



## **"What are You Packing?" - 1 Samuel 118**

*by Pastor Tim Dodson  
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**The events of 1 Samuel 17 which chronicle the killing of the giant Goliath by a young boy named David,** was one of those life-changing events that each of us have had and which we legitimately believe will change our lives and we will never forget! What transpired that day is the stuff of Noah's ark...the parting of the Red Sea, the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah. It was an event that one would expect to be burned into the psyche of all that witnessed those events. Much like our Pearl Harbor...the bombing of Nagasaki, the horrors of Auschwitz, the 9/11 terror strikes, and the landing on the moon.

Each of us have witnessed social/cultural events and have experienced personal incidents that we believed at that moment we would never forget...we would never lose the picture and the impact of that event. At the time, we believe we are forever changed. But one need not live long to see that despite the impact of such events...no matter the grand impression of that occurrence, we do, *so often*, forget. Perhaps that is the reason for our repetition in history! George Santayana, (in *The Life of Reason*, 1905) once said "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." And so the world goes...

While it seemed that Saul had seen and experienced something that would forever change him and his life, the fact of the matter is that while he initially embraced David and the wonder of what happened, he was soon overcome by his self-idolatry and his own self-interest. For those on the outside of the story, we can stand in incredulous wonder of such forgetfulness and such an 'about-face.' However, when it is *US* that is in the title roll, it is quite another story!

Saul began what would be a slow and steady decline...a painful cancerous demise that would slowly consume him, but not before it consumed his family, his nation, and his vertical relationship with his Creator. During this meltdown, Saul would ignore the counsel of those around Him, fail to take advantage of numerous "second chances", and would be consumed mentally and internally as much as the fall out of his world and the physical ramifications. He would break promises. He would turn against those he once claimed he loved. He isolated himself, and would eventually die virtually alone.

At first there was exhilarating joy and support of David! He virtually claimed him as his son and his real son Jonathan embraced him as his own brother. But the first sign of a crack in this relationship came on the heels of verse 6-9, where the women sang songs which exalted David higher than Saul in the field of battle. Was the song based on fact? Who knows! But just the *idea* that David might be thought of higher than himself began a meltdown that would bring pain to everyone around him. For seldom do such incidents play out in a vacuum, but rather they touch everyone and everything around us!

So simple jealousy ...something that our culture sees as so innocuous, began an avalanche that would eventually bury Saul and all that he had up to this point called his world. Perhaps one could follow the trail back even further...back to his pride-motivated disobedience with the Amalekites. But it is not hard to see that either way, his downfall began due to his pride and jealousy! Somewhere along the way he had gotten the idea that he was untouchable! He was the top of the heap...or at least equal with all those who were!

And at that point...like a lot of us, he felt he no longer need to consider the grand obedience, nor did he need to seek and receive counsel. In the end he would eventually bite every hand that loved him...every hand that tried to reach out to him with love and protection. First it was Samuel...his mentor and guide. Now it would be David, who loved and respected him, and the list would get quite long before we reach his end! Everyone around Saul...including his children, would become his enemies.

Saul felt he had been disrespected in verses 8 and 9, and would not let the perceived slight go. How he looked at David changed from that point, even though David did nothing directly to hurt Saul, and he quite likely...*at least for awhile*, didn't even know Saul had a grievance against him! It seemed that for Saul, his anger and jealousy...as it does for us, would blind him and close his ears. Ephesians 4:26 tells us to "...*not let the sun go down while you are still angry.*" And Ephesians 4:31 "*Let all bitterness and wrath and anger ... be put away from you...*" Mark 11:25 also says "*And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.*"

I once heard a pastor say that "*bitterness is like a twinkie. You can unwrap that thing 20 years later and it is just as sweet as at first...*" Hmmm. That's a vivid picture! Saul tried repeatedly to get along with David...or rather to "put up with David," but he never squared things. He never made things right. And bitterness and jealousy are not static issues. They are cancerous issues and they will grow and become so entrenched that you are unable to get them out and they will then spiritually kill you. You know this is a fact...for you have undoubtedly seen it play out with your own eyes.

Now David lived his life righteously despite the times of adversity and animosity. He also lived with a right heart even when he was praised and exalted. Whether he was lifted up or kicked down, he held his course. Yet David was never "done." He was known to have faltered. He was known to have out-right *failed*. But He was...*as God recorded in Acts 13:22*, a "man after my own heart." Perhaps he understood at least in principle the passage in Philippians 1:6 "*I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*" However, such was not the case with Saul. Saul appeared to have embraced a theology of "arrival." He was King. He was 'the man.' And he ceased to embrace humility...he failed to acknowledge sovereignty in God and an open heart to those God had placed as voices in his life to help guide him.

Saul would go on to live out the warning of James 3:16 ..."*Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.*" He would essentially forget about the awe-struck moments...the miraculous...the wonder of God's hand! And like so very many who have followed him, he would eventually throw it all away. He would be relegated to a byline in the history of humanity, while David...a man who loved and respected him so immensely, would go on to legend!

We read here and elsewhere, that the "spirit of the God had left Saul." That's a shocking acknowledgement, because we want to believe that we can live in any manner and do whatever we want to do and the spirit of God will always remain with us no matter what. But in Exodus we read how the presence of God left the tabernacle because of the hard-heartedness of the people. We read again in Ezekiel, where the spirit of God "departed." And now with Saul...to whom the "spirit of God" also had taken a hike. Thus it would behoove us to pay attention herein! There is record of how Israel went to battle without the spirit of God and didn't know it and were butchered! In fact, mankind has a long history of idolatry and self-anointing that caused the Holy Spirit to depart an individual and even a church. Would we know it if it occurred? Would *you*?

One of the signs of the indwelling Spirit of God is "one is larger than himself or herself." What I mean by that is there was and is evidence of the supernatural...the work of God beyond anything human. The hand of God is not just a participant in such situations, but **leading** in one's life. However...when we begin to make decisions that are solely about me and mine...about what I want and what I have going on, and the 'Christ body' is no longer considered, then I am factually in trouble.

When worldly things take precedence over spiritual...when I am no longer participating in the battle for the kingdom...when I am merely taking and not giving, consuming and not producing, and spiritually existing but not truly living...you can be certain the spirit of God is absent. How can I say such a thing? Because the Spirit of God will not live that way. God will not join you in anger and bitterness. The Spirit of God will not participate in idolatry and selfism. The Spirit of God will not live idle...He has a job to do and will do it...*with or without you*. So when we reject his attributes, we essentially reject *HIM*. And so he *leaves us*...

Now I don't know if I have ever functionally talked someone down off the ledge in this matter. That's a sad admission, but certainly an idea I am pondering! I hope I have successfully warned folks away from ever getting into that scenario, but once there, it is so very hard to wake that person up! Because if the Holy Spirit IS departed, then that person is functionally spiritually blind and deaf once again and has no real perception that they are in danger despite everyone around them jumping up and down and waving their hands!

David's life still spoke in terms of the miraculous. It still reflected the presence and power of God. But Saul's is already beginning to meltdown. He apparently justified his paranoia as well as his bitterness. After all, "he had a good reason." Yes, ...*don't we all?* The "rocket launch" of warning in this matter is when we begin to justify disobedience and/or living contrary to scripture. When we tell ourselves that we are "excused" from the battle or that we are "doing enough" for God, because of something I have going in my life. Such is deserving of extreme warning because if the spirit of God is absent in such, we are out there alone!

I wonder if we are willing to day to bravely look in there and see if He's home? He says we are the temple now, so I ask you...*is the Spirit still residing? Is The Holy Spirit still in the house?* What evidence do you have? What measurement are you using? Are you still today allowing scripture to be the 'bar' of your living and Jesus Christ alone to be the example of *how* to live? Are you quick to answer in the affirmative without really looking? What would those around you say if you asked them? Would they see the evidence of a Spirit filled temple in you?

David...*filled with the spirit of God*, doubled what was expected of Him. Yet we struggle so often to step up to, *frankly*, the little that God asks of us. Do you love Him most? *What does your living say?* Does he get the first fruits of your life? *What does your living say?* Do you worship Him or is there another person or thing that comes first?

***What does your living say?***