

## **“The Family Guy”**

1 Samuel 18:17-30

<sup>30</sup> *Then the princes of the Philistines came out to battle, and as often as they came out David had more success than all the servants of Saul, so that his name was highly esteemed. (ESV)*

Last night we got home a little late from being at someone's house. Sometimes if I crash at about 5:00, but miss my window of going to bed, I'm going to be up for awhile. So I was flipping through channels on TV. I didn't realize that on cable there is actually a game show network. I watched a show called, "1 vs. 100." With these shows, whether it's "1 vs. 100" or Jeopardy, how many of you have sat there and watched them and answered every single question? You think, "I can answer that. I should go on the show." Have you ever thought that? The idiot that's on the show thought that at one point as well, and now he's there. So I thought we'd have a little fun this morning. I'm trying to keep things fresh for you. We're just going to do just one question, one sort of "game showish" question. For those of you kids who still have yet to take the SAT, I had you in mind as well because it's a comparison questions. Basically you have to pick a multiple choice where it will say for example, "Lemon is to yellow as apple is to . . . red (unless it's a yellow apple)." It's a multiple choice. You know I'm not big into multi-media in the morning services, but I thought we'd have a little help today. [Cue the music: Final Jeopardy theme song] The question is, "Saul is to David as a) moon is to cow bell?" "Saul is to David as b) a goat is to baseball? No? "Saul is to David as c) green is to carbon dioxide?" Last chance. "Saul is to David as d) Yosemite Sam is to Bugs Bunny?" Which is it going to be? If you guessed "d" you would be correct.

If you've not been here for the past month or so, we picked up again in I Samuel and we're dealing with David and Saul and all the ins and outs. If you have ever seen Looney Tunes and specifically if you've ever seen Yosemite Sam and Bugs Bunny go at it, you understand completely what I'm going to talk about today. You got it! You understand in some sense the whole Book of Samuel. Why? For you parents who have not yet introduced your kids to Looney Tunes, all I can say is, "Shame on you." Looney Tunes is basically built around conflict. You have Sylvester and Tweety, and you have Wile E. Coyote and the Roadrunner. The other big one is Yosemite Sam and Bugs Bunny. Why is it Yosemite Sam and Bugs Bunny and not Sylvester and Tweety or Wile E. Coyote and the Roadrunner? The answer is pretty simple. Sylvester's antagonism is based purely on his hunger, as is Wile E Coyote's. But why does Yosemite Sam hate Bugs Bunny? For no other reason than that he makes him look bad. Yosemite Sam is trying to lead and trying to fight and in the middle of it all here comes this rabbit who's just minding his own business. No matter what Sam does he looks bad whenever he is in the presence of this rabbit. Anyone my age probably learned everything you need to know about world history by watching Yosemite Sam and Bugs Bunny. They fight each other as Roman soldiers; they fight each other in the War of 1812; and the Revolutionary War; and the Civil War. They're constantly going at it and Sam always, always, always loses. At some point Sam throws a bone to the fact that he's not a man of faith and Bugs is because he always says, "Say your prayers, Rabbit." But every episode ends with Sam beaten down and saying, "I hates rabbits." That's it! By the time we get to the end of the text today that's exactly where you're going to see Saul. "I hates David!" No matter what Saul does he can't look good, and no matter what David does he can't look bad, and that irks Saul. In fact it irks Saul so badly he's going to try to kill David. We looked at how Saul started to try and kill David last week.

Remember the background to this - the whole book is basically to make the case that Israel needs a king like David. David beats Goliath and after he beats Goliath they come into the cities. The women were singing and what should have been a time of rejoicing and a time of joy turns into a time of envy, anger, and malice, and ultimately Saul tries to kill David. Saul found himself in this Catch-22 because the only person who could calm Saul down when he started having fits of madness was David, yet the person that drove Saul the craziest was David. So what do you do? If you're Saul, you'd get rid of David. So we read last week that Saul tried to pin David to the wall twice with his spear. You wonder why David kept coming back. On the other hand, remember that Saul was crazy. David knew that and David was gracious. "Okay, so he tried to pin me to the wall with his spear. Everyone does that, don't they?" The story picks up this week where Saul has decided if he can't just outright kill David (apparently David is too quick to pin to the wall), he'll do something else. So we're going to look at three things this morning. We're going to look at two schemes and one colossal failure on the part of Saul.

What's the first scheme Saul has? He realizes that he can't just beat David and he can't just overtly kill him, so he has an idea. He'll use his daughter. He has two daughters, Merab and Michal. He'll use his oldest daughter in order to get David killed. Let me read that to you.

<sup>17</sup> *Then Saul said to David, "Here is my elder daughter Merab. I will give her to you for a wife. Only be valiant for me and fight the LORD's battles." For Saul thought, "Let not my hand be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him." (ESV)*

So what's Saul's plan there? First, remember that when David came onto the scene and Goliath was trash-talking Israel, David said, "What should be done for the man who kills this uncircumcised Philistine?" They said three things, the king will make him wealthy, the king will not tax his family in Israel, and the king will give his daughter in marriage. What the men didn't tell David about was the fine print. Every time I go to Best Buy or somewhere and go through the checkout line and they ask, "Do you want to subscribe for free to Sports Illustrated or Entertainment Weekly?" I always say, "Nope." Why? Because nothing's free, is it? They say you're getting a free subscription, but really what you're doing is signing away your life. You're going to get those little cards in the mail forever because you don't read the fine print. David here is going to hear the fine print from Saul. He says, "Hey, remember I promised I'm going to give you my daughter? Here's my daughter, but here's also the fine print." The fine print is, "Only be valiant for me and fight the Lord's battles." In other words, "You can have my oldest daughter as long as you keep fighting for me." Saul thought, "Maybe if he fights for me, there's a good chance that he'll get killed." David's response is interesting because on one hand I think the author of the book just wants us to see David as very innocent. But we know that David ultimately really isn't that innocent. Can you think of any other story in the Bible where a king actually sends someone out to a battlefield in order to have him killed so he doesn't have to do the dirty work himself? Maybe David and Bathsheba? So on one hand the author wants us to see David as very pure here, but on the other hand we know that David has it in him as well. But what is his response? You don't know if he's as wise as a serpent or as innocent as a dove or if he's just being humble. But what David does to Saul's offer of marriage to Merab, his oldest daughter, is decline it. He says in verse 18,

<sup>18</sup> *And David said to Saul, "Who am I, and who are my relatives, my father's clan in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?" (ESV)*

David used the same formula on Saul that Saul tried to use on God. When God called Saul to be king what did Saul say? "Who am I and who is my family and who is my clan that I should be king over Israel?" That's what you said when you wanted to back out of something honorably. You basically said, "Aw, I'm not good enough for you." That's what Saul said to God, but the difference between God and Saul is that you can't say no to God. But you can say no to Saul. That's what David was doing. He was backing out graciously. So Saul here has failed. The scheme has failed. It says that he gave his daughter Merab, "to Adriel the Meholathite for a wife."

What's the next scheme? Look at verse 20.

<sup>20</sup> *Now Saul's daughter Michal loved David. . . . (ESV)*

After the thing with Merab, Saul tried to do something that he thought would be easy. If you're ever around my house the thing you will hear me say more than anything is, "Nothing is easy." Our house is a little bit older. I think, "Oh, I should just unscrew this screw and then put another screw in and then the whole thing will be over" . . . six hours later . . . nothing's easy. That has to be how Saul felt here. Who would not want to be the king's son-in-law? There would be wealth; there'd be a claim. Who would not want to do that? "Here's this guy David who drives me crazy. David has backed out because he says he's not good enough."

Saul has been thrown a bone providentially speaking; at least that's what he's going to think. He finds out that his daughter Michal is in love with David, and it says it pleased Saul. Now, do you think it pleased Saul that his daughter was in love with David because he liked David so much? Obviously not. It tells you what kind of person he is that it would please him that his youngest daughter had fallen in love with David because it now

means he can now use his youngest daughter to get at David. That is how much he hates David, that he's willing to use his baby girl, his youngest. Why is he so excited about her in particular? Because she has a particular skill set that he thinks will bring David down. What is that skill set? He tells us right here.

<sup>20</sup> . . . *And they told Saul, and the thing pleased him.* <sup>21</sup> *Saul thought, "Let me give her to him, that she may be a snare for him and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him."* . . . (ESV)

So on one hand he's thinking that the fine print about fighting for me, that stays, so David still has a chance at being killed that way. But there is another sick thing Saul did that we're going to see toward the end, when he says that she will be a snare to him. Every time you see that (about being a snare) in the Old Testament it almost always has something to do with idolatry or idols. We find out in the very next chapter that Michal is an idolater. She's not just an idolater who has house-gods, she apparently has idols that are so big that when Saul comes looking for David she puts one of her idols in David's bed and puts a wig on it and pulls the covers up and Saul thinks David is sleeping in the bed. That's a pretty big idol. So Saul thinks, "If she's married to David then maybe her godlessness, her idolatry will be able to drag David down. She will be a snare to David." There's good precedence for that in the Old Testament. Can you think of anyone else whose idolatrous wives were a snare to him? Does the number six hundred mean anything to you or maybe nine hundred? David's own son [Solomon]. It worked on David's son, but would it work on David? Saul hoped so. What's interesting is that Saul on one hand constantly complains about how the Lord is with David and how the Lord is doing these things with David. He knows that it's David's faith that drives them, and he's willing to tear down David's faith and yet Saul never seems to get that he could have that faith. Never. What's Saul's plan? He learned the last time the mistake that he made. This time he's going to offer his youngest daughter, but he's not going to give David a chance to speak. He's going to preempt him, so he tells his servants, "Here's what I want you to do. I told David that I want him to be my son-in-law. I didn't let him talk. Now what I want you to do is go and tell him that I really like him. The fact that he comes from a nobody-clan and a nobody-tribe doesn't mean anything. It's cool. I love him and you love him. Go tell him that." That's what they do. Listen to what it says.

<sup>22</sup> *And Saul commanded his servants, "Speak to David in private and say, 'Behold, the king has delight in you, and all his servants love you. Now then become the king's son-in-law.'"* <sup>23</sup> *And Saul's servants spoke those words in the ears of David. And David said, "Does it seem to you a little thing to become the king's son-in-law, since I am a poor man and have no reputation?"* (ESV)

So they go and tell him. On one hand, is he trying to flatter David? I don't think so because I don't think that would have worked. "The king is pleased with you." "Yeah, he seemed pleased when he tried to pin me to the wall with his spear." David probably wouldn't buy that. But what they're getting at is that, "Everyone loves you. The fact that you come from a nobody-clan isn't a problem. Saul still wants you to be his son-in-law." At this point you'd think, "Who could turn that down?" David turns it down. What's David's excuse this time? David's excuse this time is that basically he can't afford it, because to marry anybody the groom would have to pay a bride price, which would be like life insurance in case he was killed in battle. He says, "I just don't have the bride price." You would think that Saul would be upset by that, but instead Saul in his own sick way takes lemons and makes lemonade, because what does Saul do? He turns this around and in the same breath shows himself on the surface to be very magnanimous. He gives David an honorable way to save face and also pay the bride price and marry his daughter. What is the bride price? Saul, I'm sure, is just beside himself. He's so happy with the scheme he's come up with because who could survive such a thing? He tells David, "Here's the only thing you have to give me for a bride price: One hundred Philistine foreskins." That's nasty, right? I know, I see it in your faces. It's nasty, but if you think about it the only way you're going to get a Philistine foreskin is if the Philistine attached to it is dead. Saul is thinking, "If David goes and tries to fight all these guys, there's no way that he will survive."

<sup>25</sup> *Then Saul said, "Thus shall you say to David, 'The king desires no bride-price except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, that he may be avenged of the king's enemies.'"* Now Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. (ESV)

Saul has proposed something frankly that's pretty gross. What's David's response going to be? "It pleased David." Saul said, "You just bring me one hundred Philistine foreskins and we're good to go." David said, "You know, I can do that." And he does. Listen to what it says.

*<sup>26</sup> And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son-in-law. Before the time had expired, <sup>27</sup> David arose and went, along with his men, and killed two hundred of the Philistines. And David brought their foreskins, which were given in full number to the king, that he might become the king's son-in-law. And Saul gave him his daughter Michal for a wife. (ESV)*

Remember, whenever you're reading these Old Testament narratives you have to pay attention to the detail. The first thing David says, "I'm good to go." He doesn't kill just one hundred Philistines and bring their foreskins, but he brings two hundred foreskins of Philistines. It said, "He brought in the full number and laid them at Saul's feet." Imagine you're Saul and maybe even rejoicing. Maybe you're sitting back with an adult beverage and you're watching cable and thinking, "This is beautiful. I just have to wait for the news that David is dead and that will be beautiful." Someone knocks and says, "Saul, excuse me." He puts it on pause. "Yeah. What do you want?" "Someone's here to see you." Here comes David walking in with (I don't know what you'd carry two hundred foreskins in) some kind of container. And Saul is horrified that David is alive, and then David just drops these at his feet. Could anything be worse? Maybe. Maybe like giving your youngest daughter to marry this guy whom you hate. Yet Saul was now in the position of having to do it. He was stuck. What's the point of this whole story? You see two schemes fail. But what is Saul's biggest failure in all of this? Saul's tremendous, colossal failure is in the very next verse.

*<sup>28</sup> But when Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him, <sup>29</sup> Saul was even more afraid of David. So Saul was David's enemy continually. (ESV)*

Saul's colossal failure is that he sees God's grace at work in David. He knows about God's grace in his head but he never appropriates it or embraces it for himself. Saul is just like you and me. He looks out and he's angry at David. Why? Because he knows that the Lord is with him. When you read these narratives David is relatively passive in the Book of Samuel. You wonder if he's even doing anything. He goes out and comes back and they say he won. "What did you do?" The Lord has done everything and Saul sees this and he knows that the Lord is the one who has done everything on David's behalf. Instead of Saul saying, "Lord, would you do everything on my behalf, too?" he simply hates the one for whom the Lord has worked. The colossal failure that you and I always have is we look at other people and we get angry because of the grace we see in their lives. Have you ever thought that? The Germans called it "Schadenfreude." You look at someone and you're sort of happy that they failed. Or, you look at someone and you wish they would fail or you can't wait until they fail or you can't wait until something bad happens to them. Has that ever happened to you? I think that happens to me on a daily basis, but that's just me. The reason that is is because you look at someone else and say, "God has given them everything. God has given them grace upon grace and he hasn't given me anything."

But then when I think about it, I have to think about the cross. In the cross of Jesus God has given you everything. You can make the case that David was successful in battle because he didn't have anything to lose. Those of you who have been in the military know the person that is most frightening is the person who doesn't have anything to lose. You can see that in David's life. Saul had something to lose. He had his reputation, he had his faith. But what's more impressive is someone who has everything who gives it away in order to win you over. That's what Jesus has done. You don't have to just see God's grace at work in people. You don't have to know that it's at work in other people. You can experience it yourself. You basically experience it like David did in the person of Jesus or you end up being like Saul and spiraling down and becoming more angry and more bitter and more angry and more bitter. Which one are you? Most of us probably take one step forward and two steps back and then two steps forward and one step back. Life is a process but what I'm asking you for this day is, what's it going to be? Will you look at God's grace and say, "I need that." Or will you just look at yourself and say, "I know it's out there and I know I should want it and I know it's the only hope I have, but instead I'm going to do things myself and I'm going to do things my way." Think about that. I'm not going to tell you which one. It's your choice which to do. Will you embrace the grace of Jesus or will you shun it? Shun it at your peril.