

## Prayers

### Opening prayer

Almighty God, and heavenly Father, deliver me this day from the works of the enemy. I offer myself in repentance to You and call on Jesus Christ my Saviour, that He might deal conclusively with the trouble that has penetrated my life. I do not understand it or know why it persists, but I certainly know this; Jesus is my Saviour and I call on His name! Almighty God, save me now and save me from the perils of the future. Come, Lord Jesus, Come! **ALLELUIA!**

### Prayer Suggestions

General theme of the week: FARMING

**1. For yourself**

*Pray for those who supply you with your food; shops and those who work in them, farmers, etc*

**2. For your friends and family**

*Continue to bless your family in prayer; pray about those occasions when you eat together.*

**3. For the church and its work**

*Remember that the Lord's Supper is a meal, and it uses food grown and produced like any other food and drink. Pray for all those involved in providing for those worship events we call 'the Lord's Supper'*

**4. For your neighbourhood, your country and the world (News)**

*Pray about the culture of food and drink in your country, about celebrity chefs, TV programmes about food, and the culture of 'eating out', from both a positive and a negative point of view. Put these things before God, seek His will, and pray accordingly*

### Meditation

Jesus, my Saviour, my Creator, my Lord,

Your glory is far greater than anything You have made:

Much greater than the light years separating the stars,

And more intricate in detail than a single snowflake;

More powerful than the energy supplied by the sun,

And attuned to the needs of each created soul;

More colourful and varied than the span of a rainbow,

And perfectly reflected in the colour of each leaf;

More sumptuous and lavish than a generous feast

And as regular and fresh as a baker's bread

Jesus, my Saviour, my Creator, my Lord;

Your glory has found me, and I can feel the divine.

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## Bible Study

### Bible passage – 1 Samuel 18:10-19

<sup>10</sup> The next day, an evil spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house while David was playing the lyre, as he did each day. Saul had his spear in his hand, <sup>11</sup> and he threw the spear, thinking, 'I will pin David to the wall.' But David eluded him twice.

<sup>12</sup> Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul; <sup>13</sup> so he removed him from his presence, and made him a commander of a thousand.

David then led the army, marching out and coming back, <sup>14</sup> and he had success in all his undertakings, for the LORD was with him. <sup>15</sup> But when Saul saw that he had great success, he was afraid of him, <sup>16</sup> for all Israel and Judah loved David because it was he who marched out and came in leading them.

<sup>17</sup> So Saul said to David,

‘Here is my elder daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife; but be valiant for me and fight the LORD’S battles.’

For he thought,

‘I will not raise a hand against him; let the Philistines deal with him.’

<sup>18</sup> But David said to Saul,

‘Who am I, and who are my kinsfolk, my father’s family in Israel, that I should be a son-in-law to the king?’

<sup>19</sup> However, at the time when Saul’s daughter Merab should have been given to David, she was given as a wife to Adriel the Meholathite.

## Review

***What an extraordinary story! Shortly after his victory over Goliath, and after acknowledging Saul as the Lord’s anointed even though he could have claimed Saul’s crown as the victor in battle, David was violently attacked by King Saul in a fit of rage! An evil spirit had taken hold of the King, and he turned on David and tried to kill him with a spear!***

Doubtless, this was terrible for David, who had to use all his agility and skill to avoid the angry King twice (18:11). He had previously taken up his position as a musician at court with nothing but the King’s service in mind (see also 16:23), but his faithful obedience nearly cost him his life. In truth, it was Saul who was afraid of David (18:12), for he would have known very well that he had been at David’s mercy in the hours after the battle with the Philistines. But far from being generous to David, King Saul turned away, yet again, from the Lord’s will and became profoundly angry with the man who had saved Israel. This is a sad story indeed.

We read in the previous passage (18:5) that King Saul had made David a commander of the army of Israel, so it sounds strange to read here in this passage that he made David ‘a commander of a thousand’ (18:13). What is happening in the story line is this. The segment of story we are beginning is new, and comes possibly from a different source to the one behind the first part of chapter 18. In addition, the Hebrew phrase ‘commander of a thousand’ is a general expression for an army commander. But most of all, we should remember this. Saul wanted to have David lead the army to increase the risk that he might be killed in battle, a not insignificant point that will become a major feature of the rest of chapter 18.

The story emphasises the growing success of David and the increasing jealousy of the old King (18:15). This is epitomised most succinctly by verse 16, which says that ‘all Israel and Judah loved David’ because he led the army and secured the borders of Israel, giving it peace. This brief verse strongly suggests that the majority within Israel and Judah wanted the young David to be the King.

Now it is quite clear why David was so successful. Scripture says ‘The Lord was with him’ (18:14), and this phrase is often repeated in David’s story. It is hard to be precise about what this means, but it refers to more than military success or David’s rapid rise to fame and fortune. It seems to describe such things as his faithful service and his desire to remain loyal to the old king despite everything. Yet more than that, it is a spiritual description of the young man’s heart. Scripture says of David that, ‘the Lord was with him’ because he had been anointed by Samuel (1 Sam 16), and this was a sign both of God’s favour and of the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. In truth, David was fulfilling what God had created him to be. Later in life, he wrote these words in a psalm, which we now know as Psalm 139, ‘it was You who formed my inwards parts ... I praise You for I am fearfully and wonderfully made’ (Ps. 139:13). These words speak of one who knew the presence of God in every part of his life.

Next, however, comes a most peculiar story which is very difficult to understand. Most people read through verses 17 to 19 because they do not seem to add anything to the story of David. But those who were inspired by God to write this Scripture felt it right to include these verses. What do they contain? They

describe a peculiar incident in which King Saul offers David his elder daughter Merab in marriage, but it was a promise that King Saul did not keep (18:19). Why was this so?

In ancient times, Kings arranged marriages in order to organise their kingdoms and ensure that people remained loyal. To this extent, it would be expected that King Saul would give a daughter in marriage to the victor in any battle fought on his behalf. In this instance, King Saul had to offer his eldest daughter (18:17), because she was not yet married, and it would have been very bad form for Saul to offer any other daughter before the first. As it is, everything fell through, and everyone's honour was left intact. All this is clear, but why should it be recorded here, and what purpose does it have in Scripture?

In tomorrow's reading, we will discover that David had eyes for another of Saul's daughters, so one reason for the story could be that it clears the way for Saul to allow a younger daughter to marry. We might think that all this is rather ordinary, but there is more. We already know that David will become King of Israel one day, so we should be interested in the woman he marries, for she will be the bearer of the one who comes after David, and this is a rather important matter. Most of the Old Testament describes the life of Israel and Judah under the kings that descended from David! We should therefore not be surprised to find that Scripture contains stories about the marriages and sexual intrigues of all those close to the line of David. To us, today's story is quaint and uninteresting, but it sets the scene for what is to come; we will find that for much of the rest of 1 Samuel, we are left wondering who will eventually marry David and bear him an heir, and the matter is never fully settled in 2 Samuel!

Today's passage contains many bits and pieces of story line, but it yields some interesting background material for our understanding of the story of David as a whole.

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## Discipleship

### Questions for groups

1. Why do you think that scripture describes the evil spirit as 'from God' (v10)? What is this saying about God, and about evil?
2. Imagine yourselves to be Israelites in David's day, and make a list of 'pros' and 'cons' for the leadership of Saul, and of David.
3. What are the godly characteristics of David? Discuss why it was said of him '*the Lord was with him*'.

### Discipleship challenges

- Give time writing down a list of the qualities you see in David which make him a man of God. How many of these are qualities to which you should aspire?
  - Read in the newspapers about the stories of great leaders today; what is the difference between them and David, and why?
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## Final Prayer

Bless me, Lord Jesus. Bless my work, my relaxation, my family, my home and all that I hold dear. Bless me also by making me stop to redirect my life according to Your will; and give me the courage to respond to all you need of me. Bless me, and make my day complete, Lord Jesus; AMEN

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