

## Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 466

1 Samuel 18

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**Teacher:**

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### Episode Summary

After David defeated Goliath, Saul became jealous of David's popularity and success. Jonathan, Saul's son, became close friends with David. Saul gave his daughter Merab in marriage to David, but then gave her to another man. Michal, Saul's other daughter, fell in love with David and they were married.

### Transcript

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 466: 1 Samuel 18. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin and he's the scholar, Dr. Justin Bass. Hey, Justin! How are you?

**JB:** Hey, Trey! Doing well.

**TS:** Good, good.

**JB:** How are you, sir?

**TS:** I'm doing pretty good. Anything new to report since chapter 17?

**JB:** I saw *John Wick 4*. I had to bring that up.

**TS:** Good or bad?

**JB:** Remember I'm a big movie lover, and I loved it.

**TS:** Okay, good.

**JB:** He'll even get a reference in this discussion about 1 Samuel 18. I don't know how that happened, but... [laughter]

**TS:** Well, I was gonna ask you...

**JB:** It's full of art. Even if anybody in the audience struggles with the violence, it's such comic-booking type of violence so I just see it as not that big a deal. But if

you don't want to see a thousand people get shot in the head, then don't see it. But there's beautiful art. They film a lot of the movie in the Louvre in France, and it's just beautiful. And it's amazing because there are strategically placed Christian paintings all throughout. My friend and I who saw it were convinced that whoever made that movie has to be at least a closet believer or trying to put things out there to lift up Christ. Because there were some beautiful paintings in the background. So I recommend it to those who usually watch violent action films.

**TS:** Which will be me. I'm included in that. I'm a child of the 80's. Mike didn't like my... I made a slasher reference because I grew up with all the slasher movies (*Friday the 13th*, you know, in the 80's). And I don't think he liked that [laughs]. I said, "What does that say about me?" And he said, "I don't know, nothing good."

**JB:** I grew up with them, too, and I'm convinced that there's definitely evil behind, especially a lot of those eighties horror movies [laughs]. A lot of evil in those, for sure.

**TS:** If anything, watching those types of movies only reinforced that evil is real for me as a child.

**JB:** Exactly.

**TS:** All those scary movies in the eighties and stuff... I just grew up believing in the supernatural, so it reinforced my supernatural worldview. That's what the movies did. They strengthened that view.

**JB:** One good thing about the older ones is they would pretty consistently always have the good overcoming the evil. It's more the recent horror-type movies that try to really turn it upside-down and make evil win. My wife and I don't even really watch any modern horror movies, but I've read about them, and it seems that they want to make the cross not powerful, the priest loses—that kind of thing. In the older movies, it was always that the priest had power or the cross had power over the vampire or whatever it was. So at least you had that in the older horror movies.

**TS:** I have not watched any modern-day horror movies since having kids. And my wife doesn't like it. I am not able to catch those as much. But I hate to hear that because I think there are some good lessons to learn from horror movies sometimes, especially when the priests win, right?

**JB:** Yeah, I agree. In fact, I'll plug *The Stand*. Stephen King's book, *The Stand* was kind of his version of the end of the world. The older one—the one from the nineties... There was a series that went on for four different nights. Because it was made for TV, it was scary, but it didn't have any sex or violence. It had a little

bit of violence, but no sex and no language because it was made for TV. So I highly recommend that because there are such great things to learn from that series—the original *The Stand*.

**TS:** I agree, it was good. And they just redid it recently, like a few years ago, didn't they?

**JB:** They redid it and I did watch that one, but I'll just say that because they redid it... I can't remember which streaming service, but it's a full-blown R-rated... A lot of terrible things in it. So it's not good for the eyes, the new one. That's why I would recommend the old one. I think the old one gives you all the great virtuous things and the things that are really grounded in the Bible, while the new one... You really have to sift through a lot of manure to get to the gems.

**TS:** Well, I am interested to see how you work in John Wick with 1 Samuel 18. So it's all you.

**JB:** Thank you, sir.

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Well, let me begin with a brief bio of this unsung hero of the Bible: Jonathan. You don't hear enough about Jonathan! This is no doubt because his story is told in the shadow of the great King David. But as Charles Spurgeon said in a sermon, Jonathan is a wonderfully noble, lovable, magnanimous man that was heir to the throne of Israel. He is magnanimous for many reasons, but the greatest act of all is the fact that Jonathan voluntarily hands over his throne to David. Not only was he heir to the throne of Israel, being the son of the king, he was at least a decade or more older than David. Before David was born (or as we might say today, "while David was still breastfeeding"), Jonathan was already leading thousands of soldiers to battle, as recorded in 1 Samuel 13, where Jonathan first appears in the Bible. It's also clear from 1 Samuel 13 and 14 that he's an elite brave and courageous warrior who wholeheartedly trusts in Yahweh. I love the story in 1 Samuel 14 where Jonathan and his armor bearer take on over twenty Philistines by themselves and kill them all. Every time I read it, I visualize that great scene in *The Patriot* when Mel Gibson and his young son take on around twenty Redcoats to save his oldest son. Another great movie.

Listen to what Jonathan says to his armor bearer. This is from 1 Samuel 14:6:

**<sup>6</sup> Then Jonathan said to the young man who was carrying his armor, "Come, and let's cross over to the garrison of these uncircumcised *men*; perhaps the LORD will work for us, because the LORD is not limited to saving by many or by few!"**

This sounds a lot like someone else—the young David as he went to battle with Goliath!

**"For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" [1 Samuel 17:26 ESV]**

**<sup>36</sup>Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God." [1 Samuel 17:36 NASB]**

Jonathan and David are kindred spirits indeed. It makes sense, then, that when Jonathan first meets David holding Goliath's head in his hands and having seen his courageous deed of slaying the giant... As 1 Samuel 18:1 says, his soul was "knit" to the soul of David. And this echoes the language, by the way, of Jacob's deep love for his son, Benjamin, in Genesis 44:30. Their souls were "bundled up" together.

C.S. Lewis captures this kind of friendship in his great book, *The Four Loves*. He says:

Friendship arises out of mere Companionship when two or more of the companions discover that they have in common some insight or interest or even taste which the others do not share and which, till that moment, each believed to be his own unique treasure (or burden). The typical expression of opening Friendship would be something like, "What? You too? I thought I was the only one."

What united Jonathan and David was not only killing uncircumcised Philistines but their love and trust in Yahweh. Let's read the first four verses of chapter 18.

**Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul...**

Note that this is continuing the story of David and Goliath from chapter 17. Remember there were no chapter breaks in the original text, so this is a good example where the chapter break really breaks up the continuity of the story.

**...that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself. <sup>2</sup> Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house. <sup>3</sup> Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. <sup>4</sup> Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt.**

Jonathan (the son of the king, a mighty warrior) gave this young shepherd boy his royal robe, his armor, his sword, bow, and belt. This was symbolic of a voluntary giving up of power—of kingship—on Jonathan's part and transferring it to David. Long before the legendary figure of Roman virtue, Cincinnatus, gave up his power and returned to his farm, and long before George Washington, the legendary figure of American virtue, gave up his power and refused to make America a monarchy, Jonathan gave up his power to David. Who else did this in the Bible, or really in all of history? Besides those three, only one person in the Bible and all of history has given up absolute power—supreme power of the heavens and earth—by humbling himself, becoming a man, suffering to the point of death, even death on a cross. Jonathan is magnanimous here, and Cincinnatus and Washington, because their surrender of power points to the greatest surrender of power in Jesus Christ. Jonathan will continue in this resolve, in his love and loyalty for David, to his death. His last recorded words in 1 Samuel 23:16-18 make this clear.

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**<sup>16</sup> And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David at Horesh, and encouraged him in God. <sup>17</sup> Thus he [Jonathan] said to him, "Do not be afraid, because the hand of Saul my father will not find you, and you will be king over Israel and I will be next to you; and Saul my father knows that also." <sup>18</sup> So the two of them made a covenant before the LORD; and David stayed at Horesh while Jonathan went to his house.**

"You will be king, and I will be next to you." When you know the whole story, that kind of gives you a tear. But it's an incredible statement by Jonathan. Jonathan will die fighting God's enemies, the Philistines, with King Saul and his brothers at the end of 1 Samuel. But unlike Saul, Jonathan dies in Yahweh's favor. We see this clearly in 2 Samuel, when David shows compassion to Jonathan's disabled son, Mephibosheth. And if you look at the genealogies of 1 Chronicles, Mephibosheth has a rich line of descendants—the only surviving descendants of Saul. Like I said, don't skip over Jonathan. Lots of treasures and wisdom to be learned from him.

Let's now hear more about the other magnanimous man, David. This is 1 Samuel 18:5-9.

**<sup>5</sup> So David went out wherever Saul sent him, *and* prospered; and Saul set him over the men of war. And it was pleasing in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants.**

**<sup>6</sup> It happened as they were coming, when David returned from killing the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and**

dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy and with musical instruments. <sup>7</sup>The women sang as they played, and said,

**“Saul has slain his thousands,  
And David his ten thousands.”**

<sup>8</sup>Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, “They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?” <sup>9</sup>Saul looked at David with suspicion from that day on.

"Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands." (And John Wick his hundreds of thousands. No, David might have killed more than John Wick.) I think Samson definitely killed more than John Wick. But David had only actually killed Goliath at this point. But in killing Goliath in that one-on-one combat, David gets the credit for killing all the Philistines that day, and I think rightly so. King Saul isn't a fan of this song and immediately turns a jealous eye to David, and really never turns it away after this. Some of my favorite visual illustrations of the deadly sin of envy would come from the excellent films *Amadeus* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and of course, Shakespeare's play, *Athello*. And like Saul, the envious characters in all those stories ultimately are destroyed by their own envy, suspicion, hatred, and increasing jealous. Pretty clear pro tip from the scriptures here: Don't have a jealous eye [laughs]. Do not participate even for a moment in envy. Don't be like Saul. Immediately repent of it and turn your eyes to Christ. It will only lead to the same kind of death and destruction as Saul. Never compare yourself with other people. Compare yourself instead with who you were yesterday or who you were five years ago or ten years ago.

Another reason to not engage in the deadly sins of envy and wrath (or anger) is, as Paul says, it gives Satan a foothold—literally in the Greek, "a space to take hold of you." And this is what happens to Saul. 1 Samuel 18:10-11:

<sup>10</sup>Now it came about on the next day that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul, and he raved in the midst of the house, while David was playing *the harp* with his hand, as usual; and a spear *was* in Saul's hand. <sup>11</sup>Saul hurled the spear for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall." But David escaped from his presence twice.

Saul's rejecting of God's word, his absence of prayer, and his giving himself over to envy, hatred, and anger leads to his possession by a demon. The evil spirit coming upon Saul makes me think of Wormtongue in *Lord of the Rings* speaking into King Théoden's ear. This evil spirit or demon coming from Yahweh no doubt

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refers to the council of Yahweh, as seen by the prophet Micaiah in 1 Kings 22. I think we should assume a similar background to this evil spirit being sent directly from the council of Yahweh to torment Saul, just like the evil spirit was sent to be a lying spirit in the mouths of King Ahab's false prophets. Remember God is sovereign over all, good and evil. This is not Star Wars, this is reality. "God is in the heavens and he does whatever pleases him." The contrast couldn't be more clear: Yahweh is with David and demons are with Saul.

And the storytelling here is really masterful, because notice that Saul tries to pin David with his spear multiple times. Later in the story, a spear will be right next to Saul while he is in a deep sleep. And Abishai, David's main bodyguard, says to David, "Let me strike him with a spear to the ground with one stroke. I will not strike him a second time." (I love Abishai, by the way. You need to find, and even pray for, a friend like Abishai and Jonathan if you don't have one.) And David refuses to kill Saul. He says, "No, Abishai!" David is also magnanimous because he is Christ-like, showing undeserved love to his enemies. Even in this story, David is holding a harp to heal while Saul holds a spear in order to kill. Proverbs 29:10 captures this contrast between Saul and David:

**<sup>10</sup> Men of bloodshed hate the blameless,  
But the upright are concerned for his life.**

Let's continue reading 1 Samuel 18. Verses 12-16:

**<sup>12</sup> Now Saul was afraid of David, for the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul. <sup>13</sup> Therefore Saul removed him from his presence and appointed him as his commander of a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. <sup>14</sup> David was prospering in all his ways for the LORD was with him. <sup>15</sup> When Saul saw that he was prospering greatly, he dreaded him. <sup>16</sup> But all Israel and Judah loved David, and he went out and came in before them.**

Everyone loves David! Jonathan loves David at the beginning of the chapter. Here we have all Israel and Judah loving David, and later the text says Saul's daughter, Michal, loves David. In fact, a few chapters ago in 1 Samuel 16, it said Saul loved David. The reason for this is clear: Yahweh was with him.

**<sup>17</sup> Then Saul said to David, "Here is my older daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife, only be a valiant man for me and fight the LORD'S battles."**

That's rich coming from Saul. I believe David is the one fighting the Lord's battles.

**For Saul thought, “My hand shall not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him.”**

Remember Saul had already promised David his daughter in marriage for killing Goliath. He at least seems to be making good on that promise here, but the text tells us Saul's true motives.

**<sup>18</sup> But David said to Saul, “Who am I, and what is my life or my father’s family in Israel, that I should be the king’s son-in-law?” <sup>19</sup> So it came about at the time when Merab, Saul’s daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given to Adriel the Meholathite for a wife.**

I think the author of Samuel wants us to see true humility on David's part here. Saul was actually humble once, before he became a murderous maniac. David will turn to evil when he is king as well. But the key difference between him and Saul is true, heartfelt repentance. David has it, Saul does not. I like Matthew Henry's comments on this passage:

*Whom am I, and what is my life? Note, It well becomes us, however God has advanced us, always to have low thoughts of ourselves. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted. And, if David thus magnified the honour of being son-in-law to the king, how should we magnify the honour of being sons (not in law, but in gospel) to the King of kings! Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us! Who are we that we should be thus dignified?*

Who are we, indeed?

We continue reading:

**<sup>20</sup> Now Michal, Saul’s daughter, loved David. When they told Saul, the thing was agreeable to him. <sup>21</sup> Saul thought, “I will give her to him that she may become a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him.” Therefore Saul said to David, “For a second time you may be my son-in-law today.” <sup>22</sup> Then Saul commanded his servants, “Speak to David secretly, saying, ‘Behold, the king delights in you, and all his servants love you; now therefore, become the king’s son-in-law.’” <sup>23</sup> So Saul’s servants spoke these words to David. But David said, “Is it trivial in your sight to become the king’s son-in-law, since I am a poor man and lightly esteemed?”**

Note again the humility.



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**<sup>24</sup> The servants of Saul reported to him according to these words *which* David spoke. <sup>25</sup> Saul then said, “Thus you shall say to David, ‘The king does not desire any dowry except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to take vengeance on the king’s enemies.’” Now Saul planned to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. <sup>26</sup> When his servants told David these words, it pleased David to become the king’s son-in-law. Before the days had expired <sup>27</sup> David rose up and went, he and his men, and struck down two hundred men among the Philistines. Then David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full number to the king, that he might become the king’s son-in-law. So Saul gave him Michal his daughter for a wife.**

Incredible that Saul tries to get David killed the same way David will later have Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, killed. Saul intended Michal to be the bait in this "Herculean labor" of bringing back 100 foreskins as the trap. Robert Chisholm in his commentary on 1 Samuel says:

It was common in the ancient Near East for victors to remove the heads, hands, and even genitals of their victims for the sake of casualty counts or as trophies of war.

You don't hear about the retrieving of foreskins that often, though. This seems to be a truly sadistic challenge from the disturbed mind of Saul. The Jewish historian, Josephus, was even embarrassed by this because he changes the story to say that David brought back 600 heads instead of hundreds of foreskins. In order to achieve this feat, David would, of course, had to have killed 100 Philistines. No matter how good he was at negotiating, there is no way he's getting their foreskins while they are still alive. In true Davidic fashion, he brings back double the amount, meaning he killed 200 Philistines. And he did it long before the deadline, Saul said. You can see why Saul was terrified of David.

The last few verses of 1 Samuel 18:

**<sup>28</sup> When Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and *that* Michal, Saul’s daughter, loved him, <sup>29</sup> then Saul was even more afraid of David. Thus Saul was David’s enemy continually.**

**<sup>30</sup> Then the commanders of the Philistines went out *to battle*, and it happened as often as they went out, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul. So his name was highly esteemed.**

I think 2 Samuel 3:1 captures the heart of these last few chapters from 1 Samuel 15-18. It says:

**David grew steadily stronger, but the house of Saul grew weaker continually.**

David grew stronger and Saul grew weaker. Saul will fall and David will be king, and there is nothing Saul or anyone else can do about that for Yahweh is with him. When you read the early church fathers, you find that they regularly see in these stories of Saul and David the future persecution of Christians by kings in power, namely the Caesars of Rome. Charles Spurgeon in 19th century London was still reading it this way, and I think it's a good application. Spurgeon says:

Mark well that one of the ways by which your election will become clear and sure to all of God's people will be this: If you are anointed king, as David was before you, you will come into conflict with Saul. It cannot be possible that the chosen of God shall forever live in peace with the heirs of hell. He who put an enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent takes care that the old enmity shall never die. The two first men of woman born were enemies of one another for this reason, and until Christ shall come, that same enmity will exist. Saul may like you for a little time if you can play well upon an instrument and drive away his melancholy, but when Saul finds you out and discovers you to be the anointed king, he will hurl his javelin at you.

Another key theme from this story that we find from Genesis to Revelation, and really throughout all of history, is what Joseph said to his brothers in Genesis 50:

**<sup>20</sup> As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.**

What man and devils mean for evil, God has and will bring about for good. From Joseph's brothers to the Egyptian pharaohs, to Satan with Job, to Saul with David, to Haman with Mordecai, to the Caesars of Rome persecuting Christians, to tyrants today persecuting Christians all over the world (like in China)... The martyrs' blood is seed. God will bring good out of evil. The supreme example of this is the cross, where all evil did its worst to Jesus Christ and the greatest good—the salvation of us and all things invisible and visible—was accomplished. Saul couldn't stop David from being king. And nothing—no thing, not Satan, not all the power in all the universe can stop Jesus from being King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Let me close with Psalm 25, possibly one of the Psalms David wrote while fleeing from Saul. David writes this:

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**<sup>4</sup> Make me know Your ways, O LORD;  
Teach me Your paths.**

**<sup>5</sup> Lead me in Your truth and teach me,  
For You are the God of my salvation;  
For You I wait all the day.**

**<sup>6</sup> Remember, O LORD, Your compassion and Your lovingkindnesses,  
For they have been from of old.**

**<sup>7</sup> Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;  
According to Your lovingkindness remember me,  
For Your goodness' sake, O LORD.**

**<sup>8</sup> Good and upright is the LORD;  
Therefore He instructs sinners in the way.**

**<sup>9</sup> He leads the humble in justice,  
And He teaches the humble His way.**

**<sup>10</sup> All the paths of the LORD are lovingkindness and truth  
To those who keep His covenant and His testimonies.**

**<sup>11</sup> For Your name's sake, O LORD,  
Pardon my iniquity, for it is great.**

**<sup>12</sup> Who is the man who fears the LORD?  
He will instruct him in the way he should choose.**

**<sup>13</sup> His soul will abide in prosperity,  
And his descendants will inherit the land.**

**<sup>14</sup> The secret of the LORD is for those who fear Him,  
And He will make them know His covenant.**

**<sup>15</sup> My eyes are continually toward the LORD,  
For He will pluck my feet out of the net.**

**<sup>16</sup> Turn to me and be gracious to me,  
For I am lonely and afflicted.**

**<sup>17</sup> The troubles of my heart are enlarged;  
Bring me out of my distresses.**

**<sup>18</sup> Look upon my affliction and my trouble,  
And forgive all my sins.**

**<sup>19</sup> Look upon my enemies, for they are many,  
And they hate me with violent hatred.**

**20 Guard my soul and deliver me;  
Do not let me be ashamed, for I take refuge in You.**  
**21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me,  
For I wait for You.**  
**22 Redeem Israel, O God,  
Out of all his troubles.**

**TS:** I would have loved to have heard Dr. Heiser talk about the taking of the foreskins. I mean, that's such a delicate thing to do, of course, unless they just whacked it. But you know... chopped it off. But I would imagine delivering the foreskins... It's such a precise thing to do.

**JB:** Yeah, I can't imagine. I CAN'T imagine [laughs]... In fact, I don't even want to imagine it. I just don't want to think about it.

**TS:** Well, I can't help but think about it. That image is in my head.

**JB:** That is rough, that is rough.

**TS:** I mean, 200... I can't get that image out of my head. I mean, that's pretty graphic stuff for the Bible. It is what it is.

**JB:** That's why I always say Judges, Samuel, and Kings is R-rated. I mean, if you were to present a lot of these stories in movie form and if you were going to do it right, it would have to be R-rated.

**TS:** Yeah, and you've gotta think about it. That's what we're doing right now. We're taking time to think about how brutal that is. David was brutal. You've gotta think about it.

**JB:** Yeah.

**TS:** All right, Justin. We appreciate it. We look forward to chapter 19 with you next time. And with that, I want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.