

I. The Setting: Saul's Jealous Manipulation

People of God, we are now entering into the serious drama that characterizes the conflict between Saul and David. We saw last week that Saul's pride and jealousy moved him to try and kill David twice with the spear. Saul developed the evil eye, meditating on David's actions, while David continued to meditate on the law of the Lord and walk wisely wherever he went. As a result he has success and won the people's hearts.

Now remember that Saul promised that whoever killed Goliath would get his daughter in marriage. David defeated the giant, and now Saul has to make good on his word.

So Saul offers David his daughter Merab to David. But it is a trap. Saul knows that David, as a loyal servant, cannot refuse the king's offer without dishonoring him.

And Saul also knows David is a poor shepherd with no means to pay a royal bride price. By offering him the hand of his daughter, Saul places David in a bind—David cannot decline without seeming ungrateful, and he cannot accept without facing impossible terms.

So Saul proposes that the “bride price” be David’s continued service in war, hoping that in fighting the Lord’s battles, David will fall by the sword of the Philistines.

Saul’s behavior here is strikingly reminiscent of Laban’s treatment of Jacob, as both men were crafty and manipulative, and willing to use their own daughters as pawns to serve their own ambitions.

Laban promised Jacob his daughter Rachel as a reward for seven years of labor, but when the time came, he gave him Leah instead. He then forced Jacob into another seven years of servitude for Rachel.

Likewise, Saul promised his daughter Merab to David, on the condition that he “fight the Lord’s battles.” David fulfilled that call faithfully, yet Saul withheld the bride and gave her to another man. Only later did Saul offer Michal to David, provided that he strike down a hundred Philistines and give him their foreskins.

The parallels are deliberate and telling. Both Jacob and David are righteous sons laboring under the hand of a deceitful father-in-law. They both suffer wrong, yet they gain blessing through patience and endurance. Both were cheated by those who should have honored them, and yet both emerged richer for it. Laban’s trickery ultimately

served to increase Jacob's flocks and sons. And as Jacob increased Laban decreased.

Likewise, Saul's scheming ultimately advanced David's rise and popularity among the people and solidified his future royal house, while Saul's spiraled downward into oblivion. What man meant for harm, God turned into blessing.

The Snare of Idolatry

So Merab is given to Adriel. But then people start noticing how Michal has been looking at David, and word gets out that she loves David. Saul is told this, and he sees another opportunity for his wicked scheme. He thought: **“I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him”** (v. 21).

The king's heart continues to plot wickedness.

David is the Blessed man of Psalm 1, whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night. This again is what gives him great success and wisdom.

But Saul is described in Psalm 2, when it says: Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed.

The word that is translated as “meditates” in Psalm 1 is translated as “plot” in Psalm 2. Again showing the difference between David and Saul. David meditates on the law and Saul meditates and plot against the LORD’s Anointed.

What is the plot that Saul has devised against the LORD’s Anointed David? He is going to use his daughter Michal as snare for him. Saul is going to send David to fight against the Philistines in order to get his daughter in marriage. And hopefully he will get killed in the process. Just like the first time with Merab. This time Saul is going to send David on mission impossible, to collect 100 Philistine foreskins as the bride price for Michal.

But there is another aspect of this snare that is also worth considering.

The term “snare” is theologically significant. It is used three times in the Torah to describe the dangers of idols and the idol worshiping Canaanites.

Ex. 23:33

³² You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. ³³ They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.”

Perhaps Saul was spiritually astute enough to recognize the power of a seductive woman. His daughter Michal had household idols (1 Sam. 19:16), and so perhaps with some pressure, she could lead David astray from the LORD.

Then, he would be sent out to fight against the LORD's enemies, all while being guilty of idolatry against the LORD. And in that case, David would be found fighting against the LORD himself, and he would come to a disastrous end. Which is quite diabolical.

And this teaches us something important about how it is that people get caught up in idolatry. It works like a snare, like a trap. The idol always holds out something you want. No hunter sets an empty trap. Instead, he lays down bait—something appealing, something that draws the prey in. The animal steps closer, reaches for what it desires, and in that moment of indulgence the trap springs shut.

Eve saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food, delightful to the eyes, and able to make one wise. That's how idols work—they promise delight, beauty, wisdom, and pleasure. They appeal to the heart's deepest desires. But once you reach for them, they take hold of you. Idolatry always begins with desire and ends in death.

The real danger of sin and temptation lies not simply in the idols out there, but in the disordered desires within us that crave them. As James says, “*Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death.*” That is the snare. Desire conceives. Sin grows. Death follows.

So we must learn to recognize the desires in us that can ensnare the soul. The Church Fathers gave us a list of the **Seven Deadly Sins**—each one springing from a good desire but when twisted by sin produces something ghastly.

Lust begins with the God-given longing for love and intimacy, but it turns that holy desire inward. It wants passion without purity, pleasure without promise, union without covenant.

Gluttony begins with the natural desire for delight and thanksgiving, but it makes the appetite a god. What should lead to gratitude of heart, soon turns the senses into slaves.

Greed begins with the desire for provision and stewardship, but it becomes a hunger for more. The heart no longer trusts God to provide; it bows to money, and possession and calls it security.

Sloth begins with the rightful desire for peace and rest, but it becomes a rejection of the gift of work. Instead of resting in God, the slothful man resists God and rests in himself. He wants comfort without calling, Sabbath without service.

Wrath begins with the desire for justice, and righteousness, but it grows into vengeance. The wrathful man stops trusting God to make things right, and takes judgment into his own hands. What began as zeal for righteousness turns to a fire that devours his enemies and himself.

Envy begins with the desire for goodness and excellence, but it turns admiration into bitterness. The envious heart cannot rejoice when others are blessed; it would rather see other people destroyed than to see them receive blessing and praise.

Pride, the oldest sin of them all, begins with the desire for glory. Man was made to share in the glory of God—but pride wants the glory for itself. It seeks to be worshiped rather than to worship, to dominate rather than to serve.

Every idol grows out of these deadly roots. Each one whispers to the heart, “You deserve this.” But behind that whisper is a snare—baited with desire, waiting to enslave. The answer is not to kill desire, but to bring it back under

the rule of God. Only when our desires are ordered by love for Him can we walk free from the snares of idolatry.

II. The Bride Price: The Cost of Honor

Saul, still scheming, decided to press his plan once more. He instructed his servants to approach David privately and flatter him. Say, “Behold, the king has delight in you, and all his servants love you. Now become the king’s son-in-law.” It was all a setup.

When David heard the offer, he was genuinely humbled. He told them that marrying into the royal family was no small matter, especially for a man of such low estate. He had no fortune, no inheritance, nothing to offer as a bride price for a king’s daughter.

His answer was passed along to Saul, who pretended to make things simple. He said he would require no dowry—only that David prove his loyalty by striking down a hundred Philistines and returning with their foreskins.

Obviously, it was another attempt on David’s life. Saul’s hope was that David would fall in battle, and the problem would take care of itself. Notice the subtle shift in Saul’s words: it was no longer “fight the Lord’s battles,” but “avenge the king’s enemies.”

And that is what happens when you place yourself at the center of all things – you put yourself in the position of God.

David, however, was undaunted by the challenge, and took it up gladly. Though he had no wealth to offer, he would pay the bride price in blood and courage. He and his men went out before the allotted time had even expired and struck down not one hundred but two hundred Philistines. He returned to Saul's court with his victory in hand.

I laugh when I think of this scene. Can you imagine? The hush that comes over the room as David walks into Saul's court. Not only is David alive, but he is carrying two bloody sacks of Philistine foreskins in his hand. He drops them on the floor. Saul's eyes grow wider and his mouth opens more as the number is counted before him, and it is double his demand. Imagine the shock that came over the court. Imagine everyone praising David while Saul sits there dumbfounded. I think this story is so hilariously weird. It's such a Bible story. It's great.

With the deed done, Saul had no choice but to give Michal to David as his wife. What was meant to ensnare David and destroy him only elevated him further in the eyes of the people. Saul clearly saw now that the Lord's favor was

upon David, that his own daughter truly loved this man, and fear took deeper root in his heart. From that day forward, Saul regarded David as his enemy. And yet, as the wars continued, David's wisdom, valor, and reputation only grew. The more Saul opposed him, the higher God raised him.

III. The Christological Fulfillment: The Greater David and His Bride

How does this passage point to the Lord Jesus? Obviously, David prefigures Christ in striking ways.

The Conspiracy and the Battle

Like David, Jesus was offered a kingdom and a bride through victory in battle. The Devil said to Jesus, “All this I will give you if you worship me.” But Jesus would not receive as a gift what he would instead win as spoils in battle.

The kings of the earth set themselves against Him, and the rulers took counsel together—just as Saul conspired against David—plotting Jesus's destruction. They laid traps, accused Him falsely, and sent Him to battle with death itself. Yet what men intended for evil, God used for the salvation of the whole world.

The Bride Price Paid in Blood

Saul demanded the blood of his enemies as the price for the bride. Christ, in turn, paid the bride-price with His own shed blood. David risked his life to win a bride who loved him despite her father's treachery, Christ laid down His life to win His Church, despite the treachery of the Father of Lies—the Devil—in whose family we all once belonged. Both David and Jesus secured a bride who was steeped in idolatry, to turn their hearts back to the one true God.

And notice also that the bride price was set at one hundred foreskins, but David overpaid with two hundred foreskins. So too, the bride price for us has been paid in full with nothing lacking—Christ's atonement is total and complete, lacking nothing.

The Greater Circumcision

The foreskins of the Philistines signify the removal of the unclean sinners from the land. The cross of Christ is the greater circumcision, where Christ Himself was cut off. Just as circumcision rolls away the reproach of sin, shame, and slavery, so Christ's death on the cross rolls away all our sin, shame, and slavery. There, the sinful flesh of the whole

world was cut away and removed, so that we might become united to Christ.

The Apostle Paul therefore declares that we too were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands—a spiritual and heavenly circumcision performed by God in the heart. God applies the circumcision of His Son on the cross to us in baptism, where, having been buried with Him and raised with Him through faith, God forgives us of all our sins and makes us alive together with Christ.

Buried with Him in baptism, raised with Him in newness of life, we are cleansed of every reproach and forgiven of every trespass. As David triumphed over the Philistines and removed their shame from Israel, so Christ triumphed over the rulers and powers, disarming them and making a public spectacle of them, having nailed the record of our sin to His cross, showing the price has been paid in full.

From Humiliation to Exaltation

Just as David was exalted and highly esteemed through faithful, wise obedience, so Christ was exalted through suffering obedience—He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name.

And here is the irony of divine sovereignty: Saul's hatred could not stop David's rise to the throne. In fact, his pursuit of David is what eventually led him to his reign. Likewise, Satan's malice could not prevent Christ's enthronement at the right hand of the Father. Satan's plot to murder the Son of God was actually his own snare and trap that he fell into, bringing about the exaltation of Christ.

The Devil is certainly afraid of Jesus, just as Saul was afraid of David, and he is also continually Christ's enemy. But Jesus' name is highly esteemed among the nations. For at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth—and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. And the Devil's destiny is to be absolutely destroyed and defeated, as every single one of Christ's enemies will be put under His feet.

IV. Application

God's Anointed Always Triumphs.

Let us consider a few points of application.

No scheme of man can thwart the Lord's purpose for David, for Jesus, and for You, who are in Christ. Though the rulers of the earth rage, and wicked people plot in vain,

God laughs, because He has enthroned His Son and given Him a name higher than every name, and He is putting all His enemies under His feet. The Church must remember that when enemies rise against us, Isaiah 54 says:

*No weapon formed against you shall prosper,
And every tongue which rises against you in judgment
You shall condemn.*

*This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord,
And their righteousness is from Me,”
Says the Lord.*

The victory belongs not to those with power, not to those who plot and scheme and meditate on how destroy the righteous, but the victory belongs to those who have faith in Christ, and who possess His divine favor.

So do not fret about the plans of wicked, for they will fall into their own snares that they set for you. So give thanks to the LORD, people of God, for the LORD your God fights for you. You just be patient and wait for the salvation of the Lord.

Faithfulness Under Trial Precedes Exaltation.

David's path to the throne was paved with injustice, betrayal, treachery, hardship, and years and years of wandering in the wilderness. Yet David continued to trust

the Lord's timing, and he remained faithful in all his sufferings. And in time God enthroned him.

Christ likewise endured betrayal and humiliation before glory. And every believer must learn this pattern—suffering before glory, the cross before the crown. Your station in life most of the time is peaceful. This is why when hardships and trials and resistance to your ordinary peaceful life comes at you, it can be so difficult to navigate it without sinning in anger.

We are tempted to get back to normal mode, and try to forcibly get out of the suffering and hardship that God has in store for us. But God wants you to be patient and faithful in the midst of it, as God takes you through it. Which is exceedingly difficult.

But if the Lord has put you here, the first thing you must realize is, this trial is from the Lord. And He is using it for your good and glory. So, bear up under this trial with patience and seek to learn what the Lord is teaching you, and allow Him to deliver you in His good timing.

Again, this can be extremely difficult, especially if we are accustomed to a life of relative ease. Therefore it would be helpful for us to remember the words that the Apostle Paul

spoke, when we said, “It is through many tribulations that we must enter the kingdom of God.”

The Cost of the Bride.

Finally, You were not purchased cheaply. You were bought with a price - the shed blood of the infinitely righteous Son of God. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s. Our Lord fought a greater battle than David against the Philistines to win you. Jesus fought against sin, death, the Devil, and hell, in order to make you His bride.

Therefore, the believer’s response to all this must be overwhelming and continual gratitude. Let the love for Christ flow out of thankfulness to Him for what He has done for you. For it is from the place of this thanksgiving and love that we then win the battle against the snares of sin in our own hearts. By making Jesus our hearts great desire, we can also have him as the lover of our soul, and we can easily overcome all sinful desires of the flesh.

Conclusion

Beloved, the story of David and Saul reminds us that every snare of the wicked turns to dust before the purposes of God. The Lord’s Anointed always triumphs. What Saul meant for evil, God used for good; what Satan meant for

destruction, Christ turned into redemption. You have been purchased with blood far more precious than the price Saul demanded—redeemed by the cross where the uncleanness of you sins was cut away forever.

Therefore, walk wisely, guard your heart from idols, and love the Lord who fights for you. For the same God who raised David to the throne has raised Christ to glory—and in Him, your salvation is secure. Amen.