

Frenemies

A Sermon in the Perfectly Imperfect Series by Pastor Rob Hamilton
Delivered on January 30, 2022

1 Samuel 17:57 – 18:9 NIRV

57 On David's return from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with the head of the Philistine in his hand. 58 Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."

18 When David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. 2 Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. 3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. 4 Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing, and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. 5 David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him; as a result, Saul set him over the army. And all the people, even the servants of Saul, approved.

6 As they were coming home, when David returned from killing the Philistine, the women came out of all the towns of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments. 7 And the women sang to one another as they made merry,

"Saul has killed his thousands,
and David his ten thousands."

8 Saul was very angry, for this saying displeased him. He said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands; what more can he have but the kingdom?" 9 So Saul eyed David from that day on.

Preamble

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ. I am Rob Hamilton, Senior Pastor at the United Methodist Church of Geneva. Coming to you from my family room as our Hamilton Street building renovations wrap up this week.

When I say 'grace and peace to you' that is a traditional Christian greeting. What I want to convey in using this greeting is that the grace of God, God's unmerited and abundant love be upon you and with that grace, may peace (wholeness) come to you. I hope that our shared worship together with music, prayer, Scripture and the Word will be a means of God's grace and peace in your life. Thank you for opening yourself to that possibility by sharing your time today.

We're approaching the halfway mark of the Perfectly Imperfect series we started a few weeks ago that follows the Old Testament figure of David as a way to explore how God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. You can checkout our '[online worship services](#)' page of our website [genevaumc.org](#) to see where we have been. So far, we've covered that **God doesn't require perfection in order to be used by God**, so anyone is available for God to call in to service. We also learned that while God doesn't require perfection to be in God's service **God sees or discerns the human heart that is tuned to God's own heart** and I mentioned some core practices that help our hearts tune to God. We have also learned last week that **God uses even the small and unexpected to deliver us from our the giants in our lives**. Today, we are going to see how **God reconciles relationships to free us so that we can serve God faithfully** by looking at the relationship between Saul and David.

As we get started, will you please pray with me and for me?

Prayer of Illumination

Jesus,

You search and know our hearts. There is no corner of our lives that grace cannot reach. There is no brokenness that can't be healed by your loving touch. Through your Word today and the words you've placed on my heart and lips, may that be a means of grace to all this day. In your name we pray, Amen.

Sermon

In case you are just tuning in to the series let me catch you up historically. These stories we are exploring from 1st Samuel take place roughly 1000 years before the birth of Jesus. The people of the stories are God's people a nation called Israel. They have recently grown from a collection of tribes inhabiting a land to becoming young nation and Saul is the first divinely anointed king of the united monarchy of Israel. Saul has a had a lot running against him as the first king, but he's not our main focus.

David is the main character in our focus. He is the youngest son of Jesse. Jesse's family has no royal pedigree, though you can trace Jesse's family history all

the way to Abraham. Without any real public notice, David is quietly anointed as the new king of Israel because God has discerned that David's heart is tuned to God and will be a faithful leader of God's people.

So right now in our history, there are two divinely appointed kings of Israel. Saul who occupies the throne for now and David, Saul's successor, but where our stories picks up today, Saul and nearly everyone else doesn't know about God's transition plan for the kingship of Israel to shift from Saul to David.

Immediately preceding our story for today, young David had just killed the Philistine giant Goliath. As a result, David has been welcomed into the royal court. David and Saul's son, Jonathan, formed a strong bond and friendship at this time. When King Saul, his court with David, and the officers returned victoriously to the capital city of Jerusalem, the crowd welcomes the soldiers home from battle and they are enamored by their new hero, David, who slayed the giant Goliath. The praise David receives, angers King Saul and from this moment and for the next 15 years or so, David and Saul are going to have a hot and cold relationship.

One could define the Saul/David relationship as Frenemies. A frenemy "is a person who is or pretends to be a friend but who is also in some ways an enemy or rival"¹. Though there are times when it seems Saul and David are flat out enemies.

Here is what I mean. First, David is welcomed into King Saul's court and



then Saul tries to impale David to the wall with a spear, twice and twice and David twice avoids it. Later, Saul 'promotes' David to be captain of a thousand men to keep him out of sight and mind. Instead of being out of sight and out of mind, David's band of warriors was always victorious because God was with him and David and his crew are super popular. Saul hates this. So Saul decided to act all friendly by

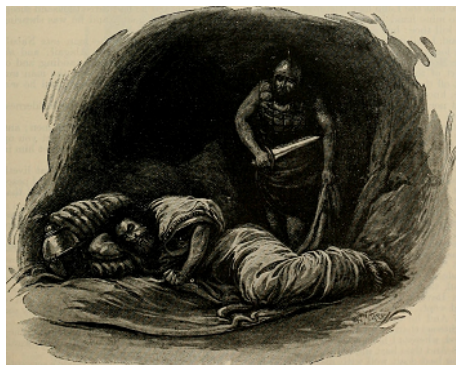


¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/frenemy>

giving his own daughter to David in marriage. But then Saul sends David into a major battle with the Philistines with the hopes David will die in battle. But God is with David the whole time. Protecting David from harm and guiding him David success and this is all still in chapter 18. By the end of the chapter 18 Saul just settles in hatred and jealousy of David.

Maybe you can relate here? Maybe you have been the victim of someone's jealousy, anger or rage? Maybe you've been the one wanting to vanquish someone. Maybe this language is too extreme but there are echos of the emotions, thoughts and behaviors of Saul and David in your life. If that's true, to any degree, then we live under the worry of threat or are held captive to jealousy, rage, anger, hurt. In either case, being held captive by these describe passions or worry that retribution is coming is not the kind of life God desires for us to live.

For these 15 years or so, it was not a good life for David or Saul. Eventually, Saul orders a hit on David, but Jonathan David's friend and Saul's son warns him. Michal, David's wife and Saul's daughter, helps David escape another plot against David's life. David is hunted by Saul and Saul's men. David has to hide, feign mental illness, and be on the run to escape the rage of Saul. At one point David is hiding in cave and Saul is close on David's tail. Saul goes into the cave (010) to have some privacy to go to relieve himself and David happens to be in the same and



David has the chance to kill Saul and end this rivalry. Instead, David of choosing vengeance, David chooses grace. David

lets Saul live. This is a great story in [1 Samuel 24](#) if you want to read the whole thing.

In the larger story, Saul calms for but a moment before the animosity picks ups yet again and a whole other cycle of threats, manhunts, and mercy take place again, or are simply retold by a different author. Regardless, in each instance David of the relationship between Saul and David, David chooses grace instead of vengeance and the story unfolds with a great deal of drama I am leaving out in this retelling.

One thing I want to note is that **David embodies God's own position toward us**. God could come at us with righteous vengeance for all the ways we miss the mark, but instead in Jesus God chooses grace. **God chooses to love us**



and even reconciles us to Godself so that we can be free to live in the love of God and live faithful lives in the world. Grace is how David stays faithful while being persecuted. Grace is how David stays humble in victory. Choosing grace is how David seeks to be in relationship with his father-in-law, his king, another one who is anointed by God, and even with one who has sought to take his life. It is by grace that David is eventually reconciled to Saul and they live at peace with each other and a peaceful transfer of power occurs between Saul and David.

When we choose grace instead of vengeance, **God reconciles relationships to free us so that we can serve God faithfully** all the days of our lives. And if you think that's impossible or at least is only possible for the heroes of the Bible, think again. The story of Matt Swatzell and Erik Fitzgerald can show us that any of us can choose grace no matter the enmity in our relationships so that God can reconcile our relationships for faithful living. [Let's watch their story \(click here\).](#)

I know we might need a moment to regain some composure after such a powerful and moving story of grace. If God's grace can work in Erik's life to bring him to a place to choose grace over vengeance toward the man who killed his wife and son; if God's grace can work in David's life to bring him to a place to choose grace over vengeance toward the man who tried killing him for 15 years and bring them to a place of reconciliation, then **God's grace at work in our lives can help us choose grace and let go past hurts to bring us to a place of reconciliation.** in our relationships to free us to serve God faithfully all the days of our lives.

If you are ready to choose grace or want to be ready to choose, I invite you to share in a prayer you can read on the pastor's blog at genevaumc.org: "Jesus, the Bible says that all things are reconciled through you. I want to have my relationships reconciled to God through you. Help me to let go of anything that I don't need to hold on to any more. Heal my wounds. Humble my heart and fill me with grace that I might seek to own my part in the enmity of any relationship. Do what I cannot and bring me and those I have hurt and those who have hurt me to a place of healing, reconciliation and peace. Amen."

Indeed may God bring us to place where we can choose grace in all our relationships and bring reconciliation wherever it is needed.