

## **“When Country Music Changes Things” (1 Samuel 18:1-30)**

### **Introduction:-**

We may begin today by asking, what can possibly happen immediately after the story of David and Goliath? In our modern times, it is a bit like asking the question, what can now possibly happen immediately after the incident of 9/11 in America? And here we wait with bated breath to see what will now happen to Israel's new champion, David, after emerging from obscurity, into the spotlight of a new fame within Saul's army. But as we will learn, country music will change things for both Saul and David, because when they were returning from the Philistine campaign, the Israelite women came out to welcome them home from operation Elah, and they danced and sang to the lyrics of the song, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David, his tens of thousands" (verse 7). In voicing these words, they were not trying to be political, nor were they seeking to make a dig at Saul. They were celebrating a great victory. But, as it will turn out, Saul will liken himself to the Elder brother at the Prodigal's party in Luke 15:25-32, left outside in the dark, whilst the fattened calf with all its privileges will be poured out upon the younger Prodigal David. Country music is great, and in 1969 it even changed the fortunes and influence of Tamworth forever, in northern NSW where I was born, as the acknowledged capital of country and western music in Australia. And now a big golden guitar greets you as you enter Tamworth from the New England Highway. But Saul's ear on this occasion for country music goes far beyond that of beat and melody, soprano and alto, and felt that the women's talents and lyrics would have been better spent on a dirge for a funeral as indicated by his response at verses 8-9. And so let us now examine this passage a little closer, in order to see how country music changes things.

### **1. First we learn that Lyrics do matter (verses 1-9)**

The first five verses of this passage begins on a high note, which appears positive for all, including Saul himself, David, Jonathan, and Saul's army. David is naturally the centre of this section, and Saul was happy to keep David within his court, and whatever mission that Saul sent David on, David was so successful, that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This also pleased all the troops, and Saul's officers as well. At this point everyone loves David! And so, behind the scenes, in God's plan, David is the rising star, whilst Saul is falling. This is a recurring pattern in 1 Samuel, and is first seen in the earlier chapters, where Samuel is presented as rising, whilst Eli and his priestly family are falling. But here in this passage, it is Jonathan, Saul's son, who also sees clearly the Lord's higher purpose for David, and as a result, he becomes one in spirit with David, and loved him as himself. Perhaps this love for David was also fired by their similar exploits against the common enemy of the Philistines, when Jonathan alone, together with his armour-bearer, attacked and defeated a Philistine garrison of some twenty men (1 Samuel 14:1-14). And Jonathan made a covenant with David, covering life and death itself, symbolized through the giving of his robe, tunic, and even his sword, bow, and belt. In this action, as Saul's firstborn son, Jonathan gives up all hereditary rights to the throne, symbolizing that David is Saul's true and legitimate successor to the throne. No one in the near east would do that. Rather, rival claimants to the throne would be eliminated! But only faith and vision could do that. The act contrasts with Saul, who earlier held on to Samuel's robe when he wanted continued legitimation, even though the Lord had rejected him as king (1 Samuel 15:26-28). And as followers of Christ, faith causes us to surrender the rights that we pretend to have, over against the Christ who is our true king. This is true freedom, when people today are crying out for one's own rights and freedom. Jesus reminds us in Psalm

110:1, that even David himself by faith called Jesus “Lord”, and not son (Luke 20:41-44). And let us be reminded of Jesus’ words at Matthew 23:11-12 when he says: “The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself, will be exalted.” Finally in this section, the song of the women is reminiscent of the women’s response at the Red Sea (Exodus 15:20-21). But Saul misinterprets the lyrics of the song – thousands are not as good as tens of thousands – Suddenly envy and jealousy give way to anger and pride. Is that not the toxic equation of those out of touch with God’s Spirit of love and grace? Suddenly Saul fears for his throne, and from that time onward “keeps his eye” on David. He now withdraws into a private world, filled with anger, jealousy, envy, and pride.

## **2. Secondly we learn that David cannot be so neatly divorced from his music (verses 10-16)**

If the first day was the return from battle, the sting of the song, concluding with Saul’s jealous eye, the second day now brings the internal world of Saul out into the open. In 1 Samuel chapter 16 David’s harp playing had brought relief to the tormented Saul. Now however, the harp player cannot be so neatly divorced from his music. For when David was playing the harp as he usually did before, Saul’s negative prophetic response on this occasion, led Saul to throw his spear twice at David in order to kill him. On a previous occasion, the prophetic response was an indication that God’s Spirit rested upon Saul at 1 Samuel 10:10, but now, this is viewed negatively, as a sign that God’s Spirit had departed from Saul, and that he no longer walked in fellowship with God. Further, on this occasion, David would have had no reason to suspect that Saul’s spear-throwing had any murderous intent, but would rather be seen as outbursts of Saul’s recurring madness. On the other hand, it is feasible that Saul saw David’s avoidance of death as a further sign that God was with David and not with Saul, and that this only added to Saul’s fear (verse 12). In a calmer moment, Saul’s response was to send David away in command of a military unit, hoping that he might be killed, but in everything that he did, he had great success, because the Lord was with him. This led to two responses: Saul was afraid of him (verse 15). But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he led them in their campaigns (verse 16), which would reinforce Saul’s fear that the support of the populace, as well as that of the Lord, would be taken from him, and given to David. This section reminds us of our Lord’s words to Peter after Jesus had predicted by what death Peter would glorify God at John 21:15-19. Peter was then more concerned about the future of the Beloved disciple who had followed Jesus up this point, with his words, “Lord, what about him?” To which Jesus then replied in John 21:22-23. “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.” God has a specific plan for each of his servants in life, and like Jonathan and David, we must make sure that we are walking in the particular path that God has tailored made for each one of us. This can only be jeopardized as we direct our eyes like Saul, onto others.

## **3. Finally, we learn that attempts to thwart God’s plans only end in failure (verses 17-30).**

In this final section, Saul’s obsessive plotting to get rid of David become increasingly bizarre. He first decides to follow through, though belatedly, on his promise that the national champion should marry his eldest daughter Merab. But for whatever reasons, Saul finally reneged on this arrangement, possibly because of David’s humble approach in verse 18, and as a result, gives his eldest daughter to another man. This was a case of double-dealing,

because she was promised to David. However, Merab's marriage to Adriel is ill-fated, for later on the Gibeonites kill all five of their sons (2 Samuel 21:5-9). But Saul was pleased when he was told that his daughter Michal was in love with David. This is striking, because it is the only reference in Old Testament narrative to a woman loving a man. But Saul intended this marriage to be a "snare" against David. The word "snare" is used in Deuteronomy 7:6 to describe idolatry, and given the reference to Michal's idols at 1 Samuel 19:13, a religious snare is possible. But there, Michal uses the idol to help with David's escape from his house. And so the snare became a means of escape for David!! Finally, when David pleads his difficulty to meet the bride price for Michal, Saul had no problem in suggesting 100 Philistine foreskins, hoping that on the law of averages, David will lose his life in the attempt. David took up the challenge, and together with his men, brought back 200 Philistine foreskins. Then Saul no doubt in utter frustration, gave his younger daughter to David in marriage. In the final two verses of this section, Saul becomes more aware that David's star is on the rise, for the Lord is with him, and that his daughter Michal loved David. As a result, Saul becomes even more afraid of David, and he remained his enemy for the rest of his days.

### **Conclusion:-**

We began our message today by talking about country music which changes things. In our passage today, there are two important encouragements for Christian believers. The first is that God cannot be thwarted, and will achieve His plans for those who love Him, regardless. Proverbs 19:21 says: "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that will prevail." Further, Paul at Philippians 1:6 puts it this way: "Being confident of this, that he that has begun a good work in you, will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ." God will also hold to account those who resist His will and cause harm to others in the process. The second encouragement from David's story where the Lord's favour shines most brightly, yet most quietly, is in His protection of David in dangers of which David is often unaware. This is also the lot of God's servants wherever they are found. Might this also imply that much of God's protection is something that we are not fully aware of from day to day? And yet with David, we can truly say, that the Lord is with us! We dwell under the shadow of His wings. May God bless us with these wonderful promises today from His Word. Amen.