

How to Please God with Depression

David, Part 3

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20 February 2008

Midweek Prayer Meeting

1 Samuel 16:14-23

Scripture and Theme: What do you do when you are depressed? The title of our message this evening is: "How to Please God with Depression". If your life is centered on God, then you'll want to please God no matter what you feel like, even if you are depressed. Open your Bible to the book of **1 Samuel 16:14-23** this evening.

We are really looking at TWO men tonight: David and Saul. Saul is a study in Disaster. The life of Saul shows us that it doesn't matter how much poise, power, and purity you have at the beginning—but how you finish the race of life!

David is a humble child of God who put God first, and Saul, a proud leader who knows the Lord only in a superficial way and eventually falls away from the faith altogether. About the only detail David and Saul have in common is that they were both kings.

But let us meet them for the first time together in the Scriptures in **1 Samuel 16:14-23**. Let's stand together as we read. "But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him. 15 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."

[Prayer for Guidance]

Introduction: Do Christians at times deal with deep depression? Yes from time to time, most do! Yet even in David's times in the valley of the shadow of death, he always found a way to worship God. He found a way to please God.

David gives us a wonderful hope, and here it is: If you know God, you can please God with your depression! You don't have to be a slave to your emotions. You can deny yourself and please God no matter what you feel like! You have the greatest hope in the world.

On the other hand Saul leaves us with an entirely different truth: that is, no matter how great you are humanly speaking, if you don't know God, you are a slave to your emotions.

Tonight we are going to look at the Histories, the Hearts, and the Hopes of David and Saul.

I. First let's look at **Histories** of David and Saul. They have similar histories—both from no name families, both chosen to be king, but that is where the similarities end.

A. **David** was a ruddy youth—a cute little kid from the tribe of **Judah**.¹ David's ancestry was not all that impressive.

(1) His **Genealogical** records would not been a good selling point for making him the king of **Israel**. For one thing, he was not a pure blooded Jew. His grandmother was Ruth the Moabitess. Ruth was a poor foreigner—so poor in fact that she was reduced to gleaning grain when she met Boaz. And Boaz didn't have all that much going for him either. His dad, Salmon, married Rahab the prostitute from Jericho. Though we see the grace of God in all this today, back then it would have been anything but impressive, surely not for the lineage of a king! Now put aside David's genealogical records, and look at his record in Scripture, because when all is said and done, God's record of us is all that matters.

(2) David's record in **Scripture** is impressive. Think about how much space God devotes to the lives of other great men of the Bible. Abraham's life fills 13 chapters. Joseph's life is covered in 14 chapters. But 54 entire chapters are given to record the life of this man after God's own heart, and that does not include the **73 psalms** that are attributed to be written by him. His life is mentioned throughout the Bible. The Apostle Paul's name is recorded 114 times. Moses is mentioned 700 times in the Bible. But the name of David is mentioned 1,127 times!

David must have been an amazing man to have that kind of record in Scripture—maybe you think he never struggled. He dealt with every struggle you and I have, and maybe more. But when he was squeezed, he went to God and relied on His grace. When David was deep in depression and discouragement he found a way to worship God. His depression didn't hurt him, but made him more holy—more like the God he panted after.

B. Though **Saul** came from the tiny tribe of **Benjamin (1 Samuel 9:21)**, he was a big, physically impressive man (**1 Samuel 9:2**). All seemed well on the outside with Saul, but through his life he showed that he was actually a slave to his emotions and he did not have a genuine walk with the Lord. He had a lot of knowledge, but the more his faith was tested, the more his unbelief was revealed.

II. Now look at the **Hearts** of David and Saul.

A. **Saul's** imposing physical stature could not cover up his weak and wicked heart.

When you examine Saul's life, he's a big talker, but he's a fake. His relationship with God is at best superficial and casual. Saul was an imposter.

¹ We see contrasts in the life of David in 1 Samuel 16. In the first part of the chapter we see David's anointing to become the King of Israel, but ironically, in the last part of this chapter, we see David as only a servant.

1. He would at times **reform** his actions, but he could never quite get around to repenting from his heart.
 2. He would **feel contrition** for what he did, but he never actually forsook his sin. The prophet Samuel would tell Saul how terrible his sin was. Saul was a big talker, but he was always **a forgetful hearer**.
 3. Saul was **connected** to his sin. He never let go. Saul would repent from trying to harm David, only to just as **quickly turn back** to his sin and jealousy and self-centered life. Saul is the fulfillment of **Proverbs 26:11** which says, "As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly." Over and over and over Saul proved that he never stopped loving his sin.
 4. He would even **confess** words of someone who was truly repentant, but **his life never followed his words**. Confession moves the lips—repentance moves the heart!
 5. Saul would repent because of the **consequences of sin**. If you will look at Saul's constant excuses, you will see that he was never uncomfortable with his sin—he was just uncomfortable with the **consequences** of sin! Just about every person will repent for a time when they are caught. But they never desire to get rid of all their sins, just the ones that make their life harder.
 6. In **public**, Saul's **confidence** was in God. Saul would **talk big about repentance** in public. He said to Samuel in **1 Samuel 15:24-15**, "I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD... 25 Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD." But Samuel saw through Saul's big words. He knew in **private** Saul was seeking everything else but God. After Samuel's death, Saul even sought the *witch of Endor!*
- B. **David** on the other hand, though he "sinned giant sins" he "fell...at the mere finger of the prophet because he was a [TRUE] repenter at heart (**2 Samuel 12:7-13**)."² David was truly "a man after God's own heart" (**1 Samuel 13:14**).

Jim Elliff gave a great definition of Biblical repentance. I'd like to share it with you. He said, <quote> "Repentance is a change of mind regarding sin and God, an inward turning from sin to God, which is known by [the fruit of obedience] (Mt. 3:8; Acts 26:20; Lk. 13:5-9). It is hating what you once [desired] and [desiring] what you once hated, exchanging irresistible sin for an irresistible Christ. The true repenter [casts himself upon] God. [He has no other option but full dependence on God]. When he fully [realizes] that sin [has utterly destroyed him], God takes him up [into his arms]. [The truly repentant person] will have faith or he will have despair; conviction will either deliver him or devour him." <end quote>

Aren't you glad that Jesus said in **Matthew 9:13**, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"?

David was a truly repentant man—we see his zeal when confronting Goliath as the enemy of God. We see his patience when Saul was seeking his life. We see his repentance at the finger of the Prophet Nathan, and the record of it in Psalm 51.

² Jim Elliff, *The Unrepentant Repenter*. <http://www.ccwonline.org/repent.html>

And we have an amazing record of at least 73 prayers and praises in the collection of David's psalms. David was "a man after God's own heart" (**1 Samuel 13:14**).

- III. Finally, I want to see the **Hopes** of these men. David's hope was in the Lord. No matter what he felt like, he had a zeal to please God. Saul's hope was in his own creative manipulation—in his flesh. He used the name of God for his own gain!

Their responses to Depression in their lives revealed who they were. As we look at these two men tonight, we are going to see how *depression specifically* revealed who these men were.

- A. **David** worshipped God when he was in depression. No matter what he felt like, he had a zeal to please God. His hope was in the LORD no matter what the circumstances or how his stomach was churning!

Listen to David in **Psalm 6**, "O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. 2 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed. 3 My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long? 4 Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake. 5 For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks? 6 I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears. 7 Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies." But listen to David's HOPE in verse 8, "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping. 9 The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer."

David says the same thing in **Psalm 42:11**, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

- B. Take **Saul** on the other hand. Depression showed who he was inside—a selfish man that had a superficial knowledge of God. Saul's depression led him to grow more self-centered and introverted. His behavior became irrational—one minute he lavished praise on David, and the next he wanted to kill him.

Today, Saul would probably be diagnosed with various psychological "diseases" which would excuse his behavior. Saul's problem was not psychological—he had a heart problem!

Saul's true heart is revealed through this depression. Look at our text in **1 Samuel 16:14-23**, "But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him". What does that mean in **verse 14** that "the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul"?

1. First, we need to understand what it does **not** mean.

It does not mean that Saul **lost** his salvation. Saul's heart was never converted. No where in the Bible is a believer ever possessed by a demon, which we are going to find out Saul was.

The problem comes when we look at **1 Samuel 10:9-10** where we read that "God gave him [Saul] another heart...10 ...and the Spirit of God came upon him,

and he prophesied". The whole idea is NOT that Saul was at this time converted. Saul never grew in sanctification, but instead abused his office as king, fell completely away from the faith, sought after psychics and witches, and ended his life through suicide. So this gift of prophecy was a sign by Samuel that he would be the king of Israel. When it says that God gave Saul "another heart", he's not referring to the new heart that the Lord gives us.

2. What **does it** mean then? It means that Saul was given the Spirit as to empower him for service. God didn't save Saul at this moment, but was simply transforming a young man with no leadership abilities into a leader. Saul couldn't lead a flea to a dog's back. He hid "among the stuff" when Samuel sought him out to be king. In giving Saul the gift of prophecy, God was gifting and equipping Saul for the leadership of a nation. This was a gift of "wisdom" for his temporary reign as the king of Israel.³

We see in **2 Samuel 7:15** that Saul is the picture of the professing believer that falls away. Look at **2 Samuel 7:15**, "But my mercy shall not depart away from him [David], as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee." This verse is a picture of apostasy.

Saul never quite came to salvation, and there came a day when God stopped dealing with Saul's heart in mercy. God will at times refuse mercy to people even while they are on this earth if they have been well exposed to the Gospel and have constantly rejected it. *There comes a day when God stops casting pearls before swine.*

The life of Saul should cause those who are casually going through the motions of Christianity to fear. Saul was on the door step of salvation, but he never entered in. He was with God's people; he even led God's people. He even prophesied in the Name of the Lord. But we need to remember the words of Jesus that "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?... 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (**Matthew 7:22-23**).

Verse 14 says "an evil spirit from the LORD troubled [Saul]". Saul was never terribly troubled by his own sin, so God sent a great depression to Saul that was very likely worsened by a demon—some have said it was even the devil himself.

What was Saul's solution? **Verse 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."

Saul ignored his sin, but refreshed his spirit through diversion.

Conclusion: Many giants in the faith have faithfully pleased God when in the valley of depression.

Paul was troubled on every side and at times was filled with fear. But he pleased God by doing the will of God. Look at **2 Corinthians 7:5-7**, "For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. ⁶ Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down,

³ A W Pink, Life of David, *Entering Saul's Service*.

comforted us by the coming of Titus; 7 And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more."

Spurgeon spent a month or a year in great pain and in great depression in southern France away from his pulpit. He said this on depression:

"There are experiences of the children of God which are full of spiritual darkness; and I am almost persuaded that those of God's servants who have been most highly favoured have, nevertheless, suffered more times of darkness than others.

No sin is necessarily connected with sorrow of heart, for Jesus Christ our Lord once said, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' There was no sin in Him, and consequently none in His deep depression.

The way of sorrow is not the way of sin, but a hallowed road sanctified by the prayers of myriads of pilgrims now with God"

William Cowper was a man that dealt with constant depression. He could hardly carry himself to church, so John Newton would carry him. When it got so bad, Newton suggested that they write a hymnal.

He wrote, "There is a Fountain filled with Blood" and hundreds of others.

One of the hymns in that famous Olney hymnal was "Amazing Grace" by Newton.

Another one, less know by dearly love is "God moves in a Mysterious Way"

*God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.*

*Discouraged saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.*