

1 Samuel 18:1-19:24 | “Well, That Backfired”  
*Preached on February 27, 2022 by Pastor Matt Brown*

Please turn in your Bibles to 1 Samuel 18, as we will be actually covering chapters 18 and 19 today. *[pause]*

Have you ever had a plan that backfired on you?

What you expected to happen didn't happen, but you got the complete opposite, instead. *[pause]*

There's a story about two young men who broke into an Iowa apartment.

They escaped and later on, their vehicle was pulled over because it matched the description of the caller.

Well here, before they had broken into the apartment, they tried to disguise themselves by scribbling all over their faces with permanent marker.

So when their car was pulled over, it made it very easy for the police to figure out that they were the culprits because of the marker all over their faces.<sup>1</sup> *[pause]*

That is an example of a plan that backfires.

They thought that marker on their faces was a good idea, but it was their downfall. *[pause]*

Maybe you have experienced a backfiring plan as well, though I highly doubt it involved permanent marker on your face. *[pause]*

In the two chapters before us today, we will find how Saul's plans backfire on him.

He will try to kill David many times, yet they don't work, and actually lead to David becoming more successful. *[pauseeee]*

In the previous chapter was the story of David and Goliath.

God had worked an amazing deliverance as he used David to defeat the giant, who defied the armies of Israel.

But now the threat on David's life doesn't come from a Philistine, but from the very king of Israel. *[pause]*

### **LET'S READ THESE VERSES. (18:1-5)**

Here, before the story tells us about Saul's attempts to kill David, it tells us how loved David was in Israel in verses 1-5.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.radioiowa.com/2009/10/29/marker-bandits-gain-national-attention/>.

It starts out by talking about how Jonathan's soul was knit together to the soul of David.

Jonathan has this great love for David, so much so, that he gives him his robe, his armor, and his weapons to him. *[pause]*

This might just seem like a small detail in passing, but this act was Jonathan essentially giving up his right to the throne and giving it to David.

Out of all the people in the kingdom, Jonathan would be the least likely to love David, for David was Jonathan's greatest threat to the throne...

...Yet here is Jonathan, willing to give up his throne out of humility and love. *[pause]*

He shows us someone who loved his neighbor as himself, and even put someone else's interests above his own.<sup>2</sup> *[pause]*

And we will see, Jonathan's response to David is the polar opposite of Saul's response to David.

Though Saul starts out loving David and putting him in charge of the men of war, we will see how his jealousy starts to overcome him in verses 6-9.

LET'S READ THAT. (18:6-9) *[pause]*

This section explains the beginnings of Saul's animosity towards David.

When returning from war, the women are singing about how many thousands that Saul has killed, yet how many *tens of thousands* that David has killed.

This incident stirs up jealousy in Saul.

He feels threatened because he knows that God has promised to give the kingdom to someone else<sup>3</sup>...

...And here is David, growing in immense popularity among the people, outshining even Saul himself. *[pause]*

From this point on, Saul will look upon David with suspicion and begin his murderous attempts. *[pauseeee]*

*So as we look at Saul's jealousy and resulting actions, what we see is...*

## **I. The destructiveness of sin.**

Anger, suspicion, deception, and attempted murder.

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<sup>2</sup> Allusions to Mark 12:31 & Philippians 2:4.

<sup>3</sup> See 1 Samuel 15:28.

Those are things that you expect to hear on the news or on a true crime show, yet here they all are in the chapters before us. *[pause]*

In these two chapters, I've found at least 7 murder attempts by Saul to get rid of David.

It's really a string of murderous plots, and through these plots we see that sin is destructive. *[pause]*

Now since we are covering two whole chapters today, I'll just summarize each of Saul's murderous attempts. *[pause]*

In Saul's first attempt at David's life, it involves a spear, used twice!

Saul is raging in his house, being tormented by the harmful spirit.

David is there trying to soothe him as he has done in the past with some music, and all of a sudden David looks up and a spear is flying towards him.

And we find out that David evades him twice.

Talk about a startling thing to experience. *[pause]*

We even find in chapter 19 that Saul apparently really likes to have his spear by his side, for he tries again.

It was the same sort of situation: Saul was tormented by the harmful spirit, David was playing music, and once again a spear comes soaring towards David, who eludes it and flees. *[pause]*

So there's attempted murder by spear, three times total.

Those attempts are pretty clear attempts on David's life, but then you also have more deceptive and hidden attempts. *[pause]*

There are two attempts by means of using an incentive to marry one of his daughters, in order to get David killed.

In chapter 18, verses 17-19, Saul offers his oldest daughter, Merab.

But there's a catch, David must continually fight bravely in battles. *[pause]*

Saul does this so as to risk David's life in war, but this doesn't work, and then Saul gives his daughter to another man.

He probably did this to make David angry and do something rash, but once again, Saul comes up short in his desired outcome. *[pause]*

After this, Saul finds out that another one of his daughters, Michal, loves David.

And instead of being happy for his daughter, Saul determines to use this to his advantage.

*[pause]*

Since he knows that David wants to be his son-in-law and that Michal loves David, he sees that as a way to incentivize David into a risky situation. *[pause]*

Saul tells David that the bride price for his daughter is 100 Philistine foreskins, but guess what David does?

He goes above and beyond, brings 200 to Saul, and gets to marry Saul's daughter.

Saul's plan has once again backfired on him, for now his enemy and rival is his son-in-law.

*[pauseeee]*

So we have talked about two separate spear incidents, as well as two marriage-related plots, and that's only 4 of the 7 attempts on David's life in these two chapters! *[pause]*

In the beginning of chapter 19, you have a plot that never really gets off the ground.

Saul tells Jonathan and his servants to straight up kill David, but Jonathan intervenes.

He goes and tells David to hide...

...Then he's able to talk his father out of killing David by explaining how it didn't make sense to kill someone innocent and who had actually brought such good to Saul.

So as a result of Jonathan's intervention, David's life is spared and he's able to come back into the presence of Saul. *[pauseeee]*

After this, Saul becomes more direct in his attempt to kill David, as he sends people to David's house to kill him.

But once again, one of Saul's family helps David out.

This time it's his daughter, Michal, who warns David and helps him escape.

When the men come to kill David, Michal has already given David a head start, and verses 13 and 14 of chapter 19 tell us that she...

"Took an image and laid it on the bed and put a pillow of goats' hair at its head and covered it with the clothes. And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, 'He is sick.'"

Finally, Saul has his men look into the bed and they find out that they were tricked.

Saul gets mad at his daughter for this deception, and she lies and essentially says that David was going to kill her, if she didn't let him go. *[pause]*

Wow, talk about a lot of murder attempts, and yet we have one more to cover.

After the whole escape from Saul's attempt on his life in his house, David goes and stays with Samuel in a place called Naioth in Ramah.

Saul somehow hears about where David is, and sends men to get him.

But guess what happens? All of a sudden, they come upon a group of prophets prophesying with Samuel, and the men sent to kill David start prophesying.

This obviously incapacitates them, so as to stop them from getting David. *[pause]*

After this, Saul sends two more groups of men, and the same exact thing happens to them.

So Saul, frustrated with the unsuccessful groups that he sent, goes himself to the town.

And guess what happens to him?

The same thing that happened to the three groups of men.

The Spirit rushes upon him, and he prophesies, stripped of his clothes before Samuel.

This allows David time to escape, as we are told in verse 1 of chapter 20. *[pauseeee]*

Talk about failed missions!

Saul had tried 7 times to kill David, but each one came up short, and actually backfired on him.

The more he attacked David, the more David became successful, and the more evident that God was with him. *[pauseeeeeee]*

So as we analyze Saul's plots, what do they show us?

First, sin ensues when we are concerned with self above all.

Saul's sinful pursuit of David came out of putting himself above everything else.

This led to jealousy, anger, and fear that gave birth to these horrible attempts on David's life. *[pause]*

Saul couldn't take someone else being popular and successful.

Saul couldn't take someone threatening his throne, even though God told him that the throne would be given to someone else.

He wanted it for himself, and didn't heed what God wanted. *[pause]*

Saul's actions are a clear demonstration of what James says, "For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice."<sup>4</sup> *[pauseeee]*

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<sup>4</sup> James 3:16.

Consider your own sin, doesn't it usually come down to a self-focus in you that wants something?

There's a reason why God says that the two greatest commandments are love God and love others,<sup>5</sup> and not love yourself.

Because a love for self above all will lead to only sin heaped upon sin. *[pauseee]*

Saul's love for self led to murder attempts - Jonathan's love for David led to the saving of a life.

What was our love for self leading to? Death. What did Christ's love for us lead to? The saving of our lives. *[pauseeeee]*

Sin also often doesn't make sense.

When Saul tried to kill David with a spear, he was trying to kill the very one who had come to refresh him with music.

And as Jonathan pointed out, Saul was trying to kill the one who had brought the great victory over Goliath and who had brought so much good to him.

There was Saul, putting so much effort into devising ways of killing the one who was helping the nation prosper. *[pauseeee]*

Have you ever found yourself doing something sinful, and then as you thought about it, you thought, "This doesn't even make sense. Why am I acting like this?"

"Why am I being mean to my spouse, who loves me so much?"

"Why am I filled with such anxiety, when God promised to take care of me?" *[pause]*

Sin is often irrational and blinds us to the truth.

That's why, like Saul, we need to be pointed back to the truth. *[pause]*

This is why being in the Word of God, and having a community of other believers helping you is so important.

We need a constant influx of truth into our souls.

We need people in our lives, who remind us of how irrational we are thinking and acting. *[pause]*

So many people think they can do the Christian life on their own.

They think that they don't need other believers, or balk at the idea that other believers should be challenging them with truth.

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<sup>5</sup> See Matthew 22:37-39.

But we need those loving rebukes, we need those challenges to view things according to what is true. *[pause]*

There are many times in my life where I got upset over something, or got discouraged about something, and my wife's directing me back to truth made the difference.

It helped me realize that I was being driven by a lie, for that's what sin does - it blinds us to what's true.

It causes us to think, believe, and live irrationally - and so the key to combating that is God's Word. *[pauseeee]*

Saul's murderous attempts also show us that unchecked sin can lead us to do horrific things.

Saul started out with a little jealousy, but it ended up all the way to attempted murder, *times 7*. *[pauseeee]*

If Saul would have stopped his jealousy right away, it would have probably not have gotten so out of control...

...But what we find with Saul is that he let's his jealousy and anger fester, which leads to attempted murders. *[pauseeee]*

This is no mere ancient or modern occurrence, this is reality in a fallen world.

Think of the lengths that people have gone throughout history because of their greed, anger, and jealousy.

There have been murders, abuse, slander, and all other kinds of horrible sins committed. *[pause]*

But this isn't only something that sin does to those *really* bad people, for think about your own life.

Haven't there been times where your sin has taken you farther than you ever thought you'd go?

Those times where you stop and say to yourself, "I can't believe that I just did that. I can't believe I went this far." *[pauseeee]*

There's that one quote from John Owen, who says, "Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you."

And Saul's life is an instance of someone who let sin kill him, for it starts to destroy his life more and more, as he deteriorates and gets worse.

Saul was spiraling downward in jealousy-fueled, attempted murder. *[pauseeee]*

When you let sin fester and grow, it only gets worse.

Adultery doesn't happen in a split second, it happens because sin was left unchecked. *[pauseeee]*

The truth is that if sin thrives, it doesn't just affect us, but our relationships start to struggle.

Saul marred his relationship with David, of course, but he also strained his relationship with Jonathan and Michal, his children. *[pause]*

Don't let sin go unchecked in your life.

Fight it immediately in the power of the Holy Spirit, armed with the Word of God.

Don't let it fester, but seek to destroy it by humble repentance and trust in the Lord. *[pauseeee]*

Sin is such a destructive, ugly thing.

Consider the ruin that sin has caused throughout history.

Just think about what sin can do to relationships, to families, to companies, or even to nations.

Saul's actions in these chapters display the destructiveness of sin, as he has gone from God's anointed king to an enemy of God, trying to prevent God's purposes from going forward. *[pauseeee]*

Yet we don't *only* see the destructiveness of sin in this passage, for we will also see God's protective care of His own through it all.

*And that's why I want to talk next about...*

## **II. The deliverance of God.**

It's easy to get caught up in the actions of Saul in these stories, but it's important to see the actions of God, too.

In every murder attempt, God was at work, delivering David and giving him success. *[pause]*

From this, we see that God's protective care can happen in unseen ways, and these unseen ways are often accomplished through circumstances and people. *[pause]*

Consider some of the circumstances...

When spears get thrown at David, God works it so that David eludes each throw.

Was Saul just a bad throw and that's the only reason that David survived all three times?

Was David just so good at dodging soaring spears? Or is there more to it? *[pause]*

Think about the amount of battles that David fought in.

In each battle, even the mission to kill 100 Philistines, David is protected from harm.

Was this mere coincidence? Or is there a deeper reason?



God's invisible hand was at work. *[pauseeee]*

Consider also how God used other people to protect David.

Get this: He used Saul's own family to do so!

The person who was a threat to Saul's throne is aided by Saul's son and daughter.

Jonathan helps David hide and talks his father out of his homicidal mindset.

Michal helps David escape, and stalls Saul long enough for him to get far away.

God was at work, quietly protecting David through different circumstances and people. *[pause]*

So also, God uses circumstances and people to care *for us*.

Haven't you ever had that moment where you thought, "Wow, if I had left 10 minutes earlier, I would have been involved in that crash."

Haven't you ever had that moment where you thought, "My friend warned me, and because of that warning, I didn't go down that wrong path." *[pauseeee]*

What's interesting is that for the marriage plots that Saul thought of, David wasn't even aware that it was a murder plot, yet he was still protected.

So also, we are taken care of by God, whether we are aware of what's happening or not. *[pauseeee]*

God's protective care can happen in unseen ways, but also in clear, evident ways.

I love the portion of this story that has Saul's men and then Saul himself start prophesying when they pursue David.

Here was God clearly showing Saul that He was in charge, and showing him that he is unable to stop God from doing what He pleases.

God was not messing around, He directly and plainly intervened through the Spirit, stopping Saul and his men in their tracks. *[pause]*

Before, God's protective work may have been somewhat hidden, but now it's not! It's clear for all to see, and how powerful it is!

SAUL'S MURDEROUS ATTEMPT HAD BOWED THE KNEE TO GOD'S POWERFUL SPIRIT!

Commentator Robert Bergen said, “Those who had entered into Naioth under the influence of the ruler of Israel now found themselves under the infinitely greater influence of the ruler of the universe.”<sup>6</sup> [pauseeee]

### THAT’S OUR GOD!

So why are you so fearful? Why do we look at the world around us and fret?

**Saul was not going to prevent or altar God’s purposes.**

No matter how hard he tried, no matter how crafty his deception, Saul was not going to win!

**He had all the power and resources in the kingdom at his disposal, yet it was no use against the Lord Almighty! [pause]**

What great confidence and encouragement that this can give us!

**Though the world seems like it has all the power and resources to do as it wills, it will not thwart God’s purposes for His people.**

In fact, this passage and the rest of Scripture show us that their attempts to thwart God’s plans actually can propel God’s plans forward.

**With every attempt of Saul on David’s life, David escaped it and grew even more successful. [pause]**

We see this in how Joseph’s brothers try to get rid of him, but what they meant for evil, God meant for good, as Joseph prospers and this leads to the salvation of many people.<sup>7</sup>

**In Exodus, Pharaoh tried to oppress the Israelites, but what happened? They multiplied even more.<sup>8</sup>**

In the early church, persecution in Jerusalem led to Christianity spreading into other regions.<sup>9</sup> [pause]

**Like Saul trying to kill David, but David escaping and being successful, so Herod tried to kill baby Jesus, yet Jesus escaped it, and grew in favor with God and man.<sup>10</sup>**

Even in Jesus’ death, the evil forces of the time thought that they were successful, only to propel God’s purposes of salvation forward through His death. [pauseeee]

*These chapters teach us that...*

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<sup>6</sup> Bergen, R. D. (1996). 1, 2 Samuel (Vol. 7, p. 210). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>7</sup> See Genesis 50:20.

<sup>8</sup> See Exodus 1:12.

<sup>9</sup> See Acts 8:1,4.

<sup>10</sup> See Matthew 2:20 & Luke 2:52.

**Evil forces against us will not thwart God's purposes for us.**

God's purposes will not flop, falter, or fail.

**This means that God's people are protected within His will.**

Just like David wasn't going to be killed before becoming the great king that God planned for him to be...

...So also, you are cared for and protected for what God has for you. *[pause]*

This doesn't mean that you won't face persecution or threat, for even David did!

But it means that through it all, God's purposes will go forward in your life, and they can't touch the most important things.

They can't touch your relationship with God or your eternal life. *[pause]*

**As the Bible proclaims, "If God is for us, who can be against us?"**

Who can bring a charge against us? Who can condemn us? "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

"Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?"

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."<sup>11</sup> *[pauseeeee]*

I have no idea what your future holds, but rest assured that whatever God's purposes are, you are in His care. *[pauseeee]*

**What made the difference for David?**

How could Saul become so afraid of him, how could David escape and be successful?

In three different times in these chapters, it says of David, "for the Lord was with him." *[pause]*

David experienced God's presence, favor, and approval - and that made all the difference.

And that's the same confidence that we can have, that no matter what we face: "the Lord is with us." *[pause]*

We have his presence with us, and we have his favor and approval because we are in Christ.

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<sup>11</sup> Romans 8:31-39.

What comfort! What assurance! What hope we can have! *[pause]*

As you look at the world around you, as you experience opposition to your faith, remember that “the Lord is with you”.

You have an all-powerful, in control God who is over all circumstances and even over the evil forces at work in the world.

This doesn’t mean that we won’t face persecution, hardships, and trials - for even David did.

But this gives us encouragement, boldness, and hope that nothing will thwart what God intends to do.

Nothing can touch our steadfast, living hope, for we are secure in the hands of the Father.<sup>12</sup>

Why? Because someone has died for us: Jesus Christ.

He took our place, taking the penalty that we deserved by dying on the cross for our sins and rising again. *[pause]*

Through Christ is the only way that we can be made right with God, have his favor and approval, and stand assured of eternal life.

If you trust and believe in what He did for you on the Cross, you will be saved.

You, too, can have a steadfast hope in a chaotic world, if you would only turn from your sins and trust in Christ’s work on your behalf. *[pauseeee]*

What a God we serve!

A God whose plans never backfire, and whose arm is mighty to save.

Rest secure knowing that His purposes and plans for your life and for the world will never be thwarted.

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<sup>12</sup> An allusion to John 10:29.