*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 21 - 26

Saul Pursues David

**Monday, June 21 1 Samuel 18:1-30**

*“David’s rise and Saul’s jealousy”*

 David’s killing of Goliath made him a national hero and entitled him to the hand of Saul’s daughter. But it also aroused feelings of jealousy in Saul, which set in motion the events that fill the rest of 1 Samuel. The story of the tension between Saul and David is told by contrasting the way Saul’s *family* relates to David with the way Saul himself relates to him. First, there is Jonathan, the crown prince, and his love for and commitment to David; second, we have Saul’s daughter, Michal, and her feelings toward David.

 However, at the core of this text is not David’s relationship with the royal family but the theological causes behind the historical realities. Events are moving ahead because God has abandoned Saul and is instead with David. All of Saul’s efforts to stop David’s rise in popularity serve only to propel David further into the limelight. By the end of the chapter, Saul himself has come to understand the two recurring elements of this text: God is with David, and Saul’s family loves David.

*Guard my heart against jealousy, Lord, for it only leads to despair. Amen.*

**Tuesday, June 22 1 Samuel 19:1-24**

*“David’s escape”*

 The first part of the chapter interchanges positive and negative responses to David. The paragraph on Jonathan’s love and support for David (verses 1-7) is followed by Saul’s malicious attempts to kill David (verses 8-10), which is followed by Michal’s loving insistence on helping David escape (verses 11-17). This magnifies Saul’s senseless opposition to David.

 Verses 18-24 tell of David’s escape from Saul. Never again will he return to the royal court of Saul. The break is real and final, and he must now begin to make other plans. We learn that David goes to meet with the prophet Samuel, who takes David with him to live at Naioth. But, Saul has not given up. Three times he sends soldiers to find and capture David, and finally he goes himself. The episode should be read together with 10:1-12, which relates the first time the Spirit of God came mightily on Saul and he prophesied among the band of prophets. The contrast between the two passages contributes to the growing condemnation of King Saul, as the distance between the two anointed ones, David and Saul, continues to increase.

*May I not be like Saul, Lord, whose pride went before his fall. Amen.*

**Wednesday, June 23 1 Samuel 20:1-42**

*“Jonathan’s loyalty”*

 What drives this chapter forward is the question of faithfulness in the relationship between David and Jonathan. Will Jonathan remain loyal to David even in the face of the harsh opposition from his father? Will he look for compromise and try to placate his father’s fears while trying to keep David in the fold?

 At the beginning of the chapter, Jonathan appears unconvinced that Saul really intends to do harm to David, and only the events at the New Moon festival persuade him that he must take action to protect David. The chronological relationship between this chapter and the previous two is confusing. Saul has already attempted to kill David, and David has had to run for his life. But the writer of 1 Samuel is not as concerned with telling the story sequentially as he is with helping the reader to understand David and Jonathan’s relationship. Here, the author has reserved this emotional and extended text for the conclusion of the unit made up of chapters 18-20. It explains why David must leave Saul’s service and say farewell to his trusted comrade, Jonathan.

*Lasting commitments in relationships, Lord, are what you desire for us. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

June 21 - 26

Saul Pursues David

**Thursday, June 24 1 Samuel 21:1 – 22:23**

*“David’s exile”*

 After their emotional farewell at the end of the previous chapter, Jonathan is able to go back to Gibeah, the location of Saul’s royal court, but David must go into exile. Chapter 21 introduces us to three new characters and explains David’s relationship to each: Ahimelech the priest, Doeg the Edomite, and Achish the Philistine king. Chapter 22 shows the risks involved in helping David.

 David first flees to the priest Ahimelech at Nob, just two miles from Gibeah. Next, he goes to Achish, king of Gath, which is significantly farther away (about twenty-three miles from Nob). When that fails to be beneficial, David escapes to the cave of Adullam (approximately ten miles from Gath). The locations of Mizpah of Moab and the forest of Hereth are not known.

 All these geographical references follow David’s journeys as he moves farther and further from central royal power at Gibeah and into the fringes of Judahite society. David is the man after God’s own heart and the chosen replacement for Saul, but through these circumstances he is being forced in the opposite direction. How will this tension be resolved?

*Keep us faithful, Lord, when life feels like it’s taking us in the wrong direction. Amen.*

**Friday, June 25 1 Samuel 23:1-29**

*“God’s guidance”*

 The chapter continues the contrast between Saul and David by relating the events surrounding the Philistine attack on the city of Keilah and the subsequent events in the southern deserts of Judah. The previous chapter related the destruction of the priestly city of Nob by Saul, who killed the priests, their families, and the inhabitants of the city. Ironically, David now takes actions to save a Judahite city, though its citizens appear to have no particular feeling of support for him.

 These events provide us with background information that highlights a contrast of great significance between Saul and David, namely, the way the two men make important decisions. David consistently inquires of God before making any important moves, whereas Saul is dependent on rumors and espionage. David seems keenly aware of God’s guidance and leadership in his life, while Saul seems out of touch and indifferent to divine guidance. In sum, this chapter is a case study in contrasting approaches between someone who is seeking to *perform* God’s will and someone who is seeking to *avoid* God’s will.

*When I seek you, Lord, you guide me according to your will. Amen.*

**Saturday, June 26 1 Samuel 24:1-22**

*“David’s reverence”*

 After Saul’s problems with the Philistines recede again into the background, he resumes his pursuit of David. At En Gedi, David unexpectedly and ironically finds himself in a position where he can kill his adversary and move to take the kingdom for himself. But his exemplary reverence for the Lord and for the Lord’s anointed restrains him, and he therefore restrains his men from taking action. The episode ends with speeches in which David argues his innocence and Saul confesses David’s right to be king.

 David is motivated by a genuine devotion to God and to the office of Israel’s king. The idea of taking Saul’s life is unthinkable to him. By contrast, Saul is characterized as a monarch obsessed with destroying his (perceived!) enemy, David, irreverently pursuing him instead of protecting the people of Israel from the Philistines. This pattern only heightens David’s legitimacy as Saul’s successor.

*I revere you, Lord, and seek to follow your will in all that I do. Amen.*