

by Pastor Tim Dodson
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BETRAYAL

1 Samuel Chapter 19



What was occurring in Chapter 19 of 1 Samuel was a long time coming. These events did not develop overnight. Saul's heart of jealousy and bitterness was not born upon a moment, but rather grew overtime. There were indeed critical events... 'crossroads' that had transpired. Yet the full manifest of this affair grew overtime and developed through Saul's unwillingness to 'face the music.'

There were large segments of Saul's life and thinking that fostered his bitterness and desire for selfish gain. The 'mistake,' *if you will*, was made long ago. THIS was not the mistake itself; *this was the fruit of that mistake*. The inevitable manifest of not only *allowing* bitterness, jealousy and self-promotion to exist, but the feeding of such. The unwillingness to call sin sin. The condoning of self-idolatry and personal entitlement. It was all coming to a head, and Saul...the great warrior/king chosen by God would now begin his slow meltdown that would eventually end in a shameful, embarrassing and unnecessary death. Saul's pride would eventually kill him, but not before it would render him spiritually impotent and a failure of leadership.

Jonathan, Saul's son would step in to try to intervene. God knows that Samuel the priest tried also to do the same earlier. No doubt others attempted to 'talk Saul down' but all ultimately failed. There were moments herein and throughout this saga, where Saul had times of spiritual clarity. Verse 7 in this chapter and elsewhere, in which He was temporarily regretful. He would weep over his heart condition...that which he knew was wrong. He would at times beg David for forgiveness but as always is the case, unless there is real repentance, there will be no lasting change. In fact, each time we go through such hallow regret, we steel ourselves a little more for the next time. We build up our tolerance and callous-over our hearts! And in doing so we no longer hear from God on the subject because His word and spirit can no longer get into our heart.

When we began to read about Saul back 10 chapters ago, who would have ever thought it would come to this! Saul was a star! He was naturally gifted and spiritually blessed. He was humble and subservient. But once again, it seems Saul developed like a cancer. Un-natural and destructive, he matured not as the coming Christ, but as a spiritual abomination. He would squander all that God gave him for the desire for more and the lust for power. Oh yes...he would justify his actions. He would tell his son Jonathan that David was dangerous...that David was trying to steal the throne and it was theirs to protect! But such changes nothing. For a child could see that this was nothing more than envy and malice. Nothing blinds a man like jealousy!

Jonathan, Saul's son, having failed to reach his father, made the incredible choice to stand by what was right as well as stand by the promises he had made to David. Such friendships and loyalty are rare in any generation. I myself have experienced such only a handful of times in my lifetime. Jonathan and David had earlier made a covenant of friendship and a promise of loyalty. And as rare as it is, this was a covenant that was made in good faith. They both meant it. I hope and pray that we as a church can learn to be as faithful and honest. We certainly have a way to go on that matter.

Jonathan both remembered and acknowledged the history that had transpired. He declared David's innocence. He spoke of David's service, integrity, and sacrifice. A lot of victories had been acquired at the hand of David! Truthfully the nation *existed* because of David and God working through him! Yet ultimately, all that history would be forgotten in Saul. All the times David comforted Saul...playing music for him, helping him through the dark times, would be discarded as if they never happened. Saul took and he took, and David kept giving until Saul finally turned to 'bite the hand that fed him.' Back in chapter 18, Saul was bound to David and would not even let him return back to his family! Saul made him a captain over his armies and the people acknowledged that it was all a good thing that was happening! They truly had it going on!

But the heart distance that would now be transversed would be astonishing. Promises would be made. Covenants pledged. Loyalties vowed. And despite it all, they all would be inexplicably tossed. Not because David failed to deliver, but because Saul's was blinded by self and jealousy. He wanted what he wanted and no one was going to stand in his way. But Saul forgot one extremely important aspect in all of this, and that was that GOD had chosen David, and David's life had proven it. So Saul was not fighting against David, He was fighting against God. And that would be a fight he would ultimately lose, despite God's incredible patience and grace. Saul just wouldn't stop, despite the repeated warnings...over and over throughout his lifetime.

So in the end Saul betrays David...breaks his promises, forgets his blessings, and turns on him.

I know that I tend to live in an imaginary idyllic world where promises mean something and loyalties matter. Rarely does such really exist today except in fairy tales! But to let this matter pass as children of God is to negate and trivialize these issues as unimportant or forgivable in the culture of the world in which we have to live. Sort of the idea of "it can't be done." Yet we must realize that to shelf all of this is to write off God's desire for his community and His direction for His disciples.

In Matthew 26:35 Peter said to Jesus "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!" And all the disciples said the same." But we know that is not how the story played out don't we? It's so funny to hear those words from Peter, when I have essentially been told that same thing by a lot of folks who gave me the "Jesus treatment" too...denying me also when things got hot. "I'm here for you brother!" "I got your back!" I know a lot of people lied as to their commitment, but you can count on me pastor!" I know...I know...I am supposed to "rejoice" in such events as I share the path that Christ walked! But does this not matter to Christ?

Proverbs 17:17 *A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*

Proverbs 3:3 *Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.*

1 Corinthians 13:7 *Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

John 15:13 *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.*

And then there are warnings against those who chose to ignore the positive calls:

Proverbs 17:11 *An evil man seeks only rebellion, and a cruel messenger will be sent against him.*

2 Chronicles 16:9 *"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him. You have done foolishly in this, for from now on you will have wars."*

David...once there was a "calm" in the relationship, continued to serve Israel and King Saul with both humility and a serious battle edge. He didn't back up because Saul undependable or unfaithful! No doubt David understood that his calling and mission could never be contingent upon others broken promises nor whether he was highly esteemed by everyone in his purview! Ultimately, he worked for a greater king...one who would "never leave him nor forsake him." (Hebrews 13:5)

Many things would expose Saul's true character...none of which were pretty or spoke highly of him! He would break promises and lash out against David. His paranoia, fears, worry and erratic swings spoke volumes as to his state of unrest and lack of peace. And yet Saul wanted position and power more than he wanted peace!

James 3:16 says "For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there." Such strife and division rains chaos on our lives. Evil imaginations, emotional stress, spiritual distance, isolation, disregard for friends (many for which we have had for YEARS!), paranoia, etc. Saul's life would *unravel*. His relationships and family connections would disintegrate. There would be increasing strife and dissension. And just like us, Saul, instead of repenting, would grab hold of HIS life all the tighter, and dig in all the deeper. BUT Saul thought this was a battle with David, when it was a battle with God, and that is a battle he could not win, did not win, and we will not win either.

Once Saul knew where David was hiding, he sent a group of soldiers to go get him. But God did an incredible thing. As the soldiers came onto the scene of ecstatic prophets prophesying under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they too were swept away by the presence of the Spirit of God! But in evidence of Saul's blinding pride and stubborn heart, he didn't get the hint and sent another group of soldiers. The same thing happened again. So round three, he goes himself and God overcomes Him too.

God's grace of course runs deep. No one can fault us for moving to do something that we think is correct even if we are as wrong as can be. But to do it again with the same results...the same failure, and then do it a third time is blindness and pride at its worst! One would expect some clowns to come out and cram into little cars at such a show! Yet, there seems to be no limit to the level of denial of truth, and spiritual blindness that is caused by the free run of pride! Saul wanted to be king, but he couldn't control anything. Because GOD didn't want him to be king, so it ultimately didn't matter. Because God was in control and calling the shots, and all the chanting in the world was not going to change anything.

From this day forward, Saul's world would steadily slip away. His power and nation would be slowly but steadily stripped from him and his own people and family would increasingly disregard him and his throne. Ironically, instead of holding onto his position, he would painfully loose what he had. Matthew 25:29 speaks of such, saying "even what he has will be taken away." Rebellion is a terrible offense and one so incredibly personally blinding. So often we just don't see what we are doing. Our unwillingness to cut it short has consistently had devastating results, and God has no choice but to bring down upon that person the hand of judgment!

With the words of God, Samuel the prophet would tell Saul "...rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king." (1Sa 15:23) For Saul, it was over. But God's grace runs deep and he calls us still. Even those who are living in rebellion and pride! He will restore you to his good standing, but that decision is your to make! What will be your story in the end? Hey Rebel...will it be a Saul story...or a Peter story?