

1 Samuel Series #9

“The Danger of Envy” – 1 Samuel 18:5-16

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Two Men*

1. Two men were walking down the road together
2. One was greedy while the other was filled with envy
3. As they were walking, a third man joined them and engaged them in conversation
4. After a while he revealed that he was an angel and would grant the men whatever they wished
 - a. the first man to wish would get whatever he asked
 - b. but the second would get double what the first man asked for
5. The greedy man knew what he wanted but because he was greedy wanted as much as he could get so he waited for the envious man to speak first
6. The envious man didn't care what he got, just so long as it was *more* than what the other had - so he too waited for the other to make his wish
7. They argued with each other for a long time why the other should speak first - but neither was willing to go first
8. Finally, the greedy man who was stronger, grabbed the envious man and began to beat him
9. The envious man cried out, “I wish to be blind in one eye.”
10. Immediately his wish was granted; he went blind in one eye
11. The greedy man, of course, went blind in both eyes

B. *The Peril of Envy*

1. Both greed and envy are sins of which we are warned in scripture time and again
2. Both blind us to the kind of joyful and peaceful life God designs and desires for those who follow Him
3. But both are sins which we can easily fall in to
4. Let's take a look at the danger and peril of envy

II. TEXT

A. V. 5

{5} So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and behaved wisely. And Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

1. These verses take place just after David has killed Goliath
2. Following the victory over the giant, the armies of Israel routed the Philistines and carried the battle all the way deep into their territory
3. This war probably lasted for several days and maybe even a couple weeks

4. We read that after David's defeat of Goliath, Saul promoted him to be a commander in the army
5. David then led his troops in pursuing the enemy
6. Whatever David did prospered
7. He had incredible success in these battles and showed himself to be quite skilled as a military strategist
8. Not only was King Saul enamored of David, but so were all the men of the army

B. Vs. 6-9

{6} Now it had happened as they were coming home, when David was returning from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women had come out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy, and with musical instruments.

{7} So the women sang as they danced, and said: "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands."

1. Once the war was over and the Philistines had been driven from the land, the armies of Israel returned to their homes
2. As was a common practice in that day, the ladies came out to throw a victory celebration for the conquering heroes
 - a. they brought out their musical instrument and noise makers
 - b. and danced in the streets as their husbands, and brothers, and fathers returned
 - c. we recently celebrated the 50th anniversary of the end of WWII and saw the film and pictures of the parades and celebration that greeted the soldiers as they returned home -
 - d. can understand the joy that would mark this event!
3. The big hit of the day was a little ditty that went: "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands."
4. David's fame and exploits had preceded him — and now as the armies return, he has become the new national hero
5. Prior to this, the hero had been King Saul
 - a. he was the one who had been the focus of their praise and celebration
 - b. he was the one who had been their leader, their hero
6. But the crowd is fickle, and now they sing a new man's praise = David
7. Where as Saul has slain his thousands, well, David - he's 10 times more successful!
8. I'm sure you can guess what Saul's response to all this was . . .

{8} Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed only thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?"

{9} So Saul eyed David from that day forward.

1. From the moment the prophet Samuel had told Saul God had rejected him from being king and had selected someone else, Saul had been nervously keeping an eye out for who it might be
2. When Saul realized that the Holy Spirit was no longer empowering him to rule the nation and that his skill and leading the army into battle was gone, he knew that his days were numbered
3. But rather than resigning and turning the throne over to Samuel for his replacement, Saul tried to keep up appearances and hold on to the throne
4. Now, for the first time, he sees someone who could take his place - David
5. So from that day forward, Saul kept a wary eye on him

C. Vs. 10-12

{10} And it happened on the next day that the distressing spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied inside the house. So David played music with his hand, as at other times; but there was a spear in Saul's hand.

{11} And Saul cast the spear, for he said, "I will pin David to the wall!" But David escaped his presence twice.

1. As soon as they return to Gibeah, which was the center of Saul's kingdom and his capital, they settle back in to their normal lives
2. Saul is seated there upon his throne and David has once again taken up his station as the king's musician
3. And once again the evil spirit which tormented Saul as a judgment from God for his rebellion came upon him
 - a. Saul went in to one of his fits
 - b. don't let that word "prophesied" throw you
 - c. it would be better translated as "raved"
4. Whenever Saul went into one of his fits, David would play his harp and the evil spirit which tormented Saul would leave
5. But this time, when Saul comes out of the fit, he is in his own rage at David who seems to have more control over Saul than Saul does over himself
6. He takes the javelin which he was holding, and throws it with all his might at David
7. But David ducks and gets out of the way
8. This happened twice!

{12} Now Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, but had departed from Saul.

1. Here we see the real reason for Saul's actions and fear -
2. Saul knew that God was with David, but he had departed from Saul
3. While every little thing that David did was wildly successful, everything Saul did was a horrible flop
4. And since Saul had been in that place of God's favor and empowering but now was without it, he knew that there was no stopping David
5. Saul was indeed, in a desperate situation; what was he to do?

D. Vs. 13-16

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

{14} And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the LORD was with him.

{15} Therefore, when Saul saw that he behaved very wisely, he was afraid of him.

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

1. Saul came up with an idea:
 - a. he would demote David from being one of his personal attendants and counselors
 - b. to being merely a captain over a troop of a 1000 men
 - c. as a captain, David would stand on the front ranks in battle
 - d. where the chances of his being killed were greatly increased
 - e. in fact, David would later follow this same ploy with a man named Urriah, the husband of Bathsheba
2. But in David's case it didn't work
 - a. David led his men into and out of battle
 - b. and every time he was tremendously successful
 - c. so much so in fact, that his fame continued to grow
 - d. everything he set his hand to succeeded
 - e. it got to the point where David's name was on everyone's lips
3. And Saul's fear only grew and grew
4. For God turned what Saul meant for harm to David's good

III. CONCLUSION

A. Saul's Envy

1. It's not hard to see in all this how Saul was driven by envy of David
2. He knew the Lord was with David while the Spirit had left him
3. He was envious of David's success and anointing
4. It grated on him to hear David's name continually spoken in such glowing terms by everyone around him
5. Like Jan Brady's envy of her sister Marsha, "Marsha, Marsha, Marsha."
6. Saul would say, "David, David, David!"
7. This envy of David drove Saul to commit greater acts of sin
8. He plotted David's death
9. He even tried to kill David by throwing a javelin at him
10. The next several chapters are the story of Saul's hunting and hounding David throughout the land of Israel, trying to kill him

B. The Sin of Envy

1. As I was meditating on this passage, I realized that envy is the driving force behind many of the more well known bible stories
 - a. Cain was driven by envy when he killed his brother Able
 - b. the tension between Leah and Rachel was due to envy over Jacob's affection
 - c. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery in Egypt because of envy
 - d. Aaron and Miriam contended with Moses over the leadership of the nation of Israel due to envy
 - e. John tells us Jesus was crucified by the religious leaders because of envy
2. Then I discovered that as we look at the letters of Paul, James, and Peter in the NT, we are constantly warned about the danger of envy
3. A good example is {James 3:16} "Where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there."
4. Why is envy such a dangerous thing?
5. First, let's make sure we understand what envy is:
6. Envy is a resentment that someone else has something we do not, with belief that we *should* have it
7. Envy doesn't rejoice when others prosper—rather, envy complains when others succeed
8. The basic problem with envy is that it calls into question God's justice
 - a. envy considers that God is not fair in what He does
 - b. that I know better than God what each person should get
 - c. at it's core, envy thinks it knows more than God and makes a better judge
10. In Romans 1:29 Paul says envy is a characteristic mark of mankind's rebellion against God
11. In Gal. 5:21 it is one of the fruits of the flesh
12. In Titus 3:3 it is one of the things that identifies a person as being unsaved!
13. No wonder then that believers are exhorted to put away all envy

{Gal 5:26} "Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

{1 Pet 2:1} "Lay aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking."

C. The Danger of Envy

1. Herein lies the real danger of envy . . .
2. Though the OT is filled with examples and stories of the seriousness of envy, and though the NT is clear in its call to put away all envy -
3. Envy is one of those sins that has been accommodated by the church
4. We rail against drunkenness and drugs
5. We blast sexual immorality and abuse
6. We pull out our doctrinal six-shooters and fire away at false teaching
7. And all the while, the deeper and more dangerous sins find a ready home in our hearts
8. Friends, it is right for us to be concerned about the obvious sins of our time

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9. But what attention do we give to the classic sins which the saints have identified as the crucial issues of our lives for centuries?
 - a. I'm referring to the 7 deadly sins of
 - b. pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth
 10. How could we ever hope to be successful in dealing with the blight of pornography in our city if we cannot control our own lusts at home?
 11. How can we ever hope to defeat violent crime in our streets if we cannot overcome our own anger?
 12. And how can we ever hope to defeat vandalism and theft if we cannot overcome our own envy?
 13. As I was studying for this morning's message, I was brought up short with just how much our culture feeds envy
 - a. truly, envy has been turned from a vice into almost a virtue in our society
 - b. as we have come to define success according to how many toys you own, we become envious of those who have more stuff than we do
 - c. how often are our decisions made by a desire that others would envy *us*?
 - d. Mark Twain hit the nail on the head when he wrote, "A man will do many things to get himself loved. But he'll do all things to get himself envied."
 14. I wonder how much in the modern American church scene is done out of envy
 - a. a pastor or church board will see the success of another church
 - b. and out envy will begin to devise new programs and outreaches to reach more people
 - c. FB Meyer was a much beloved pastor, commentator and writer of devotional literature
 - 1) he pastored a church in London at the same time as G Cambell Morgan & Charles Spurgeon
 - 2) both Morgan and Spurgeon had much larger congregations than Meyer
 - 3) he confessed that for a long time he was very envious of their success
 - 4) But when he began to pray for the Lord to bless them and their ministries, he found real peace of heart
 - 5) And as God heard his prayer, and began to bless the other two churches, they filled up and the overflow filled Meyer's church as well
 15. I wish I could say I have rooted out all envy - but I haven't
 - a. and the reality of that came home to me this last Friday morning just as I was beginning my study for this message
 - b. Suzanne brought in a brochure she had received for a new church in Camarillo
 - c. it was very clever
 - d. now, just the night before I had spent a couple hours finishing one for

- our fellowship
- e. and as I looked at the one Suzanne gave me, I was very envious, though I didn't realize it for what it was
 - f. I found myself wishing that I had thought of the stuff they had, *before* they had and had printed our flyer up first
 - g. and since delving in to this subject on Friday, I have become keenly aware of just how much envy resides in me
16. I've come to see how envy robs me of the spirit of praise and worship to God because it causes me to judge His justice
17. I've come to see how envy denies the grace of God because it makes me think about what God *owes* me

D. The Cure For Envy

1. So, what's the cure for envy?
2. First, we need to confess it = a sin
3. Second, we need to repent of it
4. Third, we need to begin to give thanks to God for what we have received
 - a. a thankful heart is the single greatest weapon against envy
 - b. and if you find it hard to thank God because you seem to have so little to be thankful for, that is a sure sign you are consumed by envy