

“Anatomy of a Wicked Leader”  
1 Samuel 22:6-9  
(Preached at Trinity, October 29, 2017)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. 1 Samuel is matchless as literature with its intense action and captivating plot. The identity of the author is unknown, but he is unsurpassed in taking this historical record and displaying it before us as a story that keeps our attention.
2. David has been fleeing for his life from the king who has determined to kill him. In **Chapter 20:3** David declared to his friend, Jonathan, "But truly as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, there is hardly a step between me and death."
3. **Chapters 20-21** find David relying more upon his wits and carnal ingenuity than upon the almighty power of God. He first fled to Nob where he resorts to deception to convince the high priest, Ahimelech, to give him the consecrated bread and Goliath's sword.
4. David then flees to the stronghold of the Philistines seeking protection from the king. Finding a less than cordial reception, he pretends to be insane, drooling on himself and scribbling on the door. Once again, David places greater confidence upon his cunning deceptions than upon God.
5. Fleeing the Philistines, he hides in the cave of Adullam. All alone, he begins to remember the source of his strength and the basis of his hope. This is the context of **Psalm 57**  
**Psalm 57:1-2 NAU** - "Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me, For my soul takes refuge in You; And in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge Until destruction passes by. <sup>2</sup> I will cry to God Most High, To God who accomplishes *all things* for me."
6. While at Adullam he is joined by a large following of social outcasts and his parents and brothers arrive.
7. Now, in excellent form, the narrator changes scenes. Our attention is turned from David to King Saul who is about to deliver a speech. Since **Chapter 16** we've seen the steady mental decline of Saul.
  - a. We've read that God removed His Spirit from Saul.  
**1 Samuel 16:14 NAU** - "Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him."
  - b. Upon the departure of God's Spirit Saul's mind became tormented. God had given Saul over to a reprobate mind. This is the outcome when a man will not have God.  
**Romans 1:21-22 NAU** - "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. <sup>22</sup> Professing to be wise, they became fools,"

**Romans 1:28 NAU** - "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper"

8. This will be the last time the narrator describes the mental state of Saul. From here on he simply sets before us the events that will ultimately lead to Saul's death. As we take this final look at the darkened mind of Saul I want us to witness some of the sad consequences of a mind hardened and given over to sin and corruption. I want us to look particularly at the effect of sin upon his leadership. I title tonight's sermon, "Anatomy of a Wicked Leader."

There are no perfect leaders. Sin has tainted the leadership of all. But when their hearts are hardened and consciences seared they can be particularly dangerous. This is true on every level from civil offices to business leaders, to pastoral leadership.

9. Our text gives us several effects of sin upon Saul's leadership.

I. Saul was manipulative and controlling

**1 Samuel 22:7 NAU** - "Hear now, O Benjamites! Will the son of Jesse also give to all of you fields and vineyards? Will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds?"

- A. Saul is sitting in an official capacity. He has gathered his servants before him
1. Most likely, this is why the narrator draws attention to the tamarisk tree. Leaders often sat beneath sacred trees in judgment.  
**Judges 4:4-5 NAU** - "Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. <sup>5</sup> She used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment."
  2. The symbol of Saul's authority was his spear instead of a scepter. Saul ruled by intimidation and force rather than the authority and respect of a leader.
  3. These servants probably represented Saul's leadership
- B. Saul boasts of how much he's done for them
1. His motive was to manipulate them into feeling they owed him their allegiance.
  2. Saul's words were in the form of a complaint, implying his servants were treating him unfairly.
  3. The truth was it was deception. Saul had not been an all-benevolent king. Don't forget the multitudes who were fleeing his reign.
  4. We must not miss, however, that whatever Saul did for them it was from a selfish motivation. He wanted to use them, to control and manipulate them. His benefits had strings attached.
  5. To Saul, his servants were nothing more than objects to be used for his advantage
- C. This reflected the selfish pride of Saul
1. Saul was consumed by self. This is what fueled his hatred of David  
**1 Samuel 18:7-9 NAU** - "The women sang as they played, and said, "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands." <sup>8</sup> Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?" <sup>9</sup> Saul looked at David with suspicion from that day on."
  2. The only thing that Saul cared about was his own self-interest.

- D. Godly leaders have an eye upon what's good for the people.
1. A Godly leader is above all else a servant
  2. Do you want to be a leader? Then serve, and God will advance you according to His will and way. Don't be afraid of menial tasks.
- II. Saul displays insecurity and paranoia – everyone is against him
- 1 Samuel 22:8 NAU** - "For all of you have conspired against me"
- 1 Samuel 22:13 NAU** - "Why have you and the son of Jesse conspired against me"
- A. Saul trusted no one. In Saul's deranged mind, all were a threat to him
1. Notice Saul surrounded himself only with people of his own tribe – Benjaminites. He didn't trust anyone else. He surrounded himself with his cronies and he didn't trust them either.  
"For all of you have conspired against me"
  2. Saul was faithless. The faithless man trusts no one.  
Richard Philips – "Saul never imagined that his followers could act out of simple loyalty and honest duty. His only way of appeal was to use better carrots and a bigger stick."<sup>1</sup>
- B. Sadly, Saul's suspicions were unfounded. This is often the case with wicked leaders. They misinterpret the actions of others and look upon them with a hypercritical eye.
1. David served Saul well (at first Saul loved him)  
**1 Samuel 16:21 NAU** - "Then David came to Saul and attended him; and Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor bearer."
  2. In his crazed jealousy, Saul soon saw David as a threat and presumed David was out to hurt him.
  3. Saul distrusted his son, Jonathan.  
**1 Samuel 20:30 NAU** - "Then Saul's anger burned against Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you are choosing the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?"  
**1 Samuel 22:8 NAU** - "For all of you have conspired against me so that there is no one who discloses to me when my son makes a *covenant* with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you who is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me to lie in ambush, as *it is this day.*"
  4. In **Verse 13** we find Saul suspicious of Ahimelech with an insanity that would lead to the murder of 85 innocent priests.  
**1 Samuel 22:13 NAU** - "Why have you and the son of Jesse conspired against me"
  5. Saul's heart was identical to King Herod many years in the future.
    - a. In his paranoia he believed the newborn Christ-child to be a threat.
    - b. How the thought of this child must have preoccupied the thoughts of Herod – needless worry, foolish concern

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<sup>1</sup> Philips, Richard. *1 Samuel, Reformed Expository Commentary*. Phillipsburg: P&R, 2012, Page 379.

- B. Nothing can dissuade the fears and paranoia of a madman
1. Ahimelech spoke clearly and honestly to Saul, but Saul wouldn't hear him. He surely wouldn't admit his error
  2. William Blaikie – “What is there a despot likes worse to hear than that he is entirely wrong. What words irritate him so much as those which proved the entire innocence of someone with whom he is angry?”<sup>2</sup>
- III. Saul had a complete disregard for other people – Particularly God's people. He wanted to destroy David, God's anointed, and God's priests.
- A. Saul thought little about the lives of these priests of God
- 1 Samuel 22:17 NAU** - "turn around and put the priests of the LORD to death, because their hand also is with David"
1. Saul had no reverence, no compassion, no grace, and no justice
    - a. Ahimelech and these priests were no threat to Saul.
    - b. Saul saw them as worthless objects to cast aside
    - c. In his rage he ordered the death of these 85 priests—death without a proper trial. Where was the mandatory 2-3 witnesses?  
**1 Samuel 22:16 NAU** - "But the king said, "You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's household!"
    - d. Saul ordered the death of these righteous men on the testimony on one wicked man. His assault upon the priests of God was actually an assault upon God.  
Matthew Henry: “God having rejected him, and ordered another to be anointed in his room, he seems well pleased with this opportunity of being revenged on the priests of the Lord, since God himself was out of his reach.”<sup>3</sup>
    - e. As if the slaughter of the priests was not enough, Doeg (presumably at the command of Saul) then destroys the entire city of Nob—women, children, animals, all that breathed.
  2. Saul's actions were indicative of those given over to their sin. There is no end to their wickedness.
    - a. This was true of pharaoh who ordered the death of the Hebrew children.
    - b. It describes Herod years later who would order his soldiers to take their daggers and slaughter little boys to satisfy his rage against the God' Son.
    - c. When a man is consumed in his sin he will often use any means to manipulate his circumstances
- B. The Godly leader loves those under his charge – the wicked leader has no regard.
1. The righteous leader leads with justice and equity
  2. There is no greater model than the Lord Jesus Christ who loves His servants with an everlasting love.
  3. Saul was void of any human compassion

<sup>2</sup> Blaikie, William Garden. (2005). *Expository Lectures on the Book of 1 Samuel*. Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books, 2005, Pages 346-347.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 422.

- IV. Saul felt perfectly justified in his wicked actions
- A. He felt Ahimelech had betrayed him, and thus betrayed the king
1. In his self-interest, all matters of righteous judgment were set aside
  2. Even as he had 85 of God's priests slaughtered, he felt he was doing the right thing.
  3. In the next chapter he finally thinks he has David cornered so he can kill him. In his delusion, he believes it was from the hand of God  
**1 Samuel 23:7 NAU** - "When it was told Saul that David had come to Keilah, Saul said, "God has delivered him into my hand, for he shut himself in by entering a city with double gates and bars."
- B. Many a wicked pastor has believed God was on his side
1. I knew a pastor who felt justified in leaving his wife for his secretary
  2. Our only protection is the Word of God  
**1 Timothy 4:16 NAU** - "Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you."  
**2 Timothy 1:13 NAU** - "Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus."
- V. These are the very character traits that will be displayed in the future Antichrist
- Manipulative and controlling motivated by an insatiable pride.
  - Suspicious and paranoid
  - Murderous hatred of God's people
  - Defilement of all that is holy
- A. The Apostle John said there would be many antichrists – many who would bear these qualities.
- 1 John 2:18 NAU** - "Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour."
1. Daniel prophesied of a particular wicked leader that would bear these characteristics  
**Daniel 8:24 NAU** - "His power will be mighty, but not by his *own* power, And he will destroy to an extraordinary degree And prosper and perform *his will*; He will destroy mighty men and the holy people."
  2. Consistent with the Apostle John's words, this man of wickedness, this antichrist of Daniel's prophecy has had multiple fulfillments.
    - a. Antiochus Ephiphanes who came to power in 175 BC was the first fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy
      - In his efforts to Hellenize the Jews he outlawed the practice of Judaism. This led to the Maccabean Revolt. Forty thousand Jews died in the space of three days.
      - Antiochus was suspicious, paranoid, and bloodthirsty. He hated God's people.
      - In 167 BC Antiochus then profaned the Temple by setting up a pagan idol, presumably Zeus, and sacrificed swine on the altar.

- b. Titus in 70 AD was another fulfillment. Thousands of Jews perished in his siege of Jerusalem. Jesus declared that Titus fulfilled Daniel's prophecy.  
**Matthew 24:15-16 NAU** - "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), <sup>16</sup> then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains."
- c. A characteristic of all of these antichrists is their bloodthirsty attack upon God's people.  
**Daniel 7:21 NAU** - "I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them"
- d. There is yet to be a final antichrist. The worst of these wicked leaders.  
**Revelation 20** tells us that Satan is bound for a thousand years but will be loosed for a brief season at the end of the age.  
**Revelation 20:1-3 NAU** - "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. <sup>2</sup> And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; <sup>3</sup> and he threw him into the abyss, and shut *it* and sealed *it* over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time."  
**Revelation 20:7-8 NAU** - "When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, <sup>8</sup> and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore."  
**2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 NAU** - "Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, <sup>2</sup> that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. <sup>3</sup> Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, <sup>4</sup> who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God."  
**2 Thessalonians 2:8 NAU** - "Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;"

- B. Saul's actions were consistent with this long line of antichrists.
1. An antichrist is one who opposes Christ. David was a foreshadow of Christ—God's Anointed and Saul viciously sought to destroy him.
  2. These priests were also God's anointed, consecrated and set apart. Saul had no reverence for them.

Conclusion:

1. There will always be wicked leaders until the King of kings returns.  
**Daniel 2:44 NAU** - "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and *that* kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever."
2. The great comfort for us is God is reigning now. His people suffer much in this world of corruption and this will only increase, but God's grace will never cease for His people. He will not cease to work for our good.
3. And Godly leaders will always be at risk at the hands of wicked men. But God will always vindicate them in the end.  
**Psalms 7:8-10 NAU** - "The LORD judges the peoples; Vindicate me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and my integrity that is in me. <sup>9</sup> O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous; For the righteous God tries the hearts and minds. <sup>10</sup> My shield is with God, Who saves the upright in heart."