



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Lessons from the Life of David: 1 Samuel 18:1-30

“Providence and the Way of Love and Envy”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The subject for today is “Providence and the Ways of Love and Envy” and the Scripture that we are looking at is 1 Samuel chapter 18. And so if you have your Bibles, will you turn to that chapter? And I’d like to read the entire chapter. It’s a lengthy chapter, not as lengthy as some in the Bible, but lengthy. But I think it would be very, very important for us to read the entire chapter in the light of the message that follows.

Verse 1, 1 Samuel chapter 18.

“Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself. And Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. And 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. 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. And 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. And the

women sang as they played, and said, “Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands.” 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?” And Saul looked at David with suspicion from that day on.”

It’s helpful, incidentally, to remember that Samuel had already told Saul that the kingdom was being taken from him.

“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. And Saul hurled the spear for he thought, “I will pin David to the wall.” But David escaped from his presence twice. Now Saul was afraid of David, for the Lord was with him but had departed from Saul. Therefore Saul removed him from his presence and appointed him as his commander of a thousand; [Evidently something like Saul’s own personal bodyguard.] and he went out and came in before the people. And David was prospering in all his ways for the Lord was with him. When Saul saw that he was prospering greatly, he dreaded him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, and he went out and came in before them. 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.” For Saul thought, “My hand shall not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him.” 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?” 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. Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David. When they told Saul, the thing was agreeable to him. And 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.” 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.” 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?" And the servants of Saul reported to him according to these words which David spoke. 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. When his servants told David these words, it pleased David to become the king's son-in-law. Before the days had expired 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. When Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David, and that Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him, then Saul was even more afraid of David. Thus Saul was David's enemy continually. 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.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his word and let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we come to Thee in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the truth of the word of God. We thank Thee for the way in which Thou hast, down through the centuries, since the beginning, guided and directed human history that it might reflect and glorify the name of our Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We thank Thee, Lord, that Thou hast, to this very day, brought us to this day and brought to us in marvelous grace, the knowledge of our great God in Heaven. We thank Thee today for the gift of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who died for sinners, such as we are. We thank Thee for the day when Thou didst bring us to faith and trust in him. And we ask, Lord, that Thou wilt continue to guide our steps and guard them as well, until we meet him face to face.

We look forward to his Second Coming and to the endless days of eternal joy that we shall experience. And, Lord, we pray that if there are some in this meeting who do not know our Lord, that through the ministry of the word of God and reflection upon the sacrifice that the Lord Jesus, has offered for sinners, they may turn to him.

We give Thee thanks for this country of which we are a part. We pray, in these very, very critical days for our president, for those who are seeking to follow the directions that the wellbeing of this country demands. We pray that Thou wilt give them wisdom and guidance and protect and keep all who are involved in the protection of this great country.

And we pray for the whole church of Jesus Christ. We ask Thy blessing upon the entire body. We pray for Believers Chapel as well, this local body. Bless its leadership. We pray for the elders and the deacons and the members and the friends and the visitors who are here with us here today. We pray, Lord, that Thou wilt particularly bless them.

And for those who have asked for our prayers, we pray for each one of them, for some who are suffering at this very moment, very deeply. We ask Lord that Thou wilt minister to them. And we thank Thee for the testimony of [name redacted] and we thank Thee that we have the confidence that he is with Thee. We pray for his wife and family. We ask, Lord, that Thou wilt sustain them in these difficult days. Be with us in this meeting and in the remaining meetings of this day. May our Lord, Jesus Christ, be exalted.

We pray, in His name. Amen.

[Message] In our ministry of the word on Sunday morning, we are looking at the life of David and seeking to study some aspects of it with a view to our own spiritual growth and development.

The subject for today, as I mentioned earlier, is “Providence and the Ways of Love and Envy.” Last week, we looked at the great conflict. Well, that is the last time I was with you, the great conflict between David and Goliath. The conflict with Goliath is now past, but David’s trials and struggles have only begun, reminding us of what the apostle learned when he was in Lystra that through many tribulations we shall enter the Kingdom of God.

Almost all Christians have, in one way or another, come to understand precisely what was meant by that statement from the Book of Acts. “It is through many trials that we enter the Kingdom of God.” And, if by God’s grace, you haven’t had some of yours yet, why, you may look forward to them in the future. But you may also know that in this you are having fellowship with all of the saints of God from the past down into the present.

One thing that is evident from the life of David is this, divine providence guides the young anointed king-to-be. And you’ll learn also that the path that God has given David to traverse is a path that includes the sweet and the bitter. It includes both Saul and others, and it includes Saul’s son, Jonathan.

One of the nicest things in the word of God, one of the most wonderful things and beautiful things, is the covenantal love of Jonathan for David. It’s expressed here in the opening verses. “The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David and Jonathan loved him as himself.” In the third verse, it is repeated. “Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself.”

And, as I mentioned, I think, in the last message, when finally the tragedy of Jonathan’s death took place and David sang his beautiful song concerning Saul and

Jonathan, three times he spoke about how the mighty have fallen. And then, he referred to Jonathan in these marvelous words.

“Saul and Jonathan beloved and pleasant in their life, And in their death they were not parted; They were swifter than eagles, They were stronger than lions. O Daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, Who clothed you luxuriously in scarlet, Who put ornaments of gold on your apparel. How have the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan is slain on your high places. “I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; You have been very pleasant to me. Your love to me was more wonderful than the love of women. “How have the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!”

Nothing could have been said that was more touching than that marvelous praise and encomium addressed by David to Jonathan. On the other hand, there is the murderous envy of Saul, and in this chapter we see some of it. Both of these things are in God’s purpose and plan for maturity. It’s not only the sweet; it’s also the bitter. And God gives both in his marvelous way of preparing us for the future.

This past week, in some of my deeper reading, I was looking at Dear Abby. And in the course of it, there was a letter from an individual who wrote to Abby along these lines. She said, “My husband and I do not get along very well.” She said, “As a matter of fact, if it weren’t for the kids, I wouldn’t live within a thousand miles of this idiot.” [Laughter] “We are both artists. My husband specializes in Western Art, now. And he’s been selling his paintings before the oil is dry upon the canvas. I don’t mean to put him down, but my work is much better than his, even if it doesn’t sell half as well. The public just happens to be going for gimmick art.”

So, if you have any Western pictures in your home, you know what it is. “I can hardly stand it when my husband sells a painting. For one thing, he has a way of gloating that makes me want to put my fist right through his face.” [More laughter] They have a

lovely family relationship as you can understand. “I wish I knew how to get over this envious attitude. Can you help me? Envious, in Montana where there are all those scenes out there, he has all those beautiful scenes to paint and continues to sell his paintings before the oil dries. Well, Abby gives him some practical advice. “Of all the emotions envy is the most difficult to control since you don’t even like your husband and are competing with him professionally, to boot. It will be doubly difficult to curb your envy. Keep telling yourself that ‘envy is an acid, and does more damage to the container, you, than to the object of your envy.’”

Well, it’s probably good practical advice for individuals who are, apparently, not particularly closely related to the Lord but, so far as I know, the Bible does not really say that envy is simply acid. The Bible seems to suggest that envy derives from the fallen nature of man and that when we engage in it, whether we are Christians or not, we are indulging in that which is the product of what we are as a result of the fall in the Garden of Eden.

But, anyway, these conflicts await us all. Those who hope to rule must first learn to obey, and the way in which we learn to obey is through the trials into which we are placed by the sovereign purpose of God. Call it providence if you like.

Now, the chapter begins with five verses that have to do with the covenantal love of Jonathan and David. Perhaps you know that Jonathan’s name means Yahweh or the Lord has given. Nathan in Hebrew means to give and Jonathan is related for the word for the deity. And so, what a beautiful name Jonathan is. I’ve always, when I see someone who is named Jonathan, the thought always comes to me, what a beautiful name. It’s a reference to the gift of God. We have some Jonathans at Believers Chapel. I am grateful for the way the parents have represented the word of God and the gift of that beautiful name. Jonathan, the Lord has given.

Now, we must not think of Jonathan as a person who was not a man and a ‘man’s man.’ He was essentially that, every inch a man. He was a warrior, we are told earlier.

We are told, specifically, that he was a brave man. We are told, also, that he was highly respected. We are told, of course, that he was loving right here and spiritual. As a matter of fact, later on we read that he, himself, encouraged David in his spirit. And so he was a man of spiritual understanding, as well, and a principled man. And, of course, as we read right here, a self-sacrificing man.

The one person who had reason to be jealous of David was Prince Jonathan, because he was to succeed Saul, so far as the ordinary succession would take place. It was he who would be king one day. We read in the fourth verse, “Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt.” One cannot but reflect upon the fact that this great gift that Jonathan gave to David reflects the way in which individuals should respond to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. But I won’t say anything about that now. Later on, we’ll make reference to that and make a few points with reference to it.

But when David said, “How the mighty have fallen,” he was including Jonathan with King Saul. Jonathan was an individual who, perhaps, at first had been terrified like all of the others when Goliath came out to oppose the children of Israel. In fact, we read in verse 24 of the preceding chapter, “When all the men of Israel saw the man, they fled from him and were greatly afraid.” So first terrified, fearful of death through Goliath and the Philistines, but, nevertheless, we read next, that he was satisfied with David. We read now it came about, when he had finished speaking to Saul, that is, that David had finished speaking to Saul, “That the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself.” Satisfied with David, his soul knit to the soul of David, it was almost like love at first sight for these two young men. Now, of course, if there is this kind of love between them and Jonathan responds as he does, it’s obvious that there was a great deal of agreement within them.

Amos, the Prophet, tells us that, “Two cannot walk together except they be agreed. Friendship is the union of souls and souls can be united only where there is

more or less accord.” So, we may assume from this, that Jonathan had much the same kind of understanding of spiritual things that David, himself, had.

The love of friends of this world is defective in three respects, someone has said. “They begin to love late, they cease early, they love little.” But the love of God is an unequal love. He loves without beginning, without an omission, and without end. And the love of Jonathan for David is a reflection of the love of God.

And then finally, Jonathan becomes captivated by David. And in chapter 19 in verse 2, we read, “So Jonathan told.” Well, I should read verse 1, “Now Saul told Jonathan his son and all his servants to put David to death but Jonathan, Saul’s son, greatly delighted in David.” Stripped himself of all of the signs of what he was by virtue of his relation to Saul, gave them to David, reminding us, of course, of what our Lord has done for us and, also, reminding of us of what Saul, himself, confesses he had to do when he came to the Lord, himself, in Philippians chapter 3, as he describes his conversion. He speaks about the fact that he, himself, had given up everything that he had. He had experienced the loss of everything. Well, Saul takes David, takes him in, almost takes him as hostage for future work by divine providence.

About two or three weeks ago, I quoted two statements by Luther on theologians and one of them pertains to this. Luther said, “A theologian is made by prayer, by mediation and by trial.” And now, David will experience something of that very thing. And we’ll discover that becoming the king of Israel is a work that will mean trial and sorrow in many ways for him.

The flames of envy in Saul are now described, beginning at the 6th verse through the 16th. Everyone is pleased in Israel. They are pleased with David. They are pleased with David’s triumph but there is one discordant note. And the discordant note is the envy of Saul. Isn’t it interesting how the one issue of the struggle with Goliath has issued in two things: It has issued in the general high regard for David and the love for him on

the part of all of the people, including the covenantal kind of love of Jonathan. But, on the other hand, it has issued in the murderous envy of King Saul.

You can see something of the picture of things in verses 6 and 7, and then, particularly, in verse 10, where we read, “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.” So what we have is really the evil, represented by the javelin in Saul's hand, and then the good, represented by the harp in David's hand. The Old Testament makes the statement that jealousy is the rage of a man. And that is what we have. But what particularly brought it about is the fact that when David returned from killing the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing to meet King Saul with their musical instruments, with joy and they sang as they played, “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

It's a very interesting statement and it has some interesting applications, really. You can understand how Saul may have been affected by it. Saul has slain his thousands, David his ten thousands. So Saul naturally responds that since they say, I've only slain thousands and David has slain his ten thousands, it's quite obvious that there is only one thing left that David shall have and that's the kingdom, itself. And so that's what he says. “They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?”

I'd like to have you notice that statement and the occasion for, we read here, incidentally, this has no sexist significance; it might well have happened for men as well as the women. But we do read here that the women sang as they played, and they sang, “Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands.” I think we're inclined to read that without paying attention to the context. You remember, the context is that Saul has not really slain anything and David has not really slain anything. It's God who has slain, through the servants in Israel.

In other words, it was not David, fundamentally, who gained the victory over Goliath. Let us never forget that. When David came out with his little sling shot and his five smooth stones and managed, with his one stone to stun the giant, knock him to the ground so that he might, with his own sword, take off his head, this was not David, fundamentally. He was an instrument. He was an instrument in the hand of a sovereign God. It was God who should have gained the glory.

I noticed one interesting thing in evangelicalism. It's a sign of my old age, and I'm sure that privately, you have my permission also, privately you can say, “Dr. Johnson's got some strange ideas and he's not really been brought into the 1990's yet.” And that would be true. And you have my permission to do that. In fact, you might even say, “He hasn't been into the 1970's, as far as I'm concerned.” [Laughter] But let me remind you of what we do. In our evangelical churches, in the last twenty or thirty years, what has arisen? The tendency on the part of individuals to stand up and entertain us; and then we clap.

And I suggest to you that's a discordant note in evangelicalism, the clapping of individuals in the services that are designed to glorify God. The reason is that what we are doing is diverting our attention from the one who is responsible for the blessings that we through music or from whatever source, and when we hear things that are good, musically, and we are touched, and I surely would like to admit that I am often touched by that, we should be quiet and worshipful and give thanks to God for it. The tendency to praise the entertainers, or to praise our Christian friends as if they were entertainers, is to my mind a discordant note. And I'd like to suggest that the women, while they have an element of truth in what they are singing, they've lost the principle thing and that is that God is the one who has destroyed the thousands through Saul and the ten thousands through David. Now, you have your permission to go out and say what you like about me and my old fashioned attitude toward spiritual things. I accept it. But I still feel that there is something here we should not miss.

Now, Saul responds in verse 8 through verse 16, and he responds in envy and jealous rage. Someone has said, “A bright day brings out the adder.” Alienation from God is Saul’s problem and that is congenial soil for the rooting of envy. If a person does not have a relationship to the Lord that is vital and significant, the soil of that person’s heart is beautiful for dropping the seed of envy within it.

Now, I’d like for you to understand something about Saul that’s often overlooked. You remember the name of Saul’s father? Well, his name was Kish. Now, Kish, evidently, was a cattleman and he had cattle and asses. And Saul, remember, the first picture you get of Saul is this great, handsome man, this man of valor, the man who stood shoulders above the children of Israel, is out on the mountains of Judea, looking for his asses. Now, I guess there’s nothing unusual about that, except there is no indication, whatsoever, that Saul had ever had any contact with spiritual things. Which is strange?

Who was the prophet who was known and loved by all of the land at that time? Samuel, of course, everyone knew about Samuel. But Kish, evidently, didn’t and Saul didn’t either. As a matter of fact, Saul didn’t even know where Samuel lived. And, so far as we know, there is no indication that he had any contact, whatsoever, with spiritual things. In fact, finally, when he comes to the village, and, incidentally, the reason that he did, ultimately, have some contact with Samuel, was his servant. His servant knew about Samuel but Saul didn’t know about Samuel. So when he couldn’t find his asses, his servant said, you know, there is a seer in the land and perhaps you can get some help from him. And so Saul follows and he comes into the town where Samuel is and then he meets Samuel, doesn’t know that he’s Samuel, and asks him about the seer. And Samuel says, fact to face with Saul, I’m the seer. Now, here is a man who lives in the land and loves his cattle more than he loves the knowledge of God.

Men? Women? There’s a lesson for us in that. And the lesson is plain and clear. If, for us, the love of our business, the love of our work, the love of our possessions, the love of our friends, the love of our family, is such that the Lord God has no place within

it, we're no better than Saul. If we love our cattle and our asses more than we love the relationship with God, it's not surprising that the kind of life that we live is something like the life of Saul, filled with all of the kinds of sins that flow out of a heart that's alienated from the Lord God.

It blinds us, envy does, to actual facts. It leads to imputation of false motives. It makes an individual wretched. It impels him to bloody deeds. The progress of disregarded light that is found in the word of God is jealousy, then awe, and finally, the command given that Jonathan and others should seek to slay David. It's astonishing. You can trace it all here. It all begins from the alienation from God. What a congenial soil that is for all of the errors and sins that characterize our lives.

There's a marvelous parallel, incidentally, here between the Lord and David. Our Lord was loved and he was hated. David was loved and he was hated. And one of these days, I'd like to draw some of the parallels between the two because they are significant. Because there is no question about it, David is a little bit of our Lord, Jesus, who appears before the time of the Lord, Jesus. He is the type of David's greater son.

Well as a result of what is happening, Saul now in jealous rage, engages in a series of plots designed to take the life of David, if possible. Knowing why things are going wrong for him and knowing why things are going right with David, nevertheless, he will seek to overthrow the young man who is God's designed successor to him. He's lost covenantal favor, himself, and not confessing his failure and seeking to be restored or brought into fellowship with God, this war of plots follows.

It reminds us of the New Testament. It reminds us of how Pilot, when he saw the ways that the Jews were acting toward the Lord, Jesus, the text of Scripture says, Pilot knew that for envy, they were bringing him to the cross, reminds us of John the Baptist and Herod, in the same way. So, Saul is filled with fear; seeks out of his being filled with fear to give place and does give place to the devil, but seeks to overthrow the way in which God has determined that David should succeed him.

David complains in one of his psalms about individuals who hated him with a cruel hatred, possessed with a devilish spirit indeed that render evil for good. And what a picture this is of that. David, playing the harp, Saul, playing with the javelin is a pictorial picture of the situation, aiming to slay David.

Now, the plots are very simple. The first one has regard to Merab, one of the daughters, and the way in which David plots is so open it's surprising that David might not have immediately seen what is transpiring. In the 17th verse, we read, “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.” Now, let me translate that. It's not found in the Hebrew text, but I'm going to make an addition. It's not a variant reading of the Hebrew text, but this is the way this really should be thought, at least. This is my daughter Merab. She's my older daughter. I'm going to give her to you as a wife. Now, David, you be a valiant man for me and fight the Lord's battles for me. In other words, you do the fighting. Fight the Lord's battles for me. You be my substitute is the thought that lies behind it. So let David win his spurs and fight the Lord's battle, but fight them for Saul. Now, we read in verse 19 that Saul went back on this promise. She should have been given to David, but she was given to Adriel the Meholathite for a wife. They had five children; they came to a very bitter end, found in the remainder of the New Testament.

But now, in the last few verses of the chapter, there is the plot regarding Michal. So, Saul, in the spirit of Psalm 55:21. Now, perhaps you cannot recall Psalm 55:21 immediately to mind. I must make a confession, I couldn't either. Psalm 55, verse 21, reads this way. In fact, it almost seems as if it were written in the light of what has transpiring here. But David wrote, “His speech was smoother than butter, But his heart was war; His words were softer than oil, Yet they were drawn swords.” Now, don't make any application to Saddam Hussein, although they seem to apply fairly well to Saddam Hussein as well, or any other of the kinds of men of that particular nature.

What David is thinking about, no doubt, are among the many enemies that he had, there were many of them whose words were smoother than butter. And so Saul, in that spirit, takes advantage of Michal's love for David and offers a price for her with a high degree of danger for David's life. So David, I'm not looking for a dowry, I just would like for you to bring me one hundred foreskins of the Philistines; hoping, of course, that David would lose his life in the prospect.

But David, not only brought the one hundred foreskins, but the two hundred. Incidentally, the reason that that term is used is because the Philistines were uncircumcised and they were uncovenanted people. And so the significance is a spiritual one or a religious one. And, consequently, David accomplished the price and Saul became even more afraid of David. Thus, Saul was David's enemy continually. 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 and so his name was highly esteemed.

In the closing words that I have for you, let me just make a comment or two. Envy, like jealousy, is to use a scriptural term as cruel as the grave. Its flashes are the flashes of fire; the very flame of the Lord, so the Scriptures say. You look back over the past of the word of God at this point and you may reflect upon Joseph's brethren and how they envied Joseph, and the things that transpired thereby. Even in this book you can look back a chapter and note the attitude of David's brothers toward him, specifically Eliab. You can look on into the future or you can look back all the way to the beginning of the Bible and see this very truth reflected in the relationship of Cain and Abel, on to the time of our Lord and the crucifixion of our Lord and the brethren, his brethren, who crucified him. “He came unto his own things and his own people did not receive him.” In fact, the reason that our Lord came, among other things was that his death might be the means by which envy and jealousy and the other products of the sinful nature that we have inherited from Adam's fall, might be done away with.

Envy, someone has said, “Completed the moral ruin of the king of Israel. As the worm seeks out the best fruit to eat the heart of it, so envy fastens upon the best and noblest persons to hate and hurt them. It goes by quick steps to injury, even to murder. Saul spake to Jonathan, his son, and to all his servants that they should kill David. O cursed envy. O hideous in gratitude. O foul and furious jealousy.”

My Christian friend, we who claim to know our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, there is no place for envy in the Christian family. God sets each of us in a particular place and gives each of us particular gifts. We are each important. We are each necessary. We are each blessed. And in the end, we shall each be rewarded in accordance with his gifts and our faithfulness in the light of them. May God deliver us from envy, which is the rage of the spirit, even of believing men.

The light motif, to use a German word, the leading theme of David’s life is God’s presence with him. God’s providential purpose that guides all of his steps is all conquering. And even the experiences of David in connection with the royal family are preparing him to become the royal king of Israel. But let us not forget the way that God directed the life of David is the way he directs your life and the way he directs my life. The same God who arranged the circumstances of David’s life in such a way that he was prepared for that which was before him, is the God who in the same marvelous way prepares us, blesses us, uses us. May God help us to look to him and to seek to walk by the spirit that he has implanted within our heart? May God deliver us from envying others whose status is different from ours. Give us the spirit of a Jonathan.

Haman sought to destroy the Jews and Haman was destroyed. The Scottish kings sought to destroy John Knox, the English kings sought to destroy him, the French kings sought to destroy him. And not only did the kings and queens seek to destroy him, but the prelates of the Roman Church also sought to destroy him. But in the final analysis, it was they who were defeated, and the great land of little Scotland, became one of the true lights of the Reformation, God’s sovereign providential hand directing them. No wonder

that the Scots, historically, were Calvinists. They understood what God had done for them in his sovereign way. And let us not forget, that is the way he deals with us who are his believers today.

And then, one last point, I know you're surprised it's only twelve o'clock and I'm about to come to the end. Let me just say this, Saul gave David his daughter to be a snare to him. But in this respect, that marriage was a kindness to him because being Saul's son-in-law made his succession to the throne that much less invidious. Someone has pointed out, especially when so many of his sons, Saul's sons, were slain with him.

Saul thought by putting him upon dangerous services to have him taken off, but that very thing confirmed the interest of the Israelites in this young and great young warrior king to be, David. The more he did against the Philistines, the more the Israelites loved him, so that his name, Scripture says, was much set by.

So his coming to the crown that much more easy because of God's preparation and the tool, the envy, the jealousy, the murderous envy of King Saul working, ultimately, for the benefit of David. There's a text in Scripture that you all know, "God makes the wrath of men to praise him."

May God deliver us from becoming slaves or servants of that which ultimately is destructive for us. It is a kind of acid, in that sense, but there is something deeper that is the cause of it, alienation, failure to submit to the Lord God. May God deliver us.

If you are here today, and you've never believed in the Lord, Jesus Christ, let me remind you, that he has offered the sacrifice for sinners, through which you may be saved. Come to Christ. May God deliver you from the natural alienation of your heart. May you turn to him and receive the gift, the gift of eternal life.

Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these ancient accounts, which are so true to our life in 1990. Deliver us from envy and jealousy to which we are so prone

naturally. Enable us by Thy grace to relinquish the control of our life that we would so like to have and to willingly give Thee the control of it. Help us, O God, to submit to the spirit who lives within believers and help us to submit to the gospel of the Lord Jesus if we have not yet come to faith and trust in Him.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.