

The Evil Eye
1 Samuel 18:1-16

The Nature of True Friendship

People of God, every one of us needs friends. Yet in the age of social media, the word friend has lost its meaning. Online, you can "befriend" someone you've never met or shared life with. Many boast of hundreds of "friends," yet remain deeply lonely—connected to everyone, but known by no one. Technology gives us communication, but not communion; connection, but not covenant.

True friendship—biblical friendship—is something entirely different. It is rooted in covenant loyalty, forged in shared purpose, mutual trust, and a common faith in the Lord our God.

The Friendship of David and Jonathan

Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the friendship of David and Jonathan. After David's victory over Goliath, "the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."

This bond was understandable because David and Jonathan had much in common: they were both courageous warriors who professed profound faith in the Lord. Both had initiated attacks against the Philistines by

faith that the Lord would fight for them, which led to great victory for Israel.

That love expressed itself in covenant—which simply gives love a structure and form. Jonathan swore faithfulness to David, sealing it by giving him his robe, his armor, and his sword—the symbols of his royal inheritance. Jonathan, the crown prince, gladly laid down his claim to the throne and honored God's anointed king.

The text describes Jonathan's love twice as, "he loved him as his own soul." Love is at the heart of biblical friendship. The word for "love" in 1 Samuel 18 is translated elsewhere as "friend." Proverbs 18:24 – "There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Proverbs 27:6 – "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." Proverbs 17:17 – "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." A friend is one who loves, and the one who loves is a friend.

Women tend to bond face to face, through shared feeling. But men bond shoulder to shoulder, through shared mission. True brotherhood is formed in labor, struggle, and battle together.

And this friendship between David and Jonathan points us beyond itself—to Christ, the true and greater Friend. Jesus said, "No longer do I call you servants, but friends." Like

Jonathan, Christ stripped Himself of His royal glory and clothed us with His righteousness. He bound Himself to us in an everlasting covenant sealed with His blood.

Because Christ has made us His friends, we are called to be friends like Him—men who stand shoulder to shoulder in battle, who keep covenant even at great cost, who love one another as your own soul.

Christian men, you need a band of brothers—men who will fight beside you, build you up, pray for you, and hold you fast in the faith once delivered to the Saints.

The Contrast: Saul's Hatred of David

But there is a stark contrast revealed in the rest of the chapter. Everyone loves David—Jonathan, Saul's officers, the people, Israel and Judah, Saul's daughter Michal. The only person who does not love David is Saul. And Saul's hatred of David is going to be the driving narrative plot for the rest of 1 Samuel.

David's Wisdom and Success

Now why does Saul hate David? Because David is faithful to the Word of God above all else. Verse 5 says David behaved wisely, and Saul set him over the men of war. The word wisely is also translated as successful.

Joshua 1 says - "Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you... This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success."

David's wisdom and his success in battle came from one source—his faithful obedience to the Word of the Lord. The Spirit of God rested upon him. He was a man of the Book, meditating on the Law day and night. His success was not luck or skill alone; it was the fruit of covenant faithfulness.

This same promise is fulfilled perfectly in the Lord Jesus Christ, the true and greater David. And because we belong to Him, it remains true for all who are in Christ. When we walk in step with the Spirit, when we love God's Word and obey it with a willing heart, the Lord grants wisdom for our steps and blessing upon our work.

The Song That Sparked Envy

David's success was first celebrated when he returned from killing Goliath. The women had come out of the cities of

Israel playing the tambourines and other instruments, dancing and singing David's praise.

This is reminiscent of Exodus 15, when Miriam joined with the other women to celebrate the Exodus through the Red Sea with dancing and tambourines and singing a song: "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea."

The Philistines were related to the Egyptians, and Goliath wanted to enslave Israel again, but David, a new Moses, delivered Israel from the Serpent. So the women come out with tambourines and dancing and singing again, saying: "Saul killed his thousands and David his ten thousands."

Upon hearing this, Saul became exceedingly angry. Remember, Saul is all about appearances. He is concerned above all about his reputation, what other people think of him. To him, being ascribed only thousands slain, while David is ascribed ten thousands, showed that David was going to win the people's hearts. So he rightly deduced that David was destined for the throne, saying, "What more can he have but the kingdom?" So Saul eyed David from that day forward.

The Danger of Reputation Over Righteousness

Saul was filled with envy and jealousy. He wanted the glory and the preeminence. But David was not concerned about reputation. David just wanted to faithfully serve the Lord. And when he did that, he grew in favor with both God and man.

And this is an important lesson. People who are so concerned about reputation will be continually dragged around by the nose by that desire. Their guiding principles are no longer, what does the Word of God say? What do the confessions and standards of my church say? Instead they give themselves over to being consumed by a desire to have a good reputation. And usually, when you obsess over what people think of you, you begin to look with suspicion on others who you think are contributing to your bad reputation.

The Evil Eye of Saul

This language in verse 8 about Saul being very angry is an echo from the story of Cain and Abel. Cain was very angry at his brother, that he was being shown favor and Cain was not. And so Cain killed his brother Abel.

When Saul heard the song, it "displeased" him, which literally means, "was evil in his eyes." So Saul "eyed" David from that day forward.

Saul had the evil eye. He looked on David with suspicion and envy because he was so concerned about how David's good reputation would ruin his own standing. David was faithful and spent his days mediating on the law of God. But Saul would spend his days and nights meditating on David and how to kill him.

Matthew 6:22-23 says: "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness."

Let this be a lesson to us. If we are full of suspicion against other members of the Church, and against faithful ministers we are guilty of having an evil eye.

Saul's Descent into Madness

Saul developed an evil eye. And what happened? The next day the distressing and evil spirit from God came over him and he "prophesied in the house." Saul is prophesying again, but this time according to the evil spirit and not the Spirit of God—the insane ramblings of a madman, consumed with envy and suspicion. So, in his Satan inspired fit of rage he tried to kill David, throwing a spear at him twice.

But though David was chased away by Saul's spear, ironically it was Saul who was afraid, because the LORD was with David, but had departed from Saul.

Therefore Saul removed him from his presence and made him captain over a thousand. And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the Lord was with him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.

A Warning to the Church

People, of God, let me say to you plainly, that I know there are those among you who are doing this very thing right now. You are not meditating on the law of God, nor are you looking to walk in His ways. You are meditating on other people, and you are examining their words and actions, and you are interpreting them from a hermeneutic of suspicion. You create narratives in your mind, and you interpret things that happen to fit a false narrative, and you paint the other person as evil, and thus deserving of your wrath and ill will.

So, you treat them with unkindness. You treat them with suspicion. You gossip and slander about people, but you never do the Christian thing and talk to them personally about your supposed grievances. You only let

misunderstanding and hatred develop in your soul. This is an evil thing, and if you do not stop it, it will destroy this church, and it will destroy your soul.

A suspicious spirit and evil eye spreads like leaven; it poisons the air we all breathe and drives out the Spirit of peace from the church. You cannot have both the Spirit of Christ and the spirit of suspicion ruling in the same heart, and the same Church. One will cast out the other.

The Example of Christ's Opponents

The Lord Jesus Himself condemned the people of His day for this very sin—the sin of having an evil eye. They judged by appearances and not by righteous judgment. In John 7, when Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath, they accused Him of having a demon. Think of that—He restored a man to health, and they called it the work of the devil. And while they were actively plotting His death, He confronted them about their murderous intent, and they denied it—though the crowd knew and said, "Is this not He whom they seek to kill?"

The people saw an act of mercy and called it evil. They looked upon the Lord of glory and called Him demonic. But in doing so, they revealed what spirit they were of. Their eyes were darkened, and their hearts corrupted.

The Danger of Self-Deception

And, beloved, the same danger lies close at hand for us. When we look on others in the Church with suspicion, when we assign evil motives to faithful actions, when we view our brothers and sisters through the lens of envy or fear, or when we are quick to listen to outside voices that slander one of our members or our ministers, we walk in the steps of Saul, not of David. The Pharisees thought they were defending the honor of God when they opposed Christ. Saul thought he was protecting his throne when he hunted David. Both were deceived. And both lost their kingdoms.

When our hearts are set on the wrong things—our own name, our own image, our own sense of control—we end up doing false obedience in the name of true obedience. We convince ourselves we are purifying the Church, when in truth we are tearing it apart. Pride dresses itself as zeal, and dissension disguises itself as concern. But the fruit betrays the root. Suspicion breeds division. The evil eye blinds the heart and justifies us attacking our own.

A Call to Repentance

So I say to you, as your pastor and as your brother in Christ—stop it. Stop keeping a record of wrongs. Stop

building your case against your fellow believers. Love does not keep a record of wrongs. Throw away your secret files you have on other people in the church. Stop whispering your grievances to others instead of speaking truth in love directly to the person you have a complaint against. If you have a complaint, go to the person directly, and not to 5 other people. If you refuse to go to the person and you instead keep talking bad about a member of our Church, you will be guilty of gossip and slander.

Also, there are those among you who are going online and subposting. Subposting means posting about someone on social media without directly mentioning them by name, often to express criticism or other negative sentiments. But it is usually done in a vague or oblique way that gives you plausible deniability. But those people who you are close to, who you gossip with, know what you are talking about. This too is evil, and it is divisive. Stop it.

Repent of the evil eye. Turn your gaze back to Christ, and meditate on His word. You have duties and obligations to your family to teach them to read and love the word of God. Why are you instead acting like Saul and meditating on others in order to destroy them? Why are you persecuting good Christian people in our church through unchristian bullying and unkindness? You are destroying

your soul and this church by building narrative cases against other faithful Christians.

Where the eye is pure, the whole body will be full of light. Individually and corporately. But where there is suspicions and an evil eye, there will only be strife and division in the body of Christ.

Walking in the Spirit

The Apostle Paul warns in Galatians 5 that the works of the flesh are evident: enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy—that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

In contrast, look again at David in 1 Samuel 18. Though Saul envied him, David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the Lord was with him. He did not repay suspicion with suspicion, or slander with slander. He continued to serve, to fight, to lead, and to love. The people saw it—they loved

him because he went out and came in before them. The Spirit that rested on David was a Spirit of humility and faithfulness, not fear and resentment.

That is the Spirit of Christ—the true Son of David—who, when reviled, did not revile in return; when accused falsely, remained faithful to the Father's will. And that same Spirit now dwells in His people.

Conclusion: Choose Your Spirit

So, Church of God, see to it that you walk not in the evil spirit of Saul, but in the Spirit of David—ultimately, the Spirit of Christ. Put away the evil eye. Lay down the hermeneutic of suspicion. Stop meditating on others behavior, and start meditating on the Word of God again. Let your judgment be righteous, not superficial. Let your love be sincere, not self-serving.

Remember what I said at the beginning: true friendship is rooted in covenant loyalty, forged in shared purpose and common faith. Jonathan loved David as his own soul, and that love was expressed in covenant faithfulness. But Saul eyed David with suspicion and envy. Jonathan built his friend up; Saul tore him down. Jonathan gave David his robe and armor; Saul hurled spears at him.

Christian men and women, you must choose: Will you be a Jonathan to your brothers and sisters in Christ, or will you be a Saul? Will you love your fellow believers as your own soul, standing shoulder to shoulder with them in the battle, or will you meditate on their faults and build cases against them? Will you bind yourself in covenant loyalty to the body of Christ, or will you divide it with the evil eye of suspicion?

The same Spirit that rested on David and Jonathan—the Spirit of Christ—dwells in you. That Spirit does not gossip, does not slander, does not keep records of wrongs. That Spirit loves at all times, wounds faithfully when needed, but sticks closer than a brother.

If we walk in that Spirit—humble, wise, and faithful to the Word of God, and not the fear of man, then the Lord will be with us, and we too will find favor with both God and man. But if we give ourselves over to the fear of man, to envy, suspicion, and slander, then we will share Saul's fate, and we will have our kingdom removed from us. Choose today which spirit will rule in you, and which kind of friend you will be to these your brothers and sisters in Christ. Amen.