

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF DAVID

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by

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Chapters 18, 19 and 20 present a striking picture of both carnality and spirituality. Today we will look at carnality.

I firmly believe Saul was a saved man. He was chosen of God, anointed by God, filled with the Spirit of God, and used of God until he allowed his ego and his personal desires to dominate him. He was a godly father. Jonathan, who was a product of Saul, was a very godly man. Saul's three sons, Jonathan, Abinadab and Malchishua, stayed with him through all his madness and deterioration and died fighting beside him on Mt. Gilboa. He did a superb job as a father.

David's sons, on the other hand, were all worthless. Even Solomon, who was given a supernatural gift of wisdom by God, became a tyrant and, before the end of his life, withdrew from the Lord. The record of the sons of David was a stench in the nostrils of God. Yet God said David was "a man after my own heart."

When Saul, the night before the battle in which he was slain, called Samuel up from the dead, Samuel said to him, "Tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me." This would seem to indicate that Saul would be in the same place as Jonathan, a godly man, and Samuel, a godly man. To me the only interpretation is that Saul was born again; born again but carnal. I believe his life was a stern warning that carnality can destroy your effectiveness, and even you, in the life down here. But, as your eternal salvation is a gift of God based entirely on his grace, it is not affected [Ephesians 2:4-9].

Then there was David. He was a man of formidable struggles, a myriad of emotional problems, monstrous obstacles to overcome, a failure as a father, but with a heart committed to God. He was not quite sure how to properly appropriate the life of God, but he was "a man after God's own heart," because it is attitude of heart, not performance, that counts.

In these chapters, we will look at two relationships; Saul and David and Jonathan and David. We will see a vivid picture of life in the flesh and life in the spirit and also a vivid picture of two kinds of love. In chapter 16 when David and his harp comforted Saul during those attacks that were intended to drive Saul back to God, Saul loved David "greatly." Jonathan also loved David. They both began by loving David greatly, but we will see different patterns emerge from those loves.

In I Corinthians 3:15, Scripture clearly warns that some of us might stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ with all of our works burned up, "saved so as by fire." I think Saul, and also Lot, Abraham's nephew, are examples of that. I hope we will not be. We are saved by the life of Jesus Christ, but we receive rewards based on the acknowledgement of our helplessness, our appropriation of the life of Christ and our walk in obedience to that life. We can fight obedience to Jesus Christ all of our lives, and still be saved, "so as by fire." If we named the name of Jesus Christ as our Lord, and took a stand for Jesus Christ as our Lord in this age of His rejection by the world, even if our life is a shambles after that, the Lord Jesus will never forget that one day when we first said, "I belong to Jesus." Never forget, however, that I Corinthians 3:15 and II Corinthians 5:10 both promise we will all one day stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ "that we might be recompensed

for the things done in the body whether they be valuable or valueless "

Chapter 18 shows the deterioration that sets in when a man chooses something God has declared a false god. Saul was told by God that because of his disobedience his line would not inherit the throne. Next, because he did not wait for Samuel, as instructed, but took over the priesthood and performed functions outside his jurisdiction, he himself was set aside as king. You will remember, he even tore a piece from Samuel's garment in an attempt to get Samuel to honor him before the Israelites. Samuel's response was, "The Lord has torn the kingdom from you and given it to your neighbor who is better than you." This is a direct word from God that: one, Saul no longer has the right to be king; two, the kingdom has already been given to someone closely associated with him, and three, in God's sight, the "neighbor" is better fit to reign as king. Saul's response was, "I will be king of Israel, and I will establish my line no matter what God says." That is rebellion, and rebellion, like a snowball, tends to gain mass and inertia [resistance to change] as it continues its journey downward.

Scripture speaks to this. Let us look at the three "giving overs" in the "snowballing" of fallen man as he continues his rebellion against God. If we continue to choose to rebel against God given light, God will give us over to increasing darkness. [Saul was a striking example.] Let us look briefly at Romans 1, verses 18-32.

Romans 1:18:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth [they know better] in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse [they have had adequate light to respond to God but have rejected the light God has given them]...Professing to be wise, they became fools [it strikes me as ironic that atheists always profess to be wise in their rejection of God] and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. [The very same things God destroyed in the flood of Noah's day when mankind previously committed this same folly, Genesis 6:5-7] Therefore God gave them over [first "giving over"] to the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

First God "gives you over" to your emotions. I like the term, "impulses." [I am not using technical psychological terms here but am just describing three stages of deterioration.] First God gives you over to impulses and allows you to be driven by the winds of emotion. He gives you over to ungodly emotions, ungodly desires, not necessarily perversion yet, but impulses that grip your bodies and souls and minds.

Verse 26, the second "giving over." Now we have a condition, a compulsion, no longer just an emotion:

For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned [literally, "burned out"] in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

"Degrading passions" is far more intense than "lusts of the heart." Lust is less severe than passion. You have now reached "compulsion" which involves perversion of God's norm for mankind. You are a victim. What originally was done, or not done, based upon how you felt, is now impossible to stop. Remember your first cigarette? You may have sucked a lemon to kill the smell and the taste, but you could quit any time. How about when you were smoking two packs a day? In spite of statistics which showed you were killing yourself, you could no longer quit. Somewhere along the line lust turned into passion. You went from choice to compulsion. That is what happened here. Literally the words are not "women" and "men" but "females" and "males." They have become like animals in their sexual behavior. In fact, they are behaving worse than animals. They have

reached compulsion.

Verse 28, with the third "giving over" we see a depraved mind. Because it has continually rejected truth, the mind can now no longer discern truth from error. I call this "consumed:"

And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled [perfect tense in the Greek. they are in a state of permanency in this situation] with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, [Unloving is not a very clear translation. It means literally "without natural affection." The basic word is the word for the natural love of a father for his son, a brother for his sister, a husband for his wife, parents for children but with a negative prefix.] unmerciful...

One of the marks of this last stage is the use of the closest intimacy within the family solely to benefit one's self. It is the same word used in II Timothy 3:3 of the last days when people are totally depraved. We will watch Saul reach this stage. He will wantonly use his daughter, whom he loves, and his son, whom he loves, just to accomplish his own desires.

Verse 32:

...and, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

Verse 32 indicates that at this stage they know what they are choosing is wrong. They know it is worthy of death, but they just do not care. That is a depraved mind.

There is a play on words here. In verse 28, "Just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God" means literally that they put God on trial to see if he would meet the specifications they had laid down for him, and when he did not, they rejected him. When they did that, God gave them over to a depraved mind. The word "depraved" is literally the adjective form of the verb used in "to put God on trial" and signifies a trialess mind. Loosely translated it means, if you put God on trial, he fails to meet your specifications and you choose to reject him, God, then, gives you over to a mind that can no longer even make a trial. Since you have rejected God's truth, God says, "You want error, all right, you can have error." That is exactly what he does in II Thessalonians 2:9-12 in the last days. Because man has rejected and refused the love of the truth, God gives him over to error that he might be deceived.

This does not apply just to non-believers. If, as I Corinthians 3:15 says, I could, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, be saved "so as by fire," or, with all my works burnt up and my total Christian life worthless, then Romans 1:18-32 could happen to me. This principle of disobedience applies to both non-believers and believers. A believer is not special in the eyes of God when it comes to getting away with sin. God is willing to destroy the persistently willful sinning believer's life down here so that his lifestyle will not continually blaspheme the name of his Lord. That is what he did with Saul.

So, beginning with verse 55 of chapter 17, we will continue our look at Saul and David. Verse 55:

Now when Saul saw David going out against the Philistine, he said to Abner the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this young man?"

Saul is not interested in who this young man is. He knows it is David. He wants to know his background. Saul had promised his daughter to the man who killed Goliath, and, being a very proud man, he wants to know the lineage of this possible son-in-law.

Verse 55b:

And Abner said, "By your life, O king, I do not know." And the king said, "You inquire whose son the youth is." So when David returned from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the Philistine's head in his hand.

Here stands David with his credentials. He has the right to Saul's daughter, the right to all the riches that were offered and the right to have a house in Israel that is free from taxation and conscription. His credentials are in his hand.

Verse 58:

And Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite." [Who is a nothing.]

Not only was Jesse a nothing, but also there is a possibility David was illegitimate. Then, too, there is indication in Scripture that David's mother may have been previously married to Nahash the Ammonite, a non-Jew, which was a stigma of major proportions in those days.

It would appear there was quite a conversation between the end of Chapter 17 and the beginning of Chapter 18. Verse 1 which has not been recorded:

Now is came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself.

Jonathan was probably in his 40's; David probably in his late teens or early 20's. Upon hearing this young man's story and his background, Jonathan's soul was knit to David in love and compassion. Saul, however, had no intention of letting David become his son-in-law.

And Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house.

Saul loves David for what David can do for Saul, but, in spite of his promise, he does not love David enough to give him his daughter and make him part of the family.

Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt.

Jonathan, as the oldest son of Saul, was heir apparent to the throne. In ancient times, what he did here was a mark of highest honor. The heir apparent, the Prince of Wales of the nation of Israel, gave up his own armor to his rival. He was not yet aware that David was his rival, but he loved this young man and honored him in front of everyone.

So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and prospered; and Saul set him over the men of war.

David apparently became Saul's Chief-of-Staff which probably initiated the conflict between Abner and David. Later on Abner chose to align himself against David.

And it was pleasing in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

At this time Israel consisted of twelve tribes, each one with its own agenda. To mold them into a nation, they needed a unifying force. David could have been that force. They all loved him. Even Saul's courtiers, the inner circle, those striving for their own little empire, loved him. The people of Israel did not all love Saul.

Although Saul began with a love for David, here we see the first step in the downward slide, Saul's jealous suspicion of David. I Samuel 18:6:

And it happened as they were coming, when David returned from killing the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy and with musical instruments.

In those days when a king returned from war, he was honored in this way. As he and his armies marched through town, the women poured out to dance in the streets and mimic various aspects of fighting the enemy. They played tambourines and triangles and put on quite a performance. Unfortunately these women have a new song which Saul does not appreciate.

Verse 7:

And the women sang as they played, and said, "Saul has slain his thousands [Saul's head size expanded and brass buttons popped off his uniform, but then came the second stanza]. And David his ten thousands."

To a man who was an egomaniac, those were no words to sing. This song became very popular too. We will see later that even the Philistines knew it.

Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?" And Saul looked at David with suspicion from that day on.

Saul knew from Samuel's prophecy that the kingdom had already been snatched from him by God and given to his "neighbor." From that same prophecy, he knew it had been given to "someone closely associated with him who was better than he." Saul was no dummy. Who was better than he by ten times, according to the voice of the people? Who was close to him, his Chief-of-Staff? Who, by the hand of the Lord, had killed Goliath? So Saul's love for David, beginning the downward plunge, changed to jealous suspicion. Saul was now being ruled by his emotions. He did not consider what David was as a person, or David's performance, or what the kingdom needed. He only knew what he felt, and, from that day on, he looked at David with suspicion. He had made a choice, a choice against God. It was God who took the kingdom and the kingship from him. It was God who said, "I give it to your neighbor." It was God who said, "He is better than you." Saul chose to take on God and to deny God's evaluation of the situation.

The next move is from suspicion to fear, verse 10:

Now it came about on the next day [evil spreads very quickly] that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul, and he raved in the midst of the house, while David was playing the harp with his hand, as usual; and a spear was in Saul's hand. And Saul hurled the spear for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall." But David escaped from his presence twice.

The spear was a symbol of authority. It was a scepter for a warrior king. Apparently Saul threw it once, missed, got it back, and when David returned to his place, threw it again.

Now fear. Verse 12:

Now Saul was afraid of David, for the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul.

Do you see any pattern in this progression of sin? When the spirit of evil from God first came upon Saul to disturb and upset him enough to drive him to God for mercy, if David played the harp and sang his beautiful songs inspired of God, Saul's rages and mania subsided. This was God's mercy trying to tell Saul to repent. Now, since Saul had rebelled against God, against truth, David's playing no longer worked. Saul still raged. He still tried to murder. David's psalms, just as inspired by the Spirit of God as they were before, had lost their impact on Saul.

This can also become true of us. When we deny the truth of the Scriptures, they lose their effect on us. In the beginning they convict; they prick our consciences, and we respond. We may not respond correctly. We may

not know exactly how to respond, but at least we respond. We have guilt, and it is good guilt, not false guilt. But if we deny the right of the Scriptures to be the standard in our lives, soon they will no longer prick. The same truth will no longer have any effect upon us. It will make no change in us.

So, Saul had reached step one, Romans 1:24, the first "giving over" by God. He was afraid of David. He realized the Lord was with David, and, of course, he knew the Lord had departed from him. He had lost that feeling of power that comes when the Spirit of God takes over. He knew David was now God's man, and he knew he was not. He was caught in this emotional situation.

Next he moved to Romans 1:26, the second "giving over." He understood the problem. He knew the evil spirit was from God, even his courtiers knew it, but he refused to repent. Instead he took the next step in his downward path, and God gave him over to "compulsion," the depraved condition.

Verse 13, instead of responding, he did exactly the opposite:

Therefore Saul removed him from his presence, and appointed him as his commander of a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.

Apparently this was a demotion. David had been Chief-of-Staff over men of war, but now Saul sent him out as a field commander over 1,000 men. Saul wanted to get him out of the court, away from himself, away from his courtiers, away from the people, out where he would be an unknown and no longer a threat to Saul's throne. Notice, the verse has not yet said Saul sent him out to be killed. He sent him out to get rid of him. Saul had not yet taken step three.

And David was prospering in all his ways for the LORD was with him.

This phrase must have driven Saul wild with frustration. He put David over just 1,000 men, sent him way out in the hinterland and all the Philistines chose to go there too. So, David routed them. Then, as he moved, the Philistines moved. Wherever David went, the Philistines seemed to go, and wherever the Philistines went, David routed them. God prospered him wherever he went.

Verse 15:

When Saul saw that he was prospering greatly, he dreaded him.

Saul is now getting very close to the "consumed" condition. Dread comes over him.

But all Israel and Judah loved David, and he went out and came in before them.

In a sense, humanly speaking, David was the one person who could have made Saul's throne secure for him. But Saul forgot all about his kingdom, and turned his attention to pursuing David. As a result, the Philistines came back into the land and took over. Israel wound up a divided kingdom because of Saul.

Saul had not been able to get rid of David by sending him out into the field, so he began to deliberately plot his death. Mind you, he was deliberately plotting the death of a man he knew the Lord was "prospering in all his ways for the Lord was with him." Saul had not only lost his love for his Lord, but also the natural love a father has for his children. So, he moved into the third "giving over," into what I call the "consumed" stage, one of the marks of which is "unnatural affection" [lack of natural love for one's family].

Verse 17:

Then Saul said to David, "Here is my older daughter [who should have given to him a long time ago] Merab; I will give her to you as a wife, only be a valiant man for me and fight the LORD's battle." For Saul thought, "My hand shall not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him"

Saul could sanction having his own daughter's husband destroyed, but he wanted to be sure no finger was pointed at him. Knowing David would be in the forefront of any action, he said, "You may have my daughter if you valiantly fight for me," but he thought, "I don't want to look like a murderer. Let the Philistines get him." [Does this sound like another king? "If I put Uriah the Hittite in the forefront of the battle..." Uriah, Bathsheba's husband and one of the thirty great warriors of Israel, was one of David's best friends. Bathsheba's father was also one of the thirty and a good friend of David's, but David did not consider either one. When he sinned against the Lord, unnatural affection struck him, too. Where did he get the idea? Is it possible Saul was his mentor? The flesh, even in a "man after God's own heart," is always thoroughly rotten.]

Now David began to get a little suspicious.

Verse 18:

But David said to Saul, "Who am I, [I am persona non grata in the courts, being stationed way out in the hinterland] and what is my life [I have no social standing. We discussed that in chapter 17] or my father's family in Israel, [I have no lineage, and you know it, Saul. You didn't give me your daughter when you should have.] that I should be the king's son-in-law?" So it came about at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given to Adriel the Meholathite for a wife.

Saul may have been trying to provoke David into revenge, hoping he could get him for treason. We do not know. But, David did not take the bait, and Saul did not push further. Besides, Saul had an ace in the hole, his second daughter, Michal. He knew she loved David, and apparently David loved her. Saul reasoned, "I can use my daughter, who loves David, as the instrument to destroy him." He had no regrets that he would be destroying his own daughter's husband and lover. Because of David's love for Michal, he had high hopes David would respond to this plan. But, sensing David's suspicions, he arranged secret negotiations.

Verse 20:

Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David. [This probably infuriated Saul. Jonathan loved David. Michal loved David.] When they told Saul, the thing was agreeable to him. And Saul thought, "I will give her to him that she may become a snare to him, [He did not care what happened to his daughter] and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him." Therefore Saul said to David, "For a second time you may be my son-in-law today." [I will give you another chance to be my son-in-law] Then Saul commanded his servants, "Speak to David secretly [I cannot go to him openly, so you slip the word to him privately], saying, 'Behold, the king delights in you, and all his servants love you; now, therefore, become the king's son-in-law'" So Saul's servants spoke these words to David. But David said, "It is trivial in your sight to become the king's son-in-law, since I am a poor man [I cannot give you a dowry] and lightly esteemed?" [I have no lineage to offset the lack of dowry. He does not seem to be suspicious of this offer as he was before] And the servants of Saul reported to him according to these words which David spoke.

Verse 25:

Saul then said. "Thus you shall say to David, 'The king does not desire any dowry except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, [take vengeance on the king's enemies. Saul planned to have David fall at the hands of the Philistines.]

When the Ammorites came sweeping down the Fertile Crescent, the eastern Ammorites [those in Mesopotamia] did not practice circumcision. The western Ammorites [those in Palestine] did. Circumcision, as practiced by many tribes, was just a rite of puberty, but with the Israelites, it had a religious significance. In Israel on the eighth day, as part of the child's dedication to God, he was circumcised. The Philistines, who had migrated from the Aegean Sea area, were noted for being uncircumcised in the midst of the circumcised. Saul wanted David to fight Philistines, who were superb warriors, well-armed, highly trained and skilled in warfare, not Ammorites who were poor fighters. How could he be sure? Bring back 100 sets of ears? No! But

foreskins! Those had to come from Philistines. He wanted proof positive that 100 Philistines were killed by David. He assumed that would take care of David. Unfortunately for him it did not.

Verse 26:

When his servants told David these words, it pleased David to become the king's son-in-law [Now he really wants to. He wants Michal. He loves her very much, and she loves him] Before the days had expired David rose up and went, he and his men, and struck down two hundred men [double the dowry] among the Philistines. Then David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full number to the king, that he might become the king's son-in-law. [Saul is now stuck. He has promised in front of all his courtiers and even used them as a go-between] So Saul gave him Michal his daughter for a wife.

Verse 28. Look at the tragedy here. Saul goes from suspicion, to dread, to an "enemy continually." He has reached the third "giving over," the "consumed" stage.

When Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, [he has full and complete knowledge, and he does not care] and that Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him, [She was very special to Saul, one of his most prized possessions for he does not kill her when she helps David escape from him, and yet he has no concern about using her], then Saul was even more afraid of David. Thus Saul was David's enemy continually.

Saul knew God had chosen David. He knew his own daughter, whom he loved dearly, loved David. He also knew as long as David was alive his throne would never be safe. So, he deliberately chose to become the "enemy continually" of the man his own God had chosen. He had a "trifling" mind. He could no longer see things clearly, for in choosing to become the "enemy continually" of God's chosen king, Saul also chose to become the "enemy continually" of God Himself.

I want to show you the deterioration that happens to a man in this position.

Verse 30:

Then the commanders of the Philistines went out to battle, and it happened as often as they went out, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul. So his name was highly esteemed.

If God is going to destroy you, my friends, he always goes first class. He was determined, now, to destroy Saul physically. As Saul had no intention of giving up the throne voluntarily, God let the Philistines remove him bodily. He increased and increased those things which contributed to Saul's wrong choices, and Saul just kept on making them.

What happened? Chapter 19, verse 1:

Now Saul told Jonathan his son and all his servants to put David to death.

Saul now made it an open established policy to kill David. He did not try to hide it. But Jonathan "delighted" in David and interceded for him. Based on the fact that the Lord obviously blessed David, that God greatly used him to mightily bless Israel, that Saul himself at one time rejoiced over him, and that David was innocent of any wrong doing, Jonathan pleaded with his father. [Chap. 19:2-5] Saul "repented" of his policy, but unfortunately it was only a temporary feeling of remorse and not true repentance.

Chapter 19, Verse 6:

And Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan, and Saul vowed, "As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death." Then Jonathan called David, and Jonathan told him all these words. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as formerly.

Until the first threat comes along, Chap 19:8:

When there was war again, David went out and fought with the Philistines and defeated them with great slaughter, so that they fled before him.

God doubles and doubles the pressure on Saul as he rebels against God.

Chapter 19:9-10:

Now there was an evil spirit from the LORD on Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand, and David was playing the harp with his hand. And Saul tried to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, so that he struck the spear into the wall. And David fled and escaped that night.

That was the last time David reported to Saul. He now knew Saul was irrevocably committed to killing him. He had only returned at Jonathan's request, but now it was impossible. Saul was so committed to the destruction of David that he made plans openly. That night he sent messengers to the house of David, intending to kill him in the morning. Meanwhile, Michal, who loved David even more than her father, spoke to him, "If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be put to death." [Somehow she must have gotten the message from her father.] She lowered David over the wall, and he fled. In his place she put her teraphim, her household god, probably a fertility idol used to insure lots of children. [Saul's family had apparently kept some of their idols.] She wrapped its head in a goat hair shawl and covered its face to keep out the night air, as they did in the ancient east. She also padded the bed. In the morning when the servants came to take David, they discovered the teraphim instead. Then when Saul confronted Michal about her treachery, she lied to him saying, "If I had not let him go, he would have killed me." [Chapter 19:11-17]

When Saul was told David had fled to Samuel at Ramah, he immediately sent messengers in pursuit. But when these messengers came upon Samuel presiding over a company of prophets who were prophesying, the Spirit of God came upon them, and they also prophesied. Three times Saul sent messengers, and three times they prophesied. Scripture does not tell us what they prophesied. I personally believe, however, that because God sincerely wanted Saul to get a message, Saul heard out of the mouths of his own messengers that David was God's anointed. As a result, Saul would know, without a doubt, that he was defying God, as is the case in Romans 1:32. [Chapter 19:18-21]

Did Saul repent? No. He was so determined to kill David, that he himself set out after him. Along the way, though, even before he got to Ramah, the Spirit of God came upon him, and he began to prophesy.

Verse 23:

And he proceeded there to Naioth in Ramah; [Naioth means "dwelling." It is probably a living compound of prophets, the school of the prophets] and the Spirit of God came upon him [Saul] also, so that he went along prophesying continually until he came to Naioth in Ramah.

Saul was caught on the road by the Spirit of God [somewhat similar to the apostle Paul a thousand years later on his way to Damascus, Acts 9:1-9], and he prophesied all the way to Ramah. Verse 24:

And he also stripped off his clothes [literally; his upper garments], and he too prophesied before Samuel and lay down naked all that day and all that night. [In the Hebrew this is not something that happened to the messengers. It only happened to Saul. God gives him a double dose of being Spirit filled again.] Therefore they say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

Does that sound familiar? In our very first lesson, [Chapter 10: 9-12] when God first chose Saul to be king of Israel, he filled him with His Spirit, and Saul prophesied. Saul was not a son of prophets nor was he part of the school of prophets. He was an outsider. To see Saul, son of Kish, prophesying, caused quite a stir. It was proof from God to Saul and to Israel that, "You are my anointed to rule Israel." Now, after many years, the

Spirit of God again filled Saul, and Saul prophesied. It re-established this saying, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

Do you see the grace of God? God had done everything humanly possible, Godly possible, to bring Saul to repentance. He had even given him a very intense experience of what he once had. But the one thing he did not do was coerce Saul's will. A true lover never coerces the will of his beloved, and God loved Saul. The prophesying went on for a day and a night. Saul was probably prophesying his own downfall, but he could not change. What was once proof that he was God's anointed was now proof that he was God's rejected. Before, when Saul chose not to obey God, his mind could still make a trial. But now he had a trialess mind, a mind that could not choose. His only thought was, "the throne for me and the lineage for my family." In spite of God's gift of some twenty-four hours of a Spirit filled life again, Saul could not change. "Because they refused the love of the truth, God gave them over to error that they might believe what was false." Saul had not lost his God-given gift of eternal life, but he had certainly destroyed his life here because of his consistent rejection of God's known will for him.

Do not trifle with God. Even if you are his anointed, do not trifle with God. I have, unfortunately, heard many stories of godly men with tremendous ministries who have destroyed their lives and their ministries. Do not ever presume on God. I do not care how he is blessing your ministry. I can name people whose books you have in your library who no longer have a ministry because they did not take God at his word. Do not ever, ever presume on God.

Prayer:

Father, we thank you so much that you are a God that loves us enough to really hurt us if you have to to get our attention, that you are a God who will even take us home if you have to in order that we will not destroy your work down here. But, God, all the way along the line, before that ever happens, you give us warning, after warning, after warning because you really do not want us to have to go home "before our time." You really do not want us to stand before you only, "saved as though by fire." You want us to stand before you and hear, "Well done thou good and faithful servant." Father, we want to be mindful that Saul started out loving you, but Saul loved Saul more, more than you and eventually Saul was destroyed. You did not love Saul any less than us. You play no favorites. So, Father, let us be mindful of the high and holy calling and the tremendous responsibility of being sons of the living God. So let us walk softly before you and take heed lest we fall, and thank you so much for your love for us. In Jesus Name we pray. Amen.

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