

Title: Losing It
Text: 1 Samuel 19
Theme: The delusional consequences of sin
Series: 1 Samuel
Prop Stmtnt: The delusional spiral of sin and fear is still under the Sovereignty of God.

A comfortably wealthy man confessed that the motivation behind his desire to obtain money was so he could pay people to do the jobs he didn't like doing. That's okay with many of us, isn't it? We have window washers, grass-cutters, brick-layers, home-cleaners, painters, carpenters, drywall dudes, pool installers and maintainers, mechanics and other jobs done by members of our congregation because people are willing to pay good money for others to do work they dislike. Power gives you the ability to keep your hands from getting messy, which is exactly what Saul attempted to do. He tried to keep his hands from getting messy. He wanted David dead, but didn't want his fingerprints at the scene of the crime. He was using his power in an attempt to get others to do his dirty work. He was learning to use his power to stay in power. This story has been repeated in our local governments and unions so many times we just accept it as normal. A few years ago, before the Feds started getting a string of convictions, one guy said that the only difference between us and a 3rd world country is that we don't have goats walking in the streets. When you give power to someone in order to protect you, you run the risk of that someone using that power against you to promote and protect himself. Saul's plan was for the Philistines to do his dirty work and remove David, who was a rising threat to the throne. But David kept being victorious and was giving Israel security that they had not known for generations. His esteem only continued to grow.

Read Text:

The chapter describes four attempts that are made on David's life. After failing to get the Philistines to kill David, Saul tries to turn his own servants into the enemies of God by asking them to kill God's anointed. Jonathan rescues David from that attempt. A little while later, Saul takes matters into his own hands and attempts to kill David himself. This time David rescues himself. That night, Saul sends his messengers to lie in wait for David while he is at home, but this plan is foiled by Michal, David's wife, who helps him escape. In the final scene, David is with Samuel and after 3 bands of soldiers fail to apprehend David, Saul himself comes only to be completely undone by God. David is rescued again.

1. **Sin skews reality**. – (1a)

Doesn't the last verse of chapter 18 sound like good news? It was. It was really good news. But not to Saul because his sin skewed his mind. Good news was bad news. Saul is a case study for so many things, one of which is the effect of sin on the mind. Good people were bad people. And murder is seen as the right thing to do. Saul is so twisted that his private plan of getting David killed is now revealed to his inner circle, including his son. He assumes that his servants and his son will go along with him. This is the loss of restraint and even the most basic of social cues. I read the text and try to get inside the head of Saul based on what the author tells us.

David is the son-in-law to Saul, brother-in-law to Jonathan. National hero and loved husband of his daughter, Michal. And Saul says, *“they should kill David.”*

Sin does not remain hidden. It does not play nice with others. Carefully concealed under the robes of regalia Saul disguised his true purposes by putting David in harm’s way in chapter 18. This only elevated David and further infuriated Saul, who now, reveals to his son and his inner circle what his real plan is. *“They should kill David.”* The secret was out at least to the inner circle. No one wants to believe bad things about your boss, when your life and livelihood depends on him. And certainly no one wants to believe bad things about your dad. But, what do you do with that information? Saul told them, presumably in confidence that *“They should kill David.”* Kill David? Did we hear that correctly? Did the servants look at each other in bewilderment? Any sane person would have to start realizing that beneath the royal robe and underneath the crown was a delusional man. This is morally despicable, militarily devastating and politically suicidal. Nothing about this makes any sense at all! These fits and episodes of despondency and rage were not moments of him being off, he was losing it. What do you do with information like that? In chapter 18, Saul was alone with his irrational and sinful fear. At the beginning of chapter 19, others become aware of it, but what happens, by the end of the chapter, the king strips himself of his royal robe and in fact, of all clothes and lays publicly naked *“all that day and all that night.”* The dude is a trainwreck. This is where sin takes you. Saul was so deranged; he was willing to commit political suicide and kill David himself.

Sin is bigger than you and you cannot control it. It will not stay in its corner and play nice. This week, the Wall Street Journal ran an article on the effect of pornography on the brain. There is some pretty compelling evidence of the literal physiological effects on the hard-wiring of the brain. I’m wondering out loud right now, but I think that it is very likely that one of the contributing factors to the rash of these mass shootings is the loss of all moral restraint, moral boundaries, and basic valuing of human life that comes from the pornification of a brain. Many of you would be aghast if your dog drank out of the toilet. Please, don’t give your kid a smart phone without filters. Sin is not our friend. It lied to Saul and he believed it. He believed it so much that he set his heart against God’s. He set his will against God’s. He was determined to win and his growing darkness and misery bore it out. Saul is the Satan figure. Jonathan is the Christ figure, again. He desires good. He pursues reconciliation. He is faithful to his promises. His love and covenant to David means that he will risk it all to do the right thing.

2. Love risks it all for good. (1b-7)

Jonathan is a voice of reason. He gives his dad good counsel. Dad, you are the king. You need to do what is morally correct. *“Let not the king sin against his servant David, because he has not sinned against you.”* Dad, you are the king. You also need to do the rational thing. *“his (David) deeds have brought good to you. For he took his life in his hand, and struck down the Philistine.”* Dad, you are the king, you need to do the theologically correct thing. *“the LORD worked a great salvation for all Israel.”* Dad, you are the king, you need to do the consistent thing. *“You saw it, and rejoiced.”* Dad, help me understand what you are thinking. *“Why then will you sin against innocent blood by killing David without cause?”*

Conversations like that are very difficult. Saul already rashly made an oath to God that Jonathan had to be killed (14.44). Jonathan knows that his dad is powerful and volatile. But Jonathan is faithful. He loves David and love has to choose to do the right thing, even when the right thing is risky. You know the saying that blood is thicker than water. Not always. Jonathan is doing the right thing even if the right thing is siding with David over his own father, Saul. Look at how Jonathan seeks to protect the peace between him and David. His plan is to have a conversation with his dad in a place where David is hidden, yet able to see Jonathan and Saul talking and possibly hear a bit of it. This helps David know that Jonathan is not playing him. Jonathan is doing what he said. Jonathan has human motivation for David to be removed, but Jonathan has godly motivation for David to be protected.

What a contrast is presented here. Saul loves himself above all and is miserable and paranoid. Jonathan loves God and others above himself and is a major force for good. He seeks peace. He looks out for the good of others and he is honorable. Jonathan is respectful but clear. David is not the enemy and if Saul carries out this threat, Saul will be sinning. Those are strong words to say to a king. Those are very hard words to say to your dad. But, this how much Jonathan loved his dad. He was willing to risk it all to save his dad from his dad.

Almost every one of you have had or you currently have an unresolved situation in your family. You fear the consequences of addressing it but also fear the consequences of not addressing it. What do you do? Love says, you pursue reconciliation. You pursue peace. You cannot make it happen, but you can pursue it. You can choose to do the right thing and address the problem. For some of you, you need to share the gospel with a parent or a sibling. It may be a situation where you get some wisdom, even some help in having that conversation, but humbly lovingly, pursue the conversation. If you are rejected, you know that you did the right thing. Finally, make sure that you are not the Saul in the situation. Are there family members who fear talking with you because you are unwilling to consider the fact that you may actually be wrong? Or there may be a better way to handle something? Are you approachable? Are you reasonable? Love is willing to speak the truth and love is willing to listen.

Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan (6). In fact, he swore an oath, "As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death." Oaths are intended to elevate the commitment to the promise so as to ensure its integrity and trust. God will die before David will be put to death by me. Or, I would kill God before I kill David. This is a serious, vow that Saul makes, that Jonathan believes and that results in reconciliation and a return to business as usual (7). Was Saul serious? Did he mean it? Was he lying to keep David close? Was he so unstable that in the moment he believed his own promise? We don't know, but we don't have to wait long. There was war again.

3. **Sin is dangerously irrational and unpredictable.** (8-10)

Three verses say so much. Notice the descriptions. David goes out and fights the Philistines. Saul is sitting in his house. Saul has a spear in his hand and David has a lyre. David struck the Philistines with a great blow. Saul attempted to strike David and failed to get David, again. The

man in power fails, while the man under authority is successful. But, wait, what happened? Saul just said in v.6 that David will not be put to death. In fact, Saul made an oath. He swore, "As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death." Saul has positioned himself in direct defiance of God and God is working deliberately and actively to dismantle Saul as king so that the nation will in time turn to David. "A harmful spirit from the LORD came upon Saul." Just as Pharaoh hardened his own heart and then the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, I think that this is an OT example of a NT truth that Paul explains in Romans 1. When a person sets himself against God and deliberately refuses the plain truth about God, that rebellion brings consequences. Those consequences are described as God giving them up, or God handing them over to more sin. Part of the judgment of God for rebellion is more sin which brings more judgment. If you tell God to get out of your life, he will, but someone else will come. It's no game. God actively judges sin and I think that in Saul's case because he had an exalted position with an exalted responsibility to represent the true king, his rebellion invites an elevated response. God is not neutral with Saul's rebellion. The anointing power of the Spirit to be a godly king has been taken from Saul because of his rebellion and given to David. Saul lost what he once had and David has it and Saul hates David for it, instead of repenting.

This passage is not speaking to a NT believer's salvation or whether or not he can lose his salvation. He cannot. It is speaking about the ministry of the Spirit in the OT who anointed with power the designated leader of God's people to represent the king to come by having wisdom, faith and power. Saul forfeited that by his rebellion. The consequences are serious. By turning Saul over to the consequences of his own fight against God, God actively fought against Saul as he will against every enemy of his. Saul's plan to defy God's plan was doomed to fail as was he.

4. **God uses imperfect people to accomplish his perfect plan.** (11-17)

Is Michal like Jonathan and risked her life to save David? Or, is she like Saul and will do whatever she has to in the moment to protect herself? The author does not give us a clear picture of what side she is on. On the one hand, Michal protects David and risks her father's wrath. On the other hand, she throws David under the bus and accuses him of threatening to kill her if she did not let him go. She clearly knows what her dad is capable of doing and does not trust him. She is the one who urges David to leave the house immediately and she is the one who lets him down from a window in order to escape unnoticed by her dad's messengers. Then she took an image, an idol actually and used it as a disguise to make it appear that David was sleeping in a bed. She is buying David some time. Wait a minute. What is an image doing in the house? We don't know. From what we read in the Psalms; we cannot imagine that David was in favor of this. But there is no moral commentary on this. The fact is presented and left hanging. When the messengers come to physically take David to Saul, she tells them that he is sick, so they go back to Saul who sends them back to carry the entire bed, if necessary, only to discover that Michal had tricked them. Saul is angry. David has escaped again. But Michal does not stand up to her dad like Jonathan did. She plays the little girl card and tells her dad that her own husband threatened to kill her, so she had no other choice but to let him go.

I'm not sure what to make of it. Did Saul share with Michel his plan like he did initially with Jonathan, assuming that Michel would go along with it? If so, then we need to give kudos to Michel for being willing to risk her father's displeasure for the sake of her husband. But, just based on what we are told, Michel is not completely innocent, so I cannot draw any firm conclusions other than the Lord uses imperfect people to carry out his perfect plan. David will not die at the hand of Saul and whether Michel is motivated by her love for David, her love for God, her self-protection, the Lord uses it as a means to get David out safely. But, when the king wants you dead, where do you go?

5. **God takes care of his own.** (18-24)

Saul lived in Gibeah and Samuel lived in Ramah which was only two miles to the west. Naioth may refer to an area in or near Ramah, perhaps a camp area for the men that Samuel trained. Ramah is likely the same place where Samuel first anointed Saul in chapter 10. While Samuel retired from being in the role of Israel's public judge, he did not retire from "the ministry." Samuel had a group of prophets who prophesied. They were literally praising God. Samuel, along with David, presumably were having "church" when Saul's messengers came to arrest David, but instead of being able to arrest him, they were overcome by the Spirit of God and joined the worship. Saul sent a second group and then a third group and the same thing happened to them. Finally, Saul went himself. But no man is a match for God and Saul was forced by the Spirit of God to praise God and prophesy. The man who was out of control of himself was always under the control of God who then revealed what Saul was really like. He stripped himself of his clothes and laid naked all that day and night. It is rather humbling. It is also enough time for David to run away.

Was it God or Saul stripping him of the kingdom? Both. Sin promises to be your power, your pleasure, your means of control, but you end up as the one out of control and as the adversary to God and no one wins that one. Even proud kings will be humbled before God; every one of them. This is what man's power is before God – nothing. Weak, broken, naked, defenseless and laying on the ground, Saul was an easy target. The darkness of his heart was now displayed. There were no robes to cover it. Even as Saul prophesied, he was a prophecy. This scene was a preview of what will take place of every king, president, prime minister, government official and all others who oppose God. All will be exposed and all will fall before God, without covering, without defense and without anywhere to hide. God takes care of his own even as his enemies are stripped of power.

In this world the normal story line is the abuse of power. Behind the palace walls sad and bad things happen. Officials are elected with promises and hope, then show that they are no better than those they replaced. Over and over, it goes. What if we had a king who actually loved his people and used his power to do them good, who was perfectly wise, perfectly good, infinitely powerful and would never die? What if we had a king who protected his own and would never leave them? Wouldn't that be amazing? He is.