

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

I SAM. 19:8 And there was war again: and David went out, and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled from him.

9 And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with his hand.

10 And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night.

11 Saul also sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal David's wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to night, to morrow thou shalt be slain.

12 So Michal let David down through a window: and he went, and fled, and escaped.

13 And Michal took an image, and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth.

14 And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He is sick.

15 And Saul sent the messengers again to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him.

16 And when the messengers were come in, behold, there was an image in the bed, with a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster.

17 And Saul said unto Michal, Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he is escaped? And Michal answered Saul, He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?

Saul's Attempts on David's Life

Lesson Text: I Samuel 19:8-17

Related Scriptures: I Samuel 18:1-19:24; Psalms 34:19-22; 59:1-17

TIME: 1021 B.C.

PLACE: Gibeah

GOLDEN TEXT—"Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all" (Psalm 34:19).

Lesson Exposition

DANGER OF A JEALOUS KING—I Sam. 19:8-10

David's popularity (I Sam. 19:8). As last week's lesson ended, David had defeated the giant Goliath and quickly rose to prominence in Israel. Consequently, "Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people" (18:5). Before long, however, Saul realized that David was now more popular than he was in the kingdom.

In the meantime, David had become fast friends with Jonathan, Saul's son (I Sam. 18:1-4). Although Jonathan was next in line for the throne, he seemed to have no concern about David's purported ambitions to be king. Moreover, David married Saul's daughter, Michal. Saul, permitted the marriage because he thought Michal would be a "snare to him" (vs. 21), though exactly in what way we are not told.

Saul's melancholy (I Sam. 19:9-10). We now discover something else about King Saul that helps us understand why he hated David. Saul was afflicted by an "evil spirit," and this was not the first time he had been so afflicted (18:10). We know that this evil spirit was the inspiration behind Saul's murderous intentions toward David.

While David was playing his lyre for Saul in the king's house, "Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin" (I Sam. 19:10) he was holding. Young and quick, David was able to elude Saul's spear and escape death.

This was not the first time this had occurred (I Sam. 18:10-11).

DELIVERANCE THROUGH A WINDOW—I Sam. 19:11-12

We do not know whether David realized how serious Saul was about killing him. Perhaps David thought he would be safe in his own home and that Saul would get over his mental instability.

Saul, however, was serious about his intentions to kill his son-in-law. He sent servants to David's house to try and make sure David did not get away. These messengers of the king planned to kill David in the morning and watched the door of the residence to make sure David did not leave the city.

Michal somehow became aware of the plot against her husband. Michal took this warning seriously and said to David, "If thou save not thy life to night, to morrow thou shalt be slain" (I Sam. 19:11).

Since normal exits from the house were being watched, Michal assisted David in escaping through a window to safety.

DECEPTION OF A LOVING WIFE—I Sam. 19:13-17

Michal's plan (I Sam. 19:13). In case their house was searched at some point or there were servants of Saul peering through the windows, Michal wanted to make sure her father's messengers at least thought David was still there.

To pull this ruse off, Michal took an “image” (I Sam. 19:13) and put it in David’s bed.

Along with this was a pillow of goats’ hair. Michal managed to make it all appear to be a man lying in the bed. In whatever light was available, this would have fooled onlookers and was quite successful.

Messengers sent (I Sam. 19:14-15). Not knowing that Michal was aware of her father’s plans against her husband, the messengers likely did not suspect that she had helped David to escape.

Messengers from King Saul came to take David. Attempting to give David more time to make his getaway, Michal told the servants her husband could not answer the king’s request because he was in bed ill.

When they reported this to the king, the servants were then told to go and bring David, carrying him in his bed if necessary. “That I may slay him” (I Sam. 19:15) made Saul’s intentions explicit.

A monarch perturbed (I Sam. 19:16-17). Given orders by the king to bring David in spite of his presumed illness, Saul’s messengers discovered they had been tricked. From Michal’s perspective, the deception had fulfilled its intended purpose to give David time to safely escape from the evil machinations of her own father.

This is a dilemma even modern couples can face. To be sure, we need to honor our parents, but when we marry, we have a special obligation to our spouse. Parents should never put their children in a position where they have to choose between honoring them or honoring their spouse.

Michal was summoned before the king and chastised for her deception. Michal refused to tell the whole story, claiming that she was forced to do this by David and that he had threatened her life if she did not cooperate.

—John Alva Owston.

QUESTIONS

1. How had David distinguished himself in Saul’s army?
2. How did Saul’s son Jonathan feel about David?
3. Why was Saul glad to give his daughter Michal to David for a wife?
4. What was the source of King Saul’s problems?
5. What did Saul try to do to David more than once?
6. Why did Saul send messengers to David’s house?
7. How did Michal aid David?
8. What else did Michal do to trick those watching David’s house?
9. How did Saul respond to Michal helping David?
10. What did Michal say David forced her to do? Were Michal’s actions justifiable?

—John Alva Owston.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. God always accomplishes His will through His chosen people (I Sam. 19:8).
2. People of faith should keep in mind that Satan desires to defeat them (vss. 9-10).
3. God will be with His people and prepare a way of escape for them (vss. 11-12).
4. Sometimes loyalty to God means that we have to break our loyalty with those who are close to us (vss. 13-14).
5. The promises of God provide a place of safety for those who obey Him (vss. 15-16).
6. Sometimes God will turn even the closest associates of His enemy against each other to accomplish His purposes (vs. 17).

—Wardell Miller.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. How does jealousy affect our relationships (cf. I Sam. 18:6-9)?
2. What did jealousy do to King Saul and his relationship with David (19:9-11)?
3. The Bible tells us that “love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave” (S of Sol. 8:6). In what ways have you seen this to be so?
4. How can a spirit of jealousy lead to murder (I Sam. 19:15)?
5. Why are believers warned not to hold a grudge against one another (cf. Lev. 19:18)?
6. Why should people of faith not allow jealousy to take root in their lives?

—Wardell Miller.

Golden Text Illuminated

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all” (Psalm 34:19).

David, throughout his life, is the prototypical afflicted righteous man. A hero among the people of Judah for his military exploits, especially his dramatic defeat of the Philistine giant Goliath, he is now the object of King Saul’s envy and murderous intent, for Saul feared David as a rival for his throne.

Saul had nothing to fear from David personally. Even though Samuel had already privately anointed David king at the command of the Lord (cf. 16:1-13), David still rightly regarded Saul as the Lord’s anointed (24:6, 10; 26:9-11).

But Saul was still obsessed with killing David, despite having sworn an oath before God not to do so (cf. vs. 6). As he sat listening to David’s musical performance, spear in hand, his bloodlust grew to a fever pitch. Without warning, Saul suddenly threw his spear at David, almost impaling him to the wall! David narrowly escaped and fled home.

David spent a long time in exile, fleeing Saul’s attempts on his life and trusting in the Lord to finally bring him to his rightful place on the throne of Israel. And God eventually did just that.

We can clearly see from this particular episode and from the events of David’s entire life that Psalm 34:19 aptly applies to him. David indeed was afflicted many times, but because he trusted God completely, the Lord always delivered him and made him victorious.