

### “Saul Fears David”

We now come to a very strange phenomenon – one man fearing another because of his relationship with God. This has happened to myself. On one occasion I was physically attacked by a ‘schizophrenic’, who said he feared me because I was a ‘man of God’. On another occasion, a colleague verbally attacked me for the same reason, admitting that my Christian faith made him feel uncomfortable.

There was also one time when a demon possessed man fell to the ground when I entered a room full of people. He crawled around on all fours away from me and into a corner under a table, where he lay stricken and fearful. A voice came from him in whining tones, imploring me not to harm him or to touch him. The demon was afraid of me, not because of who I was, but because of the God I obey and Whose power is far greater. Such instances can be repeated many times, so the response of Saul to David is not unique.

What is behind this fear? A two-fold acknowledgement. The first is the person’s own realisation that the one he attacks is of God, and that God is with him, highlighting his own abject poverty of soul until he feels the utter pain of it all. Thus, the fear is that of a man who is bound for hell, and he does not want to be reminded of the fact.

The second is the response of demons, who, though very powerful in their own right, are weak in the presence of God. Because a ‘man of God’ has the Holy Spirit within, his presence amidst the demonised causes the fallen angels to quake. There is nothing in the man to invoke this distress, for a man is easy prey for demons, who can cause him much harm.

No, what they recognise and acknowledge is the power of God within him, a power that can command them to go to outer darkness at the mere mention of Jesus’ name. This same Jesus will soon banish them to hell for ever, so the presence of the Holy Spirit also reminds them of this horrific truth. The light always shines into the darkness, causing it to flee. The darkness of evil and sin *must* hide before the Almighty power and truth of God. His Light *must* inevitably send the darkness away, for light is the environment and nature of God that displaces anything remotely dark.

Saul is the most miserable of men, for he has been told of his demise and yet he still lives. As

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he lives, he is both troubled by David and soothed by him, and the constant reminders of his own fate push Saul farther and deeper into an uncontrollable depression that finally kills him. Such is the lot of sinners whose lives are outside the grace and mercy of God.

### Verses 1-4

1.

“And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

2.

And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more to his father’s House.

3.

Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

4.

And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that (was) upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.”

Immediately after the battle, Saul and Jonathan could do no other than pay homage to David, whose singular action defeated the Philistines in just the few seconds it took to whirl the sling around his head and let fly the stone that led to the giant’s death. Father and son, and all Israel, were grateful for their deliverance.

Not only that, but, as we read before, David was a handsome and winsome young man who easily gained friends, because of his very nature... something each one of us should try to achieve. Not the false smile or the desperate attempt made by some to gain friends by always trying to be funny or be something they are not (one who always tries to be funny is a sombre soul, hiding a deep insecurity). David’s attraction was his honesty and uprightness, gleaned from his closeness to God.

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However, as we have seen, these same qualities also repel those who are estranged from God. To such, a man of God is a stumblingblock. If our lives are not stumblingblocks to the unsaved, then we are failing in our witness. A stumblingblock can either be a prompt to obey God, or it can send a man headlong into the evil his heart is already set on.

Jonathan's soul and spirit were 'knit' to David. He was instantly bound to him in the deepest of friendships. Not only was David a kindred spirit as a fearless warrior, but he also placed his trust fully in God. Just a short while before, Jonathan had himself defied all odds by trusting only in the God of Israel. So, both had a lot in common, and this fired a long lasting and genuine friendship. This is the kind of friendship that *ought* to exist between all Believers, but, sadly, is rarely ever found. It is deep and genuine, and is the basis of true unity, seen only in a common love of the truth and a respect for the other person. Little of this depth and reality is witnessed today, and this is a sad reflection of our collective spiritual state.

Jonathan, himself a lover of God and a fearless soldier, paid homage openly and publicly, giving David, literally, the clothing off his own back, together with his precious weapons. David was unwittingly regaled with the outward trappings of royalty as a reward for his deeds. Saul, too, would not let David return with his oxen, cart and brothers (which must have galled them), to his own home. Instead, he demanded that he stayed with the royal family. The two young men agreed solemnly to be friends for life, which is what happened.

### Verse 5

1.

"And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, (and) behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants."

Saul made David his general, even over Jonathan. It is a mark of Jonathan's humility that he accepted this situation so freely. How often do we become indignant when a fellow Christian seems to get all the praise and we do not? At such times we might vaunt our own supposed superiority, not understanding that whatever has transpired has already been known by God. If we have been passed over, then it is for a reason known to God and we ought not fight against it.

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David's character made him loved and trusted by everyone, including the Israelites and Saul's counsellors and court officials. This is no mean feat! It also shows the humility of David who, knowing that he was to be king, never once tried to usurp Saul's place. Nor did he try to hasten the time of his own rise to the throne. He waited patiently and somewhat reluctantly, for he was very unsure about being made king. Even so, unlike so many Christians and 'leaders' today, David was a 'natural' man in that he had 'no sides' to his character. What you saw was what you got. His personality was rounded and firm, with attributes we all preach to be good, but which few of us actually have.

Many of us pretend to be righteous and true, but harbour all kinds of sinful pride and anger within. Such is common amongst 'evangelicals'. We should not seek to gain trust and respect by our own actions. These will come with inward adherence to God's word and a proper working-out of faith in our own lives. It is this sincerity and honesty that warrants 'double honour' for pastors as they work unceasingly to obey the Lord and genuinely love the brethren. Yet, so many are hampered by their masks of what others expect of them. They try to live up to the expectations of peers, especially those they consider to be of 'importance'... those they perceive could further or destroy their humanly inspired ambitions to shine before all men and Believers. Such falsity and false hope detracts from truth and genuine unity. David, on the other hand, was as genuine as they come. He shone as a beacon amongst peers whose ambitions and duplicity made them less than attractive. Saul was jealous of David's spiritual stature and prowess in battle. We know Saul loved to employ the most valiant and courageous warriors, but he did not want them to take the glory from himself!

It is obvious Saul did not know David was to be the next king. Saul's later anger against David was borne of fear of his godly stature, not of knowledge that he was to be king. David was the opposite of Saul, and Saul knew it. So he became very angry and murderous. Such is the real state of the human heart when faced with the purity of God in a man (sometimes confused with his knowledge, outward appearance, speech, good works, or with the circles he moves in!).

### Verse 6-9

1.

"And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick.

2.

And the women answered (one another) as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

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3.

And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed (but) thousands: and (what) can he have more but the kingdom?

4.

And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.”

The soldiers of Israel started to make their way back to their homes after the battle. As they travelled through or past cities and towns, the people came out to cheer. The women made up songs – probably one verse sung by one group and the responding verse by another group. So, the first group would praise Saul, then the other group responded by praising David, all accompanied by the music of the tabrets/tambourines.

Though he was praised, too, Saul was furious that David’s achievements received even greater praise, and his murderous intentions began to take flight. We come across this jealous rage in our churches, in many guises. There is simmering resentment that a particular person is being praised or honoured. Conversely, the same rage arises when members or leaders resent one who will not ‘toe the party line’ because he believes God is calling him to walk another path.

Notice that Saul did not question the validity of the content of the songs – he simply did not like David receiving more praise than he did! So, after that episode, Saul ‘eyed’ David. He kept an eye on him for possible insurrection, though he knew perfectly well this would not happen. His suspicion was not that David would do anything against him, but that the people would prefer David as king. So, he felt threatened as king. The possibility of losing one’s power, peer-regard, job, and finances etc., is a very debilitating impetus. It can lead to double dealing, lies, ‘empire building’, and even unlawful activities, as we find time and again in society... and, sadly, within the churches. Bitterness is far more embedded in church life than we care to acknowledge.

### Verses 10-16

1.

“And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he

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prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and (there was) a javelin in Saul's hand.

2.

And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to The wall (with it). And David avoided out of his presence twice.

3.

And Saul was afraid of David because the LORD was with him, And was departed from Saul.

4.

Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain Over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.

5.

And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD (was) with him.

6.

Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him.

7.

But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.

The day after, when the men had returned to their homes, Saul was again afflicted by a demon. Yet, he prophesied. We are not told if his prophecy was true or false. It is likely his words took on a paranoid hue, given the nature of the spirit upon him. David played for Saul, but to no avail, for suddenly Saul threw the spear he had in his hand, to kill David. This was premeditated as the text shows, but David escaped injury by jumping to one side. It seems Saul tried this twice.

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The reason for this outburst, apart from his simmering resentment of David's obvious talents and status, was the way David clearly exhibited the presence of God in his life. Saul saw the difference between his own deteriorating life and that of David, which was vibrant and holy. There was also the very real anxiety of knowing he was bound for disaster, and David's life contrasted with this sharply.

To try and remove David as a direct threat, Saul reduced him in rank from general of the whole army to captain of just one company of a thousand men. David took it all well and did nothing to damage Saul's standing. He went on with life, doing everything above board and openly. His style of life and character were plain to all, as he had nothing to hide. This should be the maxim of all who have a public role in life, whether a politician or a pastor, or any other Christian. It seems today that one can do whatever one likes, so long as it is 'private'... but public lives have no privacy and, besides, the 'truth will out'.

To all and sundry, David's life was exemplary, with an emphasis on purity and honesty. He was 'wise' or he understood how to act properly, with prudence. His prudent lifestyle brought him success and prosperity, making Saul even worse. As he saw David prosper and grow in stature before all the people, Saul's mind became more and more twisted with hatred. He was now more afraid of him. The people on the other hand, loved David greatly.

### Verse 17-19

1.

"And Saul said to David, Behold my elder daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife; only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD's battles. For Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him.

2.

And David said unto Saul, Who (am) I? And what is mine life, (or) my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?

3.

But it came to pass at the time when Merab Saul's daughter should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife."

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Saul becomes even more secretive and twisted, as he plots against David. Though demonised (via oppression, not possession) at times, he still had the ability to create clever ideas to rid himself of David without incurring the anger of the people. He decided to give David his eldest daughter, Merab ('increase') on condition that David was faithful to him alone as a champion. Saul's motives were not admirable, for his idea was to send David into battle, so that he would be killed. He could then mourn his death whilst being rid of the perceived threat to his rule.

True to his character, David was overwhelmed by the offer (though, if you remember, this was a promise the king had made anyway, to anyone who defeated Goliath) and expressed humility – he was a nobody, so he had no right to join the royal family! But, Saul was not honourable toward him: when it came to the time of marriage, he gave Merab to another man, Adriel ('flock of God'), son of Barzillai, of Meholah ('meadow of dancing') birthplace of Elisha and a city of Issachar.

No mention is made of David's feelings about this, though he must have been upset and feeling betrayed. Yet, he remained loyal to Saul. (He never lost his loyalty, even when he was being hunted by Saul and his army). Rather different from those who tend to hit back when hurt or deceived.

### Verses 20-24

1.

"And Michal Saul's daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him.

2.

And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son in law in (the one of) the twain.

3.

And Saul commanded his servants, (saying), Commune with David secretly, and say, Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee: now therefore be the king's son in law.

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4.

And Saul's servants spake those words in the ears of David, and David said, Seemeth it to you (a) light (thing) to be a king's son in law, seeing that I (am) a poor man, and lightly esteemed?

5.

And the servants of Saul told him, saying, On this manner spake David."

The eldest daughter was married to someone else at the last moment, but another daughter, Michal ('who is like God?') loved David. Saul knew he had dealt treacherously with David, but he was very pleased when he heard of Michal's love for David, for maybe she could lure David to fight at every opportunity, thereby increasing the risk to David's life.

With false brightness, Saul told David he could marry Michal. But, David remained humble and did not in the least feel worthy to be part of the royal family. He did not know it, but even whilst married to Michal, Saul later gave her away to someone else! To allay any anxiety David had about Saul's intentions, Saul instructed his servants to pretend to gossip to David. They were to tell him that Saul was really pleased to have him as a son-in-law. David, though, said he was poor, so how could he possibly be married to royalty – he could not afford the customary dowry! The servants took back his every word to Saul, showing that David's defences were still down.

### **Verses 25-27**

1.

"And Saul said, thus shall ye say to David, the king desireth not any dowry, but an hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.

2.

And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son in law: and the days were not expired.

3.

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Wherefore David arose and went, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king's son in law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife."

Saul sent his servants to David to tell him he did not need the price of a bride (a dowry), because he wanted something else as a substitute. Really, he wanted nothing at all – it was just a ruse to get David killed. He said he wanted David to kill 100 Philistines because they were his enemies. Proof of the deaths would be in the form of their foreskins. This sounded reasonable to David, because to do it was to pour disdain, an insult, upon the enemy. As before, Saul did not want anything at all off David. He wanted him to fight often, to increase his chances of being killed.

Quickly, David took his company of soldiers and hunted down some Philistines, killing twice the number required! 200 foreskins were sent off to Saul. Probably with much inner hatred but public acclaim, Saul then gave his daughter to David (though he gave her to someone else after they were married!).

### Verses 28-30

1.

"And Saul saw and knew that the LORD (was) with David, and (that) Michal Saul's daughter loved him.

2.

And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually.

3.

Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, (that) David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by."

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To Saul's dismay his daughter really loved David. It was like salt rubbed into the wound that was his open sore of a heart. It made Saul even more afraid of David and with the fear came the greater resolve to kill him. Now, Saul was constantly thinking of ways to get rid of his new son-in-law.

The Philistines also continued in their fight, and David quitted himself properly and with wisdom, so that Saul could not fault him publicly. Rather, as time wore on David became a household name throughout Israel. The scene was now set for Saul's onslaught against the coming new king. He knew he would be deposed one day, but he did not know by whom!

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