



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Countering Envy (I Samuel 18—19)

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Capitol Commission state directors are missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. These Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with a heartfelt compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and it is our desire to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come.

With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and as a matter of first importance, to pray for their salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). Our desire is witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.

Introduction

First Samuel 16—17 reveals the terribleness of a heart filled with rivalry. “A tranquil heart is life to the body, but passion [envy] is rottenness to the bones” (Prov 14:30; cf. 17:22). One of the reasons for Saul's envying heart toward David was jealousy with regard to the victory over Goliath (1 Sam 17:50). The method for David's victory further aggravated Saul. Saul was a Benjamite, and the men of Benjamin were renown for slinging a stone at a hair and not missing (Judg 20:16). David was from the tribe of Judah, and not only claimed (unintentionally) the glory of Saul as deliverer of the people, but also shared the tribal pride of the Benjamites.

Saul was consistent in praising himself, even when someone else was responsible for victory (1 Sam 13:13-4). He was unwilling to share glory with anyone. Of course, it was common in the ancient world for the king to be granted credit for victory, even if he was not involved in any manner. However, such common practices were not an excuse for the leader of God's people to mimic. Saul's jealousy was entirely unnatural (cf. 14:38).

Although it would have been common to sing praises with regard to David's victory over Goliath, the saying displeased Saul and he “became very angry” (18:7-8). Saul's displeasure resulted in him looking “at David with suspicion from that day on” (18:9). His anger and envy toward David led him to several murderous attempts (18:11, 25; 19:1, 10-11). It is interesting to reflect upon Guercino's portrait of Saul attacking David (1646) in the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome. Both figures are frozen in action, but the gaze upon Saul's face is equally frozen, which is entirely appropriate. His anger toward David was almost inescapable (not excusable) because his envy was so great. Saul even repented of his anger (19:6), but did not contain it.



Jealousy can become an overwhelming and uncontrollable impulse, even among those who should be friends. Saul should not have regarded David as his enemy because they were both fellow Israelites who served the same God, and were continually responding to the threat of the Philistines. Envy from an evil spirit always manifests in anger. Scripture warns, “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing” (Jas 3:16). Being zealous not jealous is a godly virtue. “Do let your heart envy sinners, but *live* in [i.e. be zealous for] the fear of the LORD always” (Prov 23:17).

It is tragic that envy can make an enemy of one who should be a cherished friend. David confessed honestly to being innocent of any wrongdoing (20:1; cf. Ps 59:4), which makes Saul's rage even more tragic. It is wise to avoid being boastful (except in God, see Gal 6:14) so we do not provoke someone's envy. Jealousy is a nearly intoxicating

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emotion and can often be entirely irrational. Nevertheless, genuine friendship and God's provision can help us counter envy.

GOD PROVIDES FRIENDSHIP

(18:1-30) Chapter 18 records David's return to Saul's court, and the conflict that arose between him and Saul. David was blessed with a noble friendship in Jonathan, who helped protect David from the threats of his own father. Saul's actions were motivated by jealousy with regard to David's accomplishments (18:6-9). He attempted to murder David with the use of his spear (18:11), but David escaped. The fact that David escaped "twice" demonstrates his loyalty to Saul and desire to help the king overcome his torments (by not leaving his court but returning). Saul "was afraid of David for the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul" (18:12).

As opposed to recognizing God's protection of David and repenting of his sin, Saul was consumed with greater fear in his heart. Therefore, Saul sent David into battle hoping the Philistines would kill him, but David was victorious. In response, Saul gave his daughter, Michal, to David as a wife, hoping "she may become a snare to him" (18:21).

THE LORD HONORS GENUINE FRIENDSHIP THAT IS BASED UPON HIM, AND HE REWARDS THOSE LEADERS WHO FOLLOW AFTER HIS OWN HEART.

Saul's behavior is in contrast to Jonathan. He sought to destroy David by any means possible, but was always unsuccessful because God was prospering him (18:14). Genuine friends recognize Saul's actions as sinful and ungodly. God continued to bless David, and to make his name "highly esteemed" (18:30). The Lord honors genuine friendship that is based upon Him, and He rewards those leaders who follow after His own heart. Godly friendship is not self-centered, but focused upon what is beneficial for others.

GOD PROVIDES DELIVERANCE

(19:1-24) Feeling the continual threat of Saul's envy toward him, David escaped with the help of Jonathan and Michael from the court and the menace of Saul. Throughout the account, Jonathan's friendship is seen to be faithful and objective, despite the fact that David's choosing and popularity prevented him from succeeding his father as king. Jonathan is never seen as envious toward David because his trust was in the will of God. David knew that God would protect him from the anger and jealous of his enemy. God's deliverance was provided through a genuine friend (19:1-7). Genuine friends are willing to intercede on behalf of their friends because they love their friends as they love themselves.

GOD'S DELIVERANCE WAS PROVIDED THROUGH A GENUINE FRIEND (19:1-7).

Jonathan's friendship with David caused him to act as mediator with his father (19:4). He provided three reasons why Saul should reconsider his intent toward David. *First*, David did not sin against the king. *Second*, the kingdom benefited from David's victory over Goliath and the Philistines. *Third*, Saul would "sin against innocent blood by putting David to death without a cause." Jonathan's loyalty to David meant opposing the explicit command of his father, the king. His faithful support for another is a model example. Godly friendship is loyal without exception. May those who know the Lord pray that God would help us to be loyal to our friends and to be willing to honor others above our self.

It seemed for some time that Saul's heart was changed (19:6), but soon thereafter, it is evident that his envious heart remained unchanged (19:9). The word translated "evil" is *ra'* (רָעָה) and can indicate distress, such as a spirit of depression or melancholy that is manifested violently. The word could also mean that God allowed Satan or one of his demons to attack Saul. If Satan was afflicting Saul, it would be the same experience as that of Judas (Luke 22:3; John 13:27). It would seem that Jesus described Saul's experience indirectly in Matthew 12:43-44.

Jesus taught that an evil spirit would fill the vacuum created by a pseudo-religious life. "Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find *it*. "Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds *it* unoccupied, swept, and put in order. "Then it goes and takes along with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself. . . ."

The truth that Jesus communicated was the danger of outward forms of morality without genuine trust in God. When such is the experience, God removes His presence and protection, and may allow evil to fill the vacuum. With regard to those who do not honor God, they are given "over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them" (Rom 1:24). Saul had the opportunity for genuine repentance, but having seared his conscience, he lost the opportunity for it (cf. Rom 2:1-16; 1 Tim 4:2; Heb 12:17).

David composed Psalm 59 when Saul and his men were pursuing him. He knew God was his "stronghold" in whom he could trust (59:9). "But as for me, I shall sing of Your strength; yes, I shall joyfully sing of Your lovingkindness in the morning, for You have been my stronghold and a refuge in the day of my distress" (59:16).