

Prayer

Give us generous hearts O Lord; give us love which overflows, faith which is never-ending, hope that it steadfast and sure, and an attitude towards others which is open and accepting. In this way, may our testimony to the love of God be found to be true by those who meet us, and may they be drawn, as we have to the great joy of meeting our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Justice

Pray for God's people the Church, and ask the Lord to make His justice visible in the world through the wisdom, godliness and discernment of His people throughout the nations.

On-going prayers

- *Pray for the world of sport, and pray for integrity in its financing*
- *Give thanks for daily blessings*
- *Pray for the people who live near you or in your street*

Meditation

May I learn those truths of life
Which God has given in Jesus Christ;
And may I find within the Word
The way which guides me out of death to life.

Free my soul from being consumed
By all that occupies my days;
And raise my sights to higher things,
Your gracious touch of mercy on my heart.

Stir up a zeal, a passion within
Which seeks to serve all those I meet;
And through such work, fulfil my call
To do my best, my all, for Christ and others.

Save my spirit from becoming mean,
Unwilling to share the grace of God;
And turn me round from death to life
To sow and reap a harvest for the Kingdom.

Bible Study - 1 Samuel 19:1-6

¹ *Saul spoke with his son Jonathan and with all his servants about killing David. But Saul's son Jonathan took great delight in David.* ² *Jonathan told David, "My father Saul is trying to kill you; therefore be on guard tomorrow morning; stay in a secret place and hide yourself.* ³ *I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak to my father about you; if I learn anything I will tell you."*

⁴ *Jonathan spoke well of David to his father Saul, saying to him, "The king should not sin against his servant David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his deeds have been of good service to you;* ⁵ *for he took his life in his hand when he attacked the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a*

great victory for all Israel. You saw it, and rejoiced; why then will you sin against an innocent person by killing David without cause?"⁶ Saul heeded the voice of Jonathan; Saul swore, 'As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death.'

Review

The story of Saul's paranoia continues. It is difficult to ascertain the exact circumstances of this meeting between Saul and Jonathan, as the text is not clear. Jonathan however, met with his father Saul in concern for the safety of David in the light of his father's threats. Throughout the story of 1 Samuel, Jonathan is a figure of complete loyalty. He had been publicly ostracised by his father in battle (1 Sam 14) and yet remained loyal to him; he knew that God would hand his father's Kingdom over to David, but was not jealous about losing his inheritance. So instead of trying to read into the Biblical expression for his taking 'great delight in David' and trying to make of this some story about his sexuality (as some do) it would be safer to follow the more important principle of service and loyalty which is obviously important at this point in the story of David.

Jonathan spoke to his father in a field where David was in hiding, and could probably hear (19:3), David was on guard, aware of Saul's plots to kill him. The details are not very clear but some of the words in the text hint at what was going on. It is possible that when Saul went to inspect the troops that day 'in the field', David was present with the troops, but out of place, having hidden himself (19:3) amongst the troops to avoid direct contact with Saul. It would be surprising if the soldiers of the army did not know what was going on, and with David as their favourite general, they were willing to go along with the game! If this is indeed what happened, the Saul was the laughing-stock of the whole army. We look back on the story with sadness, because we know that all will eventually go wrong, and yet we are carried along with the tale of Jonathan's last ditch attempts to talk to His father and soothe things over between David and the King. The field in which this incident took place points us forward to the final story of David's relationship with the court of Saul recorded in chapter 20. The next time Jonathan and David would meet in a field, a secret message would be passed to signal David's flight and exile from his homeland.

Jonathan spoke well to his father, and by the end of our passage today, Saul was apparently willing to receive David back at court. But Jonathan's speech in verses 4 and 5 by has a ring of desperation, and we who read the story know that his efforts will not succeed. The great warrior David who fought King Saul's battles but aroused his deepest jealousy was indeed sinless before the King and unjustly treated, but such loyal service has never been able to extinguish the fires of jealousy and envy.

There is something demonic and beyond our control about the way that jealousy works to destroy people from the inside out. Even the most qualified and successful of people are susceptible to it for reasons which are often hidden and sometimes known only to God. Professors succumb to it in the face of students who are cleverer than they, captains of industry are prone to it whilst contemplating stock value and remuneration packages, politicians are known to be consumed by it when they find that the press and the public simply do not think as they do, and church leaders are prey to its entrapments when trying to take authority to themselves when thinking they are indispensable to the Church. Jealousy is a spirit which possesses, just as surely as it possessed Saul and drove him to paranoia over David, and when it takes hold, one of two things will happen. Either it will consume an individual slowly, or it may be drive out by the love of Christ. Jonathan tried so hard to drive it out of his father by love and reason, but he failed.

However, this does not mean it cannot be dealt with today, because we now have the help of our Saviour Jesus and all the benefits of His Passion. I, for one, know of no other source of spiritual power that can drive this evil out of a man or woman; it can only be done through the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Questions (for use in groups)

1. Have you tried to argue with someone to try and make them do something you know that they do not wish to do? What comparisons are there with this story?
2. Would it not have been better for David to leave Saul's service anyway, knowing that he had been anointed his successor? Why did he stay so long at court?
3. Discuss in your group how jealousy works to undermine the life of the church today.

Discipleship

Personal comment:

I have observed the most terrible jealousy at work amongst people driving them to behave in extraordinary and inappropriate ways. What is often so sad is that everyone can see this except for the person concerned who like Saul, ends up becoming a laughing-stock, even if they achieve their goals.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- Spend some time in prayer considering whether you have acted in jealousy at any time, and whether this affects you now. If so, resolve to deal with the issue, preferably by talking to the people concerned as soon as possible.
- If you have a book of Christian biography, you will probably find that no story is without an example of jealousy and its effects. Endeavour to read some more Christian biography in order to learn from God's saints.

Final Prayer

Your Passion, Lord Jesus, teaches me to love. Help me to follow your example, to 'take up my cross' and follow You. I do not know exactly what this means or where it will lead me, but You do; and I trust You all the way. Thank You Lord Jesus: AMEN