightforward manner, but if it helps for you to have an outline in

your mind, first we're going to look at how Jonathan responds to David, and then second, we'll see how Saul responds to David. And then we'll conclude by returning once more to Jonathan. And so three points Jonathan, Saul, Jonathan, pretty simple right? Let's begin then, by taking a look at Jonathan. And in verse one again. First Samuel chapter 18, verse one. As soon as he had finished speaking to soul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David. And Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

Believe it or not, this is actually the first time that Jonathan meets David. Which naturally leads us to ask, I think, what was it that drew or attracted Jonathan to David? Why did he love him so? And you might answer, well, everyone loved David, as we see in verse 16, but all Israel and Judah loved David. And again in verse 22 of the same chapter, behold, the King has delight in you, and all his servants love you.

In fact, even Saul himself at one point loved David. As we saw in chapter 16, verse 21, And Saul loved him greatly. But the question remains, because as the story continues, it becomes clear that Jonathan's love is different. It is of a different category. Israel's love, as always, is momentary and fleeting. And of course, Saul's love changes to hatred.

But Jonathan's love remains. And while the narrow narrator never tells us why or how this bond was formed, I think the preceding context makes this fairly self-evident. This is the first time that David meets Jonathan, but it's not the first time that we've met Jonathan in the story. Before David stepped onto the scene, there was another champion in Israel.

In first Samuel chapter 14, when the Philistines are pressing in on the Israelites, and when Saul, along with his men, were hiding in the caves out of fear, it was Jonathan who stepped out in faith and decided to march over to the Philistines camp with just one other person and to attack them. And this is what he had said to his armor bearer in chapter 14, verse six, come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised.

It may be that the Lord will work for us, for nothing can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few. That line can just as easily be taken out of chapter 14 and placed in the mouth of David as he's about to fight Goliath, and we wouldn't know the difference. Furthermore, although Jonathan is not mentioned in that episode, given the fact that he was the crown prince, it is more likely than not that he was by his father's side the whole time, which means that Jonathan probably heard David say to Saul in chapter 17, verse 32, your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised shall be like one

of them. For he has defied the armies of the living God, and undoubtedly, along with the rest of the Israelite army, Jonathan would have heard Goliath's taunts, and he would have heard David's response. You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.

In other words, why was Jonathan drawn to David? Because in David he saw a kindred spirit in David. Jonathan saw another man who was just as zealous for the name of Yahweh as himself. And if I may point out, this is the foundation of a truly Christian friendship. Indeed, the basis of any friendship is that the two of you are passionate about the same things.

But what makes a distinctly Christian is that the two of you are zealous for the name of God. But for tonight at least, I don't want to dwell on the relationship between Jonathan and David as being the paradigmatic model for what Christian, godly friendship ought to look like, because while that's a true statement, we would miss something very important if all we saw in this relationship was a model of friendship.

For David was not just Jonathan's friend, but I would suggest to you that more importantly, David was Jonathan's Lord. You can summarize their relationship with one word, and that word first appears in verse three. Back in chapter 18, then Jonathan made a covenant with David. Covenant. It is this covenant in particular that will become the central focus in chapter 20, in which the word is repeated two more times, where David first reminds Jonathan, for you have brought your servant into a covenant.

And then the narrator reminds us, and Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David. This covenant, as we see here, is rooted in love, but it will be sustained by loyalty, and it will result in everlasting peace.

The covenantal nature of Jonathan's friendship with David is signaled in chapter 18, verse four, when Jonathan strips himself of his robe, his armor, his sword, and his bow and belt, and gives it to David. At the very least, this is a gesture that is confirming the covenant that was just made. But at the most, by giving David his royal vestments as the Crown Prince, Jonathan is symbolically abdicating his claim to the throne and handing over his birthright to the one whom he perceives to be the future King of Israel, to be his future king.

It's hard to tell how much of what we know as the readers. Jonathan also knew at this point. Did he know, for example, that the Lord had already rejected his father Saul, and that David was anointed by the prophet Samuel? We can't tell. But what we do know with absolute certainty is that by chapter 20 there is no more guessing in our minds or in Jonathan's turn with me to chapter 20.

In chapter 20, verse 15, Jonathan says to David, do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever. When the Lord cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth. We'll come back to this later. But this statement quite clearly displays Jonathan's awareness that there is a change in regime that is coming.

And if that's not conclusive enough for you, then certainly by verse 31, when Saul, in a fit of rage, says to Jonathan, as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom shall be established. Saul spells out for his son almost in fatherly frustration, that choosing David means the death of his dynasty.

So clearly, by chapter 20, Jonathan is fully aware of what is love and loyalty means. It means that from this point forward, he must die to himself and live for David. Indeed, I might go as far as putting it like this. Jonathan was the very first subject. He was the very first servant of the Messiah, King David. And so Walter Brueggemann puts it like this.

He writes, Jonathan is to be David's follower, and for this he must hate his own father. Do you hear? They are the language of discipleship that Jesus will later employ in the New Testament. He who does not hate his own father cannot be my disciple. Luke chapter 14, verse 26. You see, when we pay attention to the covenant mental nature of Jonathan's relationship with David, what we see in this character is not just a model of friendship, but a model of discipleship.

We're going to come back to this at the end, so I want you to bookmark that in your minds. But this is how Jonathan responds to David. This is how Jonathan responds to the great work of salvation of the Lord anointed. And this is also one of only two ways that you can respond to Christ, to David's greater son.

By embracing him in love and by pledging loyalty to him as your King. The other way is displayed by Saul. And so let's turn our attention to him now. Turn with me back to chapter 18, verse two, where we're told. And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. David is now forced to retire officially from being a shepherd, and Saul sets him over the men of war, which seems to suggest that he was placed in charge of Israel of Saul's entire army. But in verse six, we get a brief flashback to when David was returning from having slain the Philistine, and the women came out to celebrate, and they began to sing. Saul has struck down his thousands, and David has ten thousands. And of course, this is now what launches Saul into his madness, into a sickness unto death. And in what follows, the narrator provides us with what I would consider to be a masterclass on the nature and destructive effects of jealousy and hatred.

What the women sing is likely not meant to be disparaging to Saul. It would be incredibly brazen for them to sing that in front of the king, if it was the parallel of the parallelism of the Hebrew poetry here would indicate that what they're meaning to say is, Saul and David have slain their thousands and ten thousands. But of course, it's Saul's jealousy that makes him interpret this in a negative way as he thinks to himself.

They have ascribed to David 10,000, and to me they have ascribed thousands. And what more can he have? But the kingdom? This is what jealousy envy does, isn't it? Jealousy is unable to share success. This is how you know if you're harboring jealousy against someone in your own

heart. If you find yourself unable to praise and encourage their achievements in the Church of Christ, there is plenty of success to be shared and all our success, all the fruits of our labor, are to be returned to God in joyful praise.

And the warning that we see in Saul is the reality that when you're unable to rejoice in the success of others, you are unable to rejoice in the work of God Himself.

Jealousy is unable to share success, and further jealousy is rooted in insecurity, as is the case again with Saul. His sarcastically bitter statement what more can he have? But the kingdom is both ironic and revealing, because it seems like it is at this point that Saul begins to piece things together. To remind you. Earlier in chapter 15, the prophet Samuel had instructed Saul to completely destroy the Amalekites, but for the last time, as the true king Saul disobeyed.

And what's relevant for us here is that Samuel had said to Saul in prophetic judgment, the Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day, and has given it to a neighbor of yours who is better than you. She saw was currently in a position of insecurity, and it's very possible, perhaps even probable, that as he saw David kill Goliath, as he saw David repeatedly defeating the Philistines, as he saw the people of Israel growing in their fondness for this conquering hero, that he began to realize that this David was the better man.

He is the one. He is the Lord's anointed. Hence the irony of his statement what more can you have but the kingdom? Since that is precisely David's destiny. So here's the progression of Saul's psyche thus far. His failure leads to insecurity, his insecurity leads to jealousy, and now his jealousy leads to explosive anger. Chapter 18, verse ten. The next day, a harmful spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house.

While David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day, Saul had his spear in his hand, and Saul hurled the spear. For he thought, I will pin David to the wall. But David evaded him twice. There is perhaps no better scene that captures, in a nutshell the nature of Saul's madness, which is why I think the narrator recounts this scene twice, almost verbatim here, and then again in chapter 19.

Once again, earlier in our story, right after David was anointed by the prophet Samuel, we were told that the spirit of the Lord rushed upon David and departed from Saul, and in his place a harmful spirit began to torment Saul. And that's when Saul first brought David into his service. And chapter 16, verse 23, we were told whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand.

So Saul was refreshed and was well, just very briefly. Some English translations describe this as the evil spirit from the Lord. I don't love that translation because it seems to suggest that God

had sent an evil or even demonic spirit to torment Saul. I don't think that this spirit is to be understood as being evil. The ESV does better, I think, by describing it as a harmful spirit.

Or you could also translate that as a destructive spirit. My understanding is that this spirit is a positive agent of God Himself, who now executes God's judgment upon Saul by working out his ruin. It's not unlike how God hardens Pharaoh's heart. In the book of Exodus. But now, back in our passage, it is the same destructive spirit that is continuing to drive Saul further into his madness.

We see Saul's jealousy and anger now bursting out into violence as he hurls his spear at David. Even as David is playing the lyre to soothe his agony. Thus, the self-destructive nature of Saul's hatred is displayed in his attempt to kill the only person who can heal him. That is not just a portrait of the depth of Saul's hatred for David.

That is also a portrait of anyone who rejects the Son of David, the Messiah King, who is to come. Cornelius, ventilate, a Christian apologist, once described rebellion against God in this way. He said, imagine that you're traveling on a train, and across the aisle you see an infant girl sitting on her grandfather's lap, but in a fit of rage, she slaps her grandfather across the face even as he is holding her in his arms.

That's what it's like to deny Christ. Not only are you denying the only one in whom his life, but you're denying him with the very mental capacities that Christ has given you in the first place. You see, even in our rebellion against God, we are forced to depend upon God. Indeed, rejecting Christ is a kind of madness. It is the greatest sickness that will certainly lead to death.

But here's now the next step in Saul's downward spiral from failure to insecurity to jealousy, to anger. And now, verse 12, Saul was afraid of David because the Lord was with him, but had departed from Saul from explosive anger to now fear. There's a key phrase that we see in this verse. It's the statement that the Lord was with David.

That's the reason for his repeated success. This phrase is repeated three times in this chapter, and each time there's a correlated comment about Saul's escalating fear. First, we're told that Saul was afraid. Then verse 15, he stood in fearful awe of David. And lastly, verse 29, Saul was even more afraid of David.

We can sense the mounting inner tension within this man, can't we? Saul is jealous of David. He hates him so much, but he also can't help but stand in awe of him. That is true of jealousy in general, for the hatred of jealousy is always mixed with a tinge of admiration. In jealousy, you deny what you know to be patently true.

But what's more, as we pointed out earlier, Saul seems to be piecing things together. And by verse 28, when we are told that Saul knew that the Lord was with David, we must conclude that Saul, now that David was God's chosen man, so that everything that follows from this point forward is not just a manifestation of Saul's hatred for David, it's a manifestation of his hatred towards God, as he now raises his fists in defiance and does everything that he can to resist what he knows is inevitable.

This futility is reminiscent of what David writes in Psalm chapter two, and this is what we sang about in the Ancient of Days. David writes in Psalm two, perhaps in partial reflection of the mad King himself. Why did the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers state Council together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, let us burst their bonds and apart, and cast away their cords from us.

He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, as for me, I have set my King on Zion, on my holy hill. This is why Saul is now terrified, for God has spoken, and he will set David on his throne.

If you have not yet embraced Christ as your King, I would offer you this same question why do you rage and plot in vain on the cross, God set his King Jesus on Zion. Christ's resurrection makes his final coronation in avoidable. See, what David's rise teaches us is that God's plans never fail. And just as surely as David will be king in this book, so to Christ, we'll return.

It is only by surrendering to the Lord's anointed that you can hope to have life. And in a way, this is exactly what Jonathan does. And so let's return now to the final part of our story. So initially tries to have David killed discreetly and indirectly, but by chapter 19, he now publicly announces to all of his servants that they should kill David.

The bounty on David's head, so to speak, has been posted, and at this stage Jonathan is still able to reason with his father. He even persuades him to reconcile with David, but this lasts only but a moment, and when David wins yet another battle, Saul's jealousy and anger flares up and he tries to pin David to the wall once more.

In chapter 20, now, and this is where we're going to spend the rest of our time, Jonathan has clearly been kept in the dark. He is completely unaware of everything that has happened in the previous episodes. And so this brings us now to the definitive moment in Jonathan's relationship with David. David informs him that his father is trying to kill him, but Jonathan is in disbelief, and so Jonathan and David now devise a plan whereby they might discover the truth.

It's so happens that the following day is the new moon, when all the king's officials would be expected to participate in a festival, and so David proposes that he deliberately excuse us himself. And if Saul responds to David's absence with anger, the two of them will know that Saul



seeks his life. That's the plan I mentioned earlier, that the relationship between Jonathan and David can be summarized by the word covenant.

Well, before Jonathan goes to execute this plan, the two reconfirm or ratify their covenant. Jonathan swears loyalty to David. And now let me read Jonathan's speech for you. Starting at the end of verse 13. This is a truly remarkable statement.

*If only you have the eyes to see. If I am still alive, show me the steadfast love of the Lord, that I may not die, and do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever. When the Lord cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.*

Isn't there something odd about what Jonathan says?

In the current situation, it is David's life that is in Jonathan's hands. Jonathan is clearly in control. All he has to do is lie. And David, who is this threat to his father's throne as well as to his own throne, will be killed? And yet, isn't it strange that Jonathan speaks to David as though he is the one at David's mercy?

Why does he speak in this way?

I'll tell you why. Because Jonathan is a man of remarkable faith. Jonathan's speech reveals to us that in spite of David's vulnerable state, Jonathan is confident that the Lord will eventually establish him on the throne. Don't overlook this. Jonathan makes a covenant with David not when he's on the throne, but in his moment of greatest distress, when David is merely a suffering servant about to be exiled.

In fact, so confident of this is Jonathan that he's able to assess the current situation better than anyone else in the story. Even David. Jonathan understands that as the son of King Saul who tried to kill David, that his entire household, both present and future, may 1st day perish in the face of David's wrath. Not if, but when he is King.

And so Jonathan appeals to the covenant and pleads for mercy. Do not cut off your covenant love from my house forever. See with the eyes of faith, Jonathan can anticipate what will happen in the future. Indeed, what does happen starting in second Samuel chapter three? And he can anticipate this not because David is such a great man, but because Yahweh is such a great God, and his plans never fail.

This is the difference between Jonathan and Saul. Jonathan has faith in Yahweh, and it's this faith that grounds his relationship, his love for David. And it's because of this faith that Jonathan, in contrast to Saul, is completely free of jealousy, of envy, of rival. If you think about it more than Saul, it is Jonathan who should have felt threatened.

But as one commentator puts it, those who are loyal to Yahweh are able to put matters of personal advancement in proper perspective. I have no doubt that in a church of our size, that there are some who wrestle with jealousy in their hearts. Won't you lay it down lest you find yourself opposing God himself?

The new moon comes along with the moment of truth. Jonathan informs his father that he had permitted David to be excused from the festival, and then verse 30. Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said to him, you son of a perverse, rebellious woman, do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?

For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom shall be established. Therefore send and bring him to me, for he shall surely die. Then Jonathan answered Saul, his father, why should he be put to death? What has he done? But Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him. So Jonathan knew that his father was determined to put David to death.

What Saul did to David, he now does to Jonathan. The parallels are so strong that I can't help but wonder whether Jesus had this very scene in mind when he spoke about discipleship in Matthew ten. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword, for I have come to set a man against his father. Whoever loves his father more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

A spear is now literally driven between Jonathan and his father, and Jonathan shows himself willing to risk his own life to take up his cross, to follow the Lord's anointed. And again, there's rich irony in what Saul accuses his son. Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse? To your shame? Indeed, Jonathan has, and he is not ashamed to call David his lord.

Then verse 34, I think this is my favorite verse in the entire section. Verse 34. And Jonathan rose from the table, not in panic, not in fear, not in wounded pride or even betrayal, but in fierce anger. I mean, isn't he the coolest person in the Bible?

And why? Because of David. Brueggemann again puts it concisely like this. He says Jonathan feels nothing for his pitiful father, but he feels everything for David. Wouldn't we all love to have a friend like Jonathan? Well, let me close by reminding you that you do. You see, Jonathan isn't just a model of friendship. He's not even just a model of discipleship.

Jonathan is also a model of covenantal faithfulness. He is faithful to David to the very end. We make much of the fact that David is a type of Christ, and he is. But in this regard, so too is

Jonathan and his fierce loyalty and his willingness to lay down his crown and to lay down his life. Jonathan points to the kind of friend that we have in Jesus.

Listen to these words that Jesus spoke to us. Listen to these words that he spoke to you. John 15:13 greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. Jonathan may have responded to David's great victory over Goliath, but we respond to the great victory of the cross, and we choose to follow Jesus.

We choose to love Jesus because he first loved us and laid down his life for us. That's the kind of King to whom we bow down and surrender.

At the very end of our passage, take a look. Jonathan keeps his word. The two embrace. They kiss. And then in verse 42, Jonathan said to David, go in peace. You know what struck me this past week? That when David wrote Psalm chapter two, he seems to have not only thought of Saul, but of Jonathan as well, especially this parting scene.

Listen to what David says in Psalm 2:10. *Now therefore, O kings, be wise. Be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the sun, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way. For his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.* I may be wrong, but I imagine that David later in life, reflecting upon the choice that Jonathan had to make that day, understood that his friend chose not him per se. But I'll put it like this - David understood that Jonathan chose to seek first God's King and God's kingdom. Why don't you do the same?

Let's pray.

Father in Heaven we confess that you are a loving and gentle God, but you are also the King of the universe. And your wrath is fierce. No one can stand in your way. Your paths have been established, and they will certainly come to pass. Lord, we beg you to have mercy upon all those who have yet to bend their knees to you. Soften their hearts. We pray so that they might yield, and find that they don't submit to a tyrant king, but to a humble king, to the king that we see on the cross who laid down his life for us. Father, I ask for this congregation. I ask that if anyone here is rebelling against you, may you just remind them through this word that even in their rebellion, they depend upon you. So bring them back. We pray. Allow them to seek first your King Jesus and His kingdom which has been inaugurated, and his death and resurrection, and which will be consummated upon his most certain return. It is to that day that we look and it is in light of that future, that we live in the present. We pray all these things in the strong name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.