

1 Samuel 18:6-20 - **Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Ephesians 6:10**

Have you ever wanted to launch a missile?

Someone makes you mad... and you want to launch... Someone gets on your last nerve... and you want to go off... Someone disrespects you thinking you're not worth their time... Someone puts you in a position where you're powerless... and you just want to do something...

The defining moment of Stanislav Petrov's life was the moment he decided to do nothing.

- Russian military duty officer // just a few hours into his shift // alarms blared, warning ICBM's launched from an American base.
- The alarms turned out to be in error.
- But can you imagine his sense of powerlessness... fear... anger even?
- Many officers might jump to take defensive measures, and this was indeed an assumption Petrov felt looming over him.
- But, for some reason, something didn't add up for Petrov: "After five nerve-racking minutes — electronic maps and screens were flashing as he held a phone in one hand and an intercom in the other, trying to absorb streams of incoming information — Colonel Petrov decided that the launch reports were probably a false alarm."
- Though Petrov was later reprimanded for not immediately reacting to the situation that confronted him, Petrov defended his inaction, pointing out that the alert system had been rushed to use and was likely inaccurate.
- **He said, "We are wiser than the computers"**

Perhaps. But sometimes it's hard to believe that we're actually wiser than computers. After all... in those moments of fear, powerlessness, anger... loss of control... wisdom can be hard to find.

- Today, we see two people: Saul and David. One has power but is losing his mind. The other is powerless but unfazed even in great danger.
- How do we develop wisdom in times of great loss, grief, anger?

In the middle of that chaos what are we called to do? What is our responsibility? How should our hearts respond? What are our options?

- **We can be strong in the Lord... or weak in ourselves. We can calmly trust the Lord or cling to fleeting control.**

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Ephesians 6:10

#1 Saul raves... David plays (v. 6-10)

6 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. 7 And the women sang to one another as they celebrated, "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

- Goliath's fall shook more than the ground. (FOBC)
- David draws such different reactions:
 - faithful love from Jonathan,
 - rejoicing celebration from the women,
 - murderous envy from Saul. (FOBC)
- Operation Elah is done... now comes the celebration
- Problem... the song was not meant to anger Saul... it was just a song!
- It was meant to point out their great teamwork!

8 And Saul was very angry, and this 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?" 9 And Saul eyed David from that day on.

- Saul's fears were misplaced but not irrational.
 - popularity gave David the potential to become a rival of Saul
 - But David didn't have any agenda... he's content throughout (16-19) to wait for God's timing for the next King.
 - In fact... later, he has an opportunity to kill David... and he just won't do it. He leaves politics up to the Lord (perhaps a good idea!)
- Saul becomes ever fixated on his fear... eying David from that day forward... rather than calling out to God.
 - He fixes his eye on the wrong place... looking down rather than up!
 - Saul becomes the "man who withdraws into himself,"
 - He fixates on a silly contrast ... an unintentional slight
 - He fixates on fear of David ... rather than a healthy fear of God

- David on the other hand... seems blissfully ignorant... full of faith and forward movement despite the crazy swirling around him.
 - Ironic that hatred for David appeared immediately after his great achievement in the Valley of Elah and his sudden elevation to prominence, but it is not coincidental. (REC)

William Blaikie writes: "It pleased God, in infinite love, to make David pass through a long period of hard discipline and salutary training for the office to which he was to be raised." (REC)

- And, even though David seems unaware... he certainly isn't... and even though the temperature keeps rising... the simple difference between David and Saul is where they put their eyes.
- David looks to God... Saul keeps looking at David

10 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.

- We witness Saul, driven by petty fears and jealousies, becomes a disintegrated personality, but most disturbing is the realization that the evil spirit which torments him and makes his plight even more desperate is the agent of ... YHWH. (Bravos)

1. What is this harmful spirit?

- Originally the Holy Spirit had empowered Saul
- Saul was a great leader for twenty years (1 Sam 14:47–48). (HSOTB)
- He went from shy shirking... to prominence and power
 - Even fighting great battles with the Lord on his side!
 - But now he has an evil spirit... what is that spirit?
 - Demonic power?
 - Jealousy personified?
 - It's best to take the text at it's word... an evil spirit... but that doesn't absolve Saul. He could have turned to the one who sent it... and begged for mercy. Instead he doubles down.
- But, I don't think the type of spirit is what bothers us... it the direction it comes from. "... a spirit from God rushed upon Saul".

2. There are two important points: COMFORT in God's control... and WARNING regarding God's wrath

- **Comfort**

- #1 The direction is actually comforting... what's the other option? " an evil spirit RANDOMLY came at Saul" .
 - To think that there is a place in this universe that is not ultimately under God's Kingly Rule is perhaps more frightening than the evil spirit
 - Knowing that God is in control ... calms the soul.
- #2 How do we see Goodness in God's sending of an evil spirit
 - A. Justice - This is the natural consequence of Saul's active choice to go his own way. Justice at the end of the day is God allowing us to have what we truly want. Saul wanted to be the king... the one ultimately in control.
 - We can't handle the chaos on our own... but if we want to try it... God will let us. This is the inevitable result

Keller: God only allows Satan to accomplish the very opposite of what he wants to accomplish. He only gives Satan enough rope to hang himself... God hates evil. He's against it. He didn't create a world in which evil existed. But He permits it. Why? He permits Satan only to bring evil into Job's life in such a way, in such an amount, that actually completely defeats Satan's real intention. Satan is only allowed by God to actually defeat himself and achieve the very opposite of what he wanted.

- **Warning**

- Jonathan Edwards uses the image of the Sun... saying that the Sun doesn't cause the darkness.
 - What causes the darkness? The Earth's rotation away from the Sun. In the same way, when we rotate away from God... evil is the inevitable result
- We should watch carefully against the appearance of an envying spirit within our own hearts. (REC)
 - We chiefly do this by taking the matter to God in prayer, leaving no room for such wickedness to settle in our hearts. (REC)
 - Not long previously, we were told that "Saul loved [David] greatly" (1 Sam. 16:21). Now, because of his own proud and insecure spirit, Saul begins to loathe and fear a young man who has been nothing but faithful in service to him. (REC)
 - Sin cherished in the heart will invariably express itself (REC)

- v. God's words and acts cannot be denied and opposed without dire consequences to those who hate what the Lord has established. (REC)

The distinction between Saul and his family reveals the difference between those who embrace God and His Messiah and those who reject Him Jealousy is a terrible emotion. Jealousy is the scab you keep picking only to have the wound fester. Jealousy is a hunger you simply cannot satisfy; the more you eat, the emptier you feel, and it forces you to feed it once again. Jealousy is a pain that will not abate; it persists and pounds us until we are pushed to the point of no return. Jealousy is a terrible and harsh master. Saul felt the awful talons of jealousy dig into his heart to prevent him from loving David and loving God's plan through David. (JD Greer)

- if Saul would not return to God and his blessing, through sincere repentance and renewed faith, it would not be because God was unwilling to receive him (REC)

So it is clear that there are activities in the unseen which are not explained to us. Every now and then the curtain between is drawn aside for a moment, and we see. But it is soon drawn back again. Only this we know: [from Psalm 138:3] "As soon as I pray, you answer me; you encourage me by giving me strength." Oh to use all disappointments, delays and trials of faith and patience... (Amy Carmichael)

3. Saul raves... but what is David doing? He plays the lyre! (He's like a teenager with headphones in... oblivious to what's going on)
- a. ACTUALLY... he's ministering to Saul.
 - b. You can imagine the attendants saying, "David, Saul's really bad today... can you play him a tune? Calm him down a bit"?
 - c. David's harp-playing would soothe Saul's frenzied condition, so that he would once again gain control of his emotions and actions (1 Sam 16:14–23).
 - d. Saul was David's enemy (29), but David was never Saul's enemy (IVPBBC)
 - e. David just played... peace and contentment day by day
 - f. He just keeps on keeping on...

"You cannot play the piano well unless you are singing within you." —Concert pianist Arthur Rubenstein (1887–1982)

- David plays the harp oblivious to the danger around him. How? His heart is signing!

In the middle of that chaos what are we called to do? What is our responsibility? How should our hearts respond? What are our options?

- We can be strong in the Lord... or weak in ourselves. We can calmly trust the Lord or cling to fleeting control.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Ephesians 6:10

#2 Saul's afraid... David evades (twice... makes you wonder why he stayed!) (v. 10b-12)

10b Saul had his spear in his hand. 11 And Saul hurled the spear, for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall." But David evaded him twice. 12 Saul was afraid of David because the Lord was with him but had departed from Saul.

1. What exactly is Saul afraid of?
 - a. He's afraid of losing the kingdom... sure...
 - b. But he's afraid because the Lord has departed from him...
 - c. Saul is in advanced rebellions against God
 - d. But his focus is on David who's not his real problem... God is Saul's real problem
 - e. David's popularity, the women's song, the Philistines... none of them is the issue
 - f. (REC) Saul's problem was his hostile relationship with the Lord. [The proof is] in verse 12, which says that Saul perceived that David was blessed by God in a way that he was not. Saul had set his will against the Lord and hardened his resentful heart against God's commands. God was therefore against Saul...
2. Saul had a magic approach to God... we learned that back in chapter 15. He tries to manipulate God (and God's prophet) to get military advantage.
 - a. And, when you try to control God it's like trying to control the ocean. Simply put... you're too small.
 - b. But it is that smallness that Saul (which Saul is afraid to embrace) that could actually save him
 - c. If he would be like John the Baptist and get smaller THEN Jesus could get bigger in his eyes...
 - d. This American Life (Ira Glass) asked people which super power they'd like to have... and what they'd do with it.
 - i. Most wanted invisibility so they could get sneaky ... steal a sweater... spy on someone
 - ii. Or to fly... so they could avoid traffic
 - iii. No one wanted power to do good for others... or to solve world problems.
 - iv. After all... (said one person) "If you had to rescue somebody from a burning building or something like that, you might catch on fire."

- v. When we have a magic approach to God... then it's all about us. Our needs, our wants, our desires
 - 1. Which may even be good desires and wants (Family isn't bad... but if it's first you'll kill your family) (Money isn't bad... but if it's first you'll never have enough) (Love isn't bad... but if you look for it from the wrong source you'll be left dry and hopeless)
 - 2. When those other things in our life don't live up to our desires, needs, expectations...
 - 3. Then like Saul... we throw spears. (Maybe not literally... but certainly the harm is the same)
- vi. Saul's afraid of the Lord's departure because he's afraid of losing self-focused power
- e. But here's the kicker... how do you get the Lord back? ... Repent... God didn't move... you did.
- 3. The irony is that the one who has the most to fear (NATURALLY / David) seems to come back for more... Look at v. 11

11 And Saul hurled the spear, for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall." But David evaded him _____ . (How many times??) TWICE

- a. How many times would you let someone throw a spear at you?
- b. 1 Time ... and I walk...
- c. Is David clueless? No... he's just faithful.
- d. Justin Martyr explained to the emperor in his First Apology, "You can kill, but not hurt us." (REC)
- e. savage official persecution of Christians in China not only has done nothing to slow the gospel's spread, but has actually spurred the expansion of the church (REC)
- f. David escapes his javelin throwing because God is with David and not with Saul (18:12). (Bravos)
- g. 688, A mighty fortress is our God

2 Did we in our strength confide, our striving would be losing; were not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing: dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he; Lord Sabbaoth, his Name, from age to age the same, and he must win the battle.

- The fact that this happens twice shows that David continued to serve Saul under oppressive circumstances— And, it inspired fear not in David but in Saul (REC)
 - This awareness ought to have caused repentance, but instead it only hardens Saul's mad resolve to end David's life. (REC)

In the middle of that chaos what are we called to do? What is our responsibility? How should our hearts respond? What are our options?

- **We can be strong in the Lord... or weak in ourselves. We can calmly trust the Lord or cling to fleeting control.**

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#3 Saul's fearful... David is loved (13-16)

13 So Saul removed him from his presence and made him a commander of a thousand. And he went out and came in before the people. 14 And David had success in all his undertakings, for the Lord was with him. 15 And when Saul saw that he had great success, he stood in fearful awe of him. 16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, for he went out and came in before them.

- 1. Saul intends to place David at the front of the troops... so that he'd be picked off by the enemy.
 - a. But what happened? v. 14... he had success
- 2. Saul's response... fearful awe
 - a. "If you fear God, then you fear nothing at all. But if you do not fear God then you fear everything."
- 3. Saul can't do anything... so he's dumbfounded... standing doing nothing. (SHOCK)
 - a. He's at the end of himself... and yet he still won't repent.
 - b. Saul resents God's judgment of him... But rather than seeking mercy from the Judge... he fights against the Almighty
 - c. His spiritual rebellion was leading him into shocking actions... never being satisfied with his kingship... his son... his daughters...
 - d. His standing in fearful awe is the end result of a heart that is not resting in God... there is no peace...

But, as the REC says, *Paul says, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Therefore, if Saul would not return to God and his blessing, through sincere repentance and renewed faith, it would not be because God was unwilling to receive him. Many of the greatest sinners in the Bible were accepted by God when they humbled themselves to him in faith. Paul thus wrote: "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). (REC)*

4. 14 And David had success in all his undertakings, for the LORD was with him.

- a. This passage reveals the third person who is present—the One whose actions dominate this chapter. (REC)
- b. The Lord was with David

- c. The Lord gave David success
- d. The Lord is the one providing David's success and blessings...
- e. David's real victory was his humble confidence and delight in the Lord, a blessing that God makes available to all who trust in him. (REC)

In the middle of that chaos what are we called to do? What is our responsibility? How should our hearts respond? What are our options?

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- Saul raves... David plays // Saul's afraid... David escapes // Saul's fearful... David is loved
 - Doesn't mean an easy path... David will have greater trials soon enough...
 - And, so did Jesus
 - Remember the taunting of the religious leaders as Jesus hung on the Cross
 - Mt. 27:43 >> He trusts in the Lord, Let God deliver him, now, if he desires him
- Jesus the greater David didn't just have words thrown at him...
 - Jesus didn't evade the spear... indeed, it was thrust into his side!
 - But Jesus did tell us how to walk in the middle of chaos...
 - ***Quoting David, Jesus says, (Psalm 31:5) Into your hands I commit my spirit // For you HAVE redeemed me, O Lord, Faithful God!***
- How does he say God HAS (Finished done) redeemed him
 - For David, it was trusting... not clinging
 - You see... you can't change by DOING MORE... Follow the rules better ... Read more books...
 - The only way to change is for the heart to love... And what is love but (at it's root) trust in someone else's care for us.
 - And, who else can you trust... but God?

Sermon Week 5 - David the Warrior - Notes

Theme of the entire book

- God is looking for a man after his own heart... and he will provide that man in Jesus.
- Ephesians 6:10-18
 - Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Ephesians 6:10
 - John 10:22-39

Textual Outline Lotz (Facts, Lessons, Voice) and Commentary

- 6-9 What more can he have but the kingdom... And Saul eyed David from that day on
- 10-11 A harmful spirit rushed Saul... he raved.. he thought he'd pin David... but David evaded
- 12-16 Saul was afraid, spirit departed, removed David / David had success, great success, all loved David... The Lord was with David... Saul just had fear

Fallen Condition Focus (Issues and Idols) state what sin or consequence of sin the passage and your sermon will address

- Who you gonna call? Ghost busters...

Propositional Statement and Outline

- In the middle of that chaos what are we called to do? What is our responsibility? How should our hearts respond? What are our options?
 - We can be strong in the Lord... or weak in ourselves.
 - Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Ephesians 6:10

In the midst of the waiting... the question must be asked, "How should we wait"?

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Ephesians 6:10

6-9 What more can he have but the kingdom... And Saul eyed David from that day on

6 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.

- Goliath's fall shook more than the ground. (FOBC)
- The immediate result of David's exploit against Goliath was a place at court, and a high army rank (IVPBBC)
- David draws such different reactions: faithful love from Jonathan, rejoicing celebration from the women, and murderous envy from Saul. (FOBC)

7 And the women sang to one another as they celebrated, 8 "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

- the Israelite women came out to welcome them home from Operation Elah (FOBC)
- The popular song that angered him was never intended to make him inferior to David; the numbers were not meant to be exact! (IVPBBC)
- the song was meant to declare what a fine team David and Saul made (IVPBBC)

(8) And Saul was very angry, and this 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?" 9 And Saul eyed David from that day on.

- Saul's fears were misplaced but not irrational. (IVPBBC)
 - popularity gave him the potential to become a rival of Saul
 - Saul is the older brother at the prodigal's party (Luke 15:25-32). (FOBC)
- Saul becomes ever fixated on his fear... eying David from that day forward... rather than calling out to God.
 - He fixes his eye on the wrong place... looking down rather than up!
 - Saul becomes the "man who withdraws into himself," the man who "is liable to ridicule, because the comic is largely made up of this very withdrawal." (Bravos)
 - Saul evidences a "certain mechanical inelasticity just where one would expect to find the wide-awake adaptability and the living pliability of a human being." It is quite funny when people who are addicted to gadgets fall victim to their working, willy-nilly of human control, because one buys gadgets to be in control, and the impulse boomerangs. In Jacques Tati's film *Mon Oncle*, the sophisticated technology of the modern house takes control of its owners. (Bravos)
 - Saul has become fixed on certain ideas: first he is "wroth" (18:8) about being adversely contrasted with David; he then becomes anxious that David will take the kingdom (18:8); and finally he becomes "afraid" (18:12, 15). Fixed on his fear and fixated with David ("Saul eyed David from that day and forward"; 18:9),

- David on the other hand... seems blissfully ignorant... full of faith and forward movement despite the crazy swirling around him.
 - It may be ironic that hatred for David appeared immediately after his great achievement in the Valley of Elah and his sudden elevation to prominence, but it is not coincidental. (REC)
 - William Blaikie writes: "It pleased God, in infinite love, to make David pass through a long period of hard discipline and salutary training for the office to which he was to be raised." (REC)

10-11 A harmful spirit rushed Saul... he raved.. he thought he'd pin David... but David evaded

10 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.

- We witness as Saul, driven by petty fears and jealousies, becomes a disintegrated personality, but most disturbing is the realization that the evil spirit which torments him and makes his plight even more desperate is the agent of ... YHWH. (Bravos)
 - Saul's paranoia concerning David was exacerbated by the frequent arrival of "an evil spirit from God" (v.10; see comment on 16:14). On more than one occasion in the past, Saul had received an accession of the Spirit of God, which "came upon him in power" (10:10; 11:6), but now the evil spirit "came forcefully upon" him (same Heb. verb in all cases). Whether good or evil, such accessions sometimes induced "prophesying," often resulting in an altered state of consciousness (see comment on 10:5-6), accompanied at times by bizarre behavior (19:23-24). (EBC)
- What is this harmful spirit?
 - The challenge is not the type of spirit... evil, harmful, jealous... the point is that it's bad.
 - The Spirit of God had overwhelmed Saul when he had assumed the role of king over the land (1 Sam 10:6, 10; 11:6). (HSOTB)
 - Saul was a great leader for twenty years (1 Sam 14:47-48). (HSOTB)
 - after Saul was anointed king, he immediately shed his previous shyness and reticence to be in the public eye (HSOTB)
 - what was the evil spirit mentioned here and in 1 Samuel 18:10 and 19:9? (HSOTB)
 - Josephus explained it as follows: "But as for Saul, some strange and demonical disorders came upon him, and brought upon him such suffocations as were ready to choke him" (HSOTB)
 - Keil and Delitzsch likewise attributed Saul's problem to demon possession (HSOTB)
 - was not merely an inward feeling of depression at the rejection announced to him, ... but a higher evil power, which took possession of him, and not only deprived him of his peace of mind, but stirred up the feelings, ideas, imagination, and thoughts of his soul to such an extent that at times it drove him even into madness. This demon is called "an evil spirit [coming] from Jehovah" because Jehovah sent it as a punishment. (HSOTB)
 - A second suggestion is that this evil spirit was a messenger, by analogy with the situation in 1 Kings 22:20-23. This unspecified messenger did his work by the permission of God. (HSOTB)
 - third suggestion is that this evil spirit was a "spirit of discontent" created in Saul's heart by God because of his continued disobedience. (HSOTB)
 - The type isn't what bothers us... it the direction it comes from. "... a spirit from God rushed upon Saul".
 - There are two important points: Comfort in God's control... and warning regarding God's wrath
 - Comfort
 - #1 The direction is actually comforting... what's the other option? " an evil spirit RANDOMLY came at Saul" .
 - To think that there is a place in this universe that is not ultimately under God's Kingly Rule is perhaps more frightening than the evil spirit
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 - A. Justice - This is the natural consequence of Saul's active choice to go his own way. Justice at the end of the day is God allowing us to have what we truly want. Saul wanted to be the king... the one ultimately in control.
 - We can't handle the chaos on our own... but if we want to try it... God will let us. This is the inevitable result

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completely defeats Satan's real intention. Satan is only allowed by God to actually defeat himself and achieve the very opposite of what he wanted.

- Warning
 - Jonathan Edwards uses the image of the Sun... saying that the Sun doesn't cause the darkness.

What causes the darkness? The Earth's rotation away from the Sun. In the same way, when we rotate away from God... evil is the inevitable result

- We should watch carefully against the appearance of an envying spirit within our own hearts. (REC)
- We chiefly do this by taking the matter to God in prayer, leaving no room for such wickedness to settle in our hearts. (REC)
- Not long previously, we were told that "Saul loved [David] greatly" (1 Sam. 16:21). Now, because of his own proud and insecure spirit, Saul begins to loathe and fear a young man who has been nothing but faithful in service to him. (REC)
- Sin cherished in the heart will invariably express itself (REC)
- God's words and acts cannot be denied and opposed without dire consequences to those who hate what the Lord has established. (REC)

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- if Saul would not return to God and his blessing, through sincere repentance and renewed faith, it would not be because God was unwilling to receive him (REC)

So it is clear that there are activities in the unseen which are not explained to us. Every now and then the curtain between is drawn aside for a moment, and we see. But it is soon drawn back again. Only this we know: [from Psalm 138:3] "As soon as I pray, you answer me; you encourage me by giving me strength." Oh to use all disappointments, delays and trials of faith and patience... (Amy Carmichael)

- David was playing his lyre because Saul was having one of his "spells" (v. 10; cf. 16:23). That may well have been how Saul's attendants talked about him at such times: "The king's really bad today, David." They may well have thought of Saul's condition as something not quite under his control (cf. 16:15). (FOBC)
 - David's harp-playing would soothe Saul's frenzied condition, so that he would once again gain control of his emotions and actions (1 Sam 16:14–23).
 - Saul was David's enemy (29), but David was never Saul's enemy (IVPBBC)

11 And Saul hurled the spear, for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall." But David evaded him twice.

- David seems unaware of his danger. (FOBC)
 - they were construed as outbursts of Saul's recurring madness. Dangerous but not malicious. (FOBC)
 - It says much about David's humility that after his public triumph in slaying Goliath, and despite the praise of the nation, he remained in humble service to Saul, continuing to play the lyre in his court. (REC)
- It is no accident when words are thrown at spouses or children that resemble Saul's weapon hurled against David. How much emotional pain is suffered in homes today by those who permit their minds to dwell in darkness! (REC)
 - The most important thing for us to realize about Saul is that he is an advanced and concentrated portrait of man in rebellion to God. Saul is just like people today who focus their resentment and frustration on other people when their real problem is God. Saul's true problem was not David's popularity, the foolish song of the women, or even the Philistines. Saul's problem was his hostile relationship with the Lord. We see proof of this in verse 12, which says that Saul perceived that David was blessed by God in a way that he was not. Saul had set his will against the Lord and hardened his resentful heart against God's commands. God was therefore against Saul, as seen by the "harmful spirit" that fed into the king's jealous rage (1 Sam. 18:10). (REC)
- The episode with his hurled spear—which, remarkably, happened twice, indicating that David continued to serve Saul under oppressive circumstances—inspired fear not in David but in Saul (REC)

- This awareness ought to have caused repentance, but instead it only hardened Saul's mad resolve to end David's life. (REC)
- Justin Martyr explained to the emperor in his First Apology, "You can kill, but not hurt us." (REC)
 - savage official persecution of Christians in China not only has done nothing to slow the gospel's spread, but has actually spurred the expansion of the church (REC)
 - Saul sought evil for David, the more he feared him. Why? Because the promise of Psalm 121 was true for David, as it is true for all others who are owned by God through saving faith: "The LORD is your keeper ... The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life" (Ps. 121:5–7) (REC)
- David escapes his javelin throwing because God is with David and not with Saul (18:12). (Bravos)
- "You cannot play the piano well unless you are singing within you." —Concert pianist Arthur Rubenstein (1887–1982)
 - David plays the harp oblivious to the danger around him. How? His heart is signing!

12-16 Saul was afraid, spirit departed, removed David / David had success, great success, all loved David...

The Lord was with David... Saul just had fear

12 Saul was afraid of David because the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul.

- The reader sees both Yahweh's favor and Saul's malice; he sees that David is the object of both Yahweh's goodness and Saul's envy. (FOBC)
- There are four references to David's success (vv. 5, 14, 15, 30), three assertions that Yahweh is "with" David (vv. 12, 14, 28), and six uses of some form of the verb to love (Hebrew, 'ā hab) with David as the object (vv. 1, 3, 16, 20, 22, 28) (FOBC)
- Saul, however, he fears and stands in awe of David; the text says so—three times (vv. 12, 15, 29). (FOBC)

13 So Saul removed him from his presence and made him a commander of a thousand. And he went out and came in before the people.

- Saul's purpose, however, was sinister: He intended to place David at the head of the front rank of troops, where he would be sure to be killed by the Philistines (v.17; cf. David's similar treatment of Uriah in 2 Sam 11:14–15). (EBC)

14 And David had success in all his undertakings, for the LORD was with him.

- Here is where Yahweh's favor appears most brightly yet most quietly—in his protection of David in danger of which David was unaware. Chapter 18 contains two keynotes side by side: Yahweh's favor and Saul's malice; but the former is stronger than the latter. Was this written only for David's sake? Might it mean to suggest that this quiet protection of Yahweh is the heritage of others among his servants? Might it imply that much of Yahweh's protection is completely unknown to you? Maybe you should sit down again with Mary and ponder these things in your heart (Luke 2:19). (FOBC)
- This passage reveals the third person who is present—the One whose actions dominate this chapter. (REC)
 - We have considered Saul as a classic picture of the mad anxiety that accompanies life without God. (REC)
 - David, on the other hand, demonstrates the humility that leads to God's protection and blessing. (REC)
 - Finally, we are compelled to see God himself as the prime actor in these events. Thus, David shows us what a difference it makes to be right with God. Whereas Saul is driven through fear and envy into madness, David is led through success to the high esteem of God's people. (REC)
 - We become right with God not by fulfilling a quest or by doing enough good works, but by accepting his mercy as revealed in Jesus Christ. (REC)
 - Psalm 1 says of the man of faith: "In all that he does, he prospers" (v. 3). Jesus taught, "Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit" (John 15:5). Jesus is the blessed Son of God in whom sinners are made to prosper spiritually, bearing good fruit to the glory of God. (REC)
 - When it comes to their sins, believers are distinguished from King Saul in that they confess and repent of their sins. In later years, when David fell into great sin, he was willing to repent and thus had his relationship with God restored. "I have sinned against the LORD," he confessed, and God's messenger replied, "The LORD ... has put away your sin" (2 Sam. 12:13). (REC)
- If we put together all the sides of the portrait presented in this chapter, we see the strongest motivation for each of us to seek the Lord. Saul had his will set against God. He was unwilling to obey God's commands and resented God's judicial opposition in his life. The result of this hardened attitude to God produced the furthest thing from happiness, peace, joy, and success for Saul. Even the things that he possessed—most notably the kingship—he could not enjoy, seeing dangerous threats all around. Moreover, as he cultivated wicked passions, he was driven by God further into madness (1 Sam. 18:10). Saul then discovered that his self-will and spiritual rebellion led him to perform shocking actions. In a similar way, men and women today who live without the blessing of God on their lives do not find satisfaction in life, and they often find themselves being led by sin into behaviors they once had scarcely thought themselves capable of engaging in. Like Saul, their true problem is with God. They

are not at peace with God and God is not at peace with them, so they will not and cannot find peace with themselves or anyone else. (REC)

- Paul says, “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). Therefore, if Saul would not return to God and his blessing, through sincere repentance and renewed faith, it would not be because God was unwilling to receive him. Many of the greatest sinners in the Bible were accepted by God when they humbled themselves to him in faith. Paul thus wrote: “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost” (1 Tim. 1:15). (REC)

15 And when Saul saw that he had great success, he stood in fearful awe of him.

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

- David’s military exploits, possible only because the Lord was “with him” (v.14), bound him all the more closely to “Israel and Judah” (v.16; for this phrase see comment on 11:8) in covenant relationship (“loved”;) (EBC)
- David’s real victory was his humble confidence and delight in the Lord, a blessing that God makes available to all who trust in him. (REC)
 - David depicts for us another man who was hated without a cause and who was not only unjustly threatened but also unjustly put to death by his own people. David’s greater Son, Jesus Christ, achieved a victory over enemies greater than the Philistines, conquering the evil forces of Satan, sin, and death. In his victory, received by faith alone, we have every blessing, starting with the forgiveness of our sins. (REC)
 - We are told three times in this chapter that the Lord was with David, and this made all the difference. Jesus is called Immanuel, “God with us,” and he promises to be with all who look to him in faith (Heb. 13:5). (REC)
 - With David, we therefore praise Christ, not merely saying that he has slain thousands or ten thousands, but also singing, “Bless the LORD, O my soul, ... who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy” (Ps. 103:2–4). (REC)