

Saul 5 - Pop Goes the Weasel

Even as we get into our examination of the reign of David, we are not quite done with Saul yet because their reigns overlap. David had been *anointed* to be the next king, but he had not been *installed* as king. Saul had been rejected, but he was not going to go without a fight. His sinful, rebellious attitude not only caused his rejection, but it had an effect on him mentally. His mental state was further compounded by his all consuming jealousy of David. The thought of David just ate at him. As David ran around the countryside to escape Saul, Saul would pop up all over the place. We can see the insanity of sin as we observe Saul's unchecked jealousy eating away at him. Saul truly did some bizarre and outlandish things. His behavior reminded me of an old nursery rhyme. Many of us will remember cranking the handle of a jack-in-the box to the tune of *Pop! Goes the Weasel*. There are all kinds of jack-in-the-boxes you can get today made for kids age 1 ½ to 3 years old. A kid cranks the handle that leads to the surprise of jack, Curious George, Mickey Mouse, or some other toy popping out. The nursery rhyme leads to images of a weasel popping up all over the place surprising a monkey as they run around and around a mulberry bush. Saul's obsession was like the jack-in-the box and the nursery rhyme. Saul would get reproved for his unjustified jealousy, but then that jealousy would pop up again and Saul would chase after David again. It also might remind you of the Whack-a-mole game at an arcade. Saul would get whacked down and just pop up again as he chased David around Israel. Unchecked, sin will just keep popping up out of nowhere and eat away at our peace as we will see in Saul.

1. An evil spirit -

The first sign of the insanity of sin in Saul was upon the anointing of David.

1Sam 16:13-14 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.

14 But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.

Saul's relationship with God had always been precarious and at risk. This is the way it is with so many people. They have a tenuous connection to God. They believe in God, but that is not to their credit as if they have any real interest in Him. Their relationship is more like, "I believe in God, but I leave Him alone and He leaves me alone." Those who profess to be atheists just don't acknowledge what they know in their heart to be true.

Rom 1:19-20 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

With God absent, we fall into evil. The use of the word *evil* here should not be understood in the sense of *moral* evil. Here, and in many places, *evil* refers to *natural* evil, or troubles. God sent a spirit upon Saul that troubled him. He did not send a sinful spirit on Saul. What is described looks like a spirit of depression. His servants advised Saul that a music therapy might help.

1Sam 16:15-23 And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee.

16 Let our lord now command thy

servants, *which are* before thee, to seek out a man, *who is* a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.

17 And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring *him* to me.

18 Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, *that is* cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD *is* with him.

19 Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, *which is* with the sheep.

20 And Jesse took an ass *laden* with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent *them* by David his son unto Saul.

21 And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armourbearer.

22 And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight.

23 And it came to pass, when the *evil* spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

In the next chapter we read about how David went back home at the beginning of the battle with the Philistines, visited his brothers, and responded to the challenge of Goliath. It was at that point that Saul *really* paid attention to who David was.

1Sam 17:55-58 And when Saul

saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son *is* this youth? And Abner said, *As* thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell.

56 And the king said, Enquire thou whose son the stripling *is*.

57 And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand.

58 And Saul said to him, Whose son *art* thou, *thou* young man? And David answered, I *am* the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.

1Sam 18:6-9 And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick.

7 And the women answered *one another* as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

8 And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed *but* thousands: and *what* can he have more but the kingdom?

9 And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

The spirit of jealousy in Saul only grew worse from this point forward.

1Sam 18:10-11 And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and *there was* a javelin in Saul's hand.

11 And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall *with it*. And David avoided out of his presence twice.

1Sam 18:12-15 And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul.

13 Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.

14 And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD *was* with him.

15 Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him.

Saul then used his own daughter, Michal, to set a trap for David. He canceled her engagement to another man and gave her to David. He didn't want to kill him with his own hand (this time), but by the Philistines. David would have to win in a battle to win a dowry to be able to marry Michal. David succeeded which only multiplied Saul's jealousy and fear.

1Sam 18:28-29 And Saul saw and knew that the LORD *was* with David, and *that* Michal Saul's daughter loved him.

29 And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually.

Rather than seek the Lord when he *knew* that God was with David, he only descended *further* into jealousy. In chapter 19, Saul tried to spear David again. Then, he tried to kill him in his sleep, but Michal had helped David escape. In chapter 20, after Saul's son Jonathan, who was David's Best Friend Forever, helped David escape, Saul flew into a rage against him.

1Sam 20:30-31 Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious *woman*, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness?

31 For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.

You can see how bad his sanity had been affected because right after he spoke of the throne of Jonathan, his own son, being threatened, he tried to kill Jonathan.

1Sam 20:32-33 And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?

33 And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.

In chapter 22, Saul destroys a city of priests because they had assisted David, even though they did so unknowingly. In chapter 23, 24, we read how Saul continued to pursue David. Saul went into a cave to rest. David took advantage of the moment, went in secretly, cut off the hem of Saul's robe, and escaped. After David got far enough away, he called out to Saul and pointed out how innocent he was because he had not taken advantage of the opportunity to kill Saul.

1Sam 24:16-22 And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, *Is this thy voice, my son David?* And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept.

17 And he said to David, Thou

art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.

18 And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not.

19 For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day.

20 And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand.

21 Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house.

22 And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.

Do you think this would be the last of Saul's attempts against David? No. This is what comes from insincere repentance. The same process is repeated in chapter 26 (that time Saul's water cruse was taken).

1Sam 26:21-25 Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.

22 And David answered and said, Behold the king's spear! and let one of the young men come over and fetch it.

23 The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness: for the LORD delivered thee into *my* hand to day, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD'S

anointed.

24 And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation.

25 Then Saul said to David, Blessed *be* thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great *things*, and also shalt still prevail. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

Indeed, Saul did not try to kill David again, but that could be because he didn't live much longer. The full effect of sin on the sanity of Saul is seen when he turns to a witch for advice just before his death. This will be the topic of another sermon.

The key difference we see between Saul and David is that David was all in for God and respecting God's man, Saul. Saul's sin of rebellion and stubbornness that was reported back in chapter 15 eventually took its toll on Him.

2. The corruption of sin -

Saul's persistence in jealousy ate at his heart like a cancer. We often present the problem of temptation leading us to fall into sin which should be enough of a warning to resist temptation. A more complete picture would be the problem of stubbornness that causes us to wallow around after we have fallen into sin. We can get so caught up in the immediacy of our problems that we don't fully consider the future if we don't escape while it is easier.

Eccl 8:11 Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

Rom 2:5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the

day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

Rom 6:16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

Prov 5:21-22 For the ways of man *are* before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings.

22 His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.

Prov 1:24-31 Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;

25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:

26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;

27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.

28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:

29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:

30 They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.

31 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.

Jas 1:14-15 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

15 Then when lust hath

conceived, it bringeth forth sin:
and sin, when it is finished,
bringeth forth death.

3. All in or not at all -

Part of the problem with the spiritual poverty of our culture is the way people approach God. Christianity and church are something that people "try" because they are facing difficulties. Whether Christianity "fails" sooner or later, they drop off because "it didn't work for me." It is not just a case of being spiritual is some tool to fix our problems. We don't take God down off a shelf, apply a dose of God to our problems and then put Him back up on the shelf. The problems we face serve to get out attention, but the remedy to our problems is to fix *us*, not just to fix our *problems*. You can't just *try* Christianity. You actually have *to be* a Christian. Being a Christian is not about merely praising God in the good times and enduring suffering in the evil times. Being a Christian is about knowing God and seeing the good and the evil in the context of our Christian mission. In *that* context, Christianity works 100% of the time because the success of Christianity is not in ups and downs of our day to day lives but in rescuing people and entering into *eternal* life. The problem is that you have to be all in or you are not in at all. We either surrender 100% to Christ for all eternity or we are doomed to a few accidental good days and a lot of not accidental bad days to be followed by an eternity in Hell.

Success starts with wanting to be right with God, not just temporarily from time to time to take care of our troubles. It starts with a dissatisfaction with what we are and a desire to be forgiven and then to live rightly with God. By that I mean not just to live right, but to live in a right relationship with God. When we desire that, then the right living will naturally proceed. Jesus covered this in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matt 6:31-33 Therefore take no

thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Instead of being consumed with the material needs of life, we have to look beyond our selves. *Seek ye **first** the Kingdom of God.* You not only need to find Christ and the eternal salvation He provided, but then also the spiritual maturity that enables you to find success as you serve God.

Matt 5:6 Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Saul was consumed with jealousy and depression. When we have Christ, we have a whole new mind available to us.

2Tim 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Rom 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

We began with the problem of the insanity of sin and temptation popping up in the downfall of Saul, but we can

end with learning from him. Salvation entails not only the remedy for our eternal judgment, but also the remedy for our mind and heart. When you receive Christ, you do so acknowledging that you are a sinner and offer your whole heart to Him. We give Him our vocabulary, body, our relationships, our labor. Whether it be the time we are together in the organized work of the Lord at church, or the time we spend in the work of the Lord while we are out in the world, it all starts with being all in for Him.

Is there a certain sin that keeps popping up in life? Has the enemy convinced you that you are never going to be able to overcome it? Take a lesson from Saul. Instead of rebelling, be faithful to the Lord and ask Him regularly to help you. Make that commitment today. Going forward God will help you make better choices.

1. An evil spirit - 1Sam 16:13-14, Rom 1:19-20, 1Sam 16:15-23, 17:55-58, 18:6-15, 28-29, 20:30-33, 24:16-22, 26:21-25
2. The corruption of sin - Eccl 8:11, Rom 2:5, 6:16, Prov 5:21-22, 1:24-31, Jas 1:14-15
3. All in or not at all - Matt 6:31-33, 5:6, 2Tim 1:7, Rom 12:1-2