

1&2 Samuel (A Man After God's Own Heart)

God Pursues Saul

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"In what story do you believe you are living?"- Curt Thompson

I. The Story of God's Pursuit Through the Ordinary

There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth. 2 And he had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.

3 Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. So Kish said to Saul his son, "Take one of the young men with you, and arise, go and look for the donkeys." 4 And he passed through the hill country of Ephraim and passed through the land of Shalishah, but they did not find them. And they passed through the land of Shaalim, but they were not there. Then they passed through the land of Benjamin, but did not find them. 1 Samuel 9:1-4

15 Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed to Samuel: 16 "Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince³ over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have seen 4 my people, because their cry has come to me." 17 When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD told him, w"Here is the man of whom I spoke to you! He it is who shall restrain my people." 18 Then Saul approached Samuel in the gate and said, "Tell me where is the house of the seer?" 19 Samuel answered Saul, "I am the seer. 1 Samuel 9: 15-19; Romans 8:28

- "Earth is heaven's workshop, [...] which implies that God uses all things to change us for the better. It follows that how we respond to our circumstances, however unwelcomed, carries significant weight. Life in this world is like a divine workshop; the stuff of daily experience marriage and children, responsibilities and opportunities, interruptions and problems and suffering the tools that God uses; the artist is God himself, who will sculpt the block of marble that we are into something extraordinary."- Gerald L. Sittser.

II. The False Story of the False Self

As for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, do not set your mind on them, for they have been found. And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for you and for all your father's house?" 21 Saul answered, "Am I not a Benjaminite, from the least of the tribes of Israel? And is not my clan the humblest of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then have you spoken to me in this way?" 1 Samuel 9:20-21; 2 Corinthians 10:3-6;

So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, ²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, ²³ and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. 1 Corinthians 3:21

III. The Story of God's Empowering Presence

Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him and said, "Has not the LORD anointed you to be prince¹ over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies. And this shall be the sign to you that the LORD has anointed you to be prince² over his heritage.

Then the Spirit of the LORD will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. ⁷ Now when these signs meet you, do what your hand finds to do, for God is with you. ⁸ Then go down before me to Gilgal. And behold, I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do." ⁹ When he turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart. And all these signs came to pass that day. ¹⁰ When they came to Gibeah,⁴ behold, a group of prophets met him, and the Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he prophesied among them. 1 Samuel 10; 2 Corinthians 3:16-18

- "Through Christ and by the Spirit we are being transformed so as to bear the likeness for which we were intended at the beginning. One takes the Spirit lightly in Pauline theology and Christian experience at great risk, for herein lies the glory that by the spirit we not only come to know God but come to live in His presence in such a way as to be constantly renewed into God's image" -Gordon Fee

IV. The Story of Shame

²⁰ Then Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. ²¹ He brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its clans, and the clan of the Matrites was taken by lot;⁵ and Saul the son of Kish was taken by lot. But when they sought him, he could not be found. ²² So they inquired again of the LORD, "Is there a man still to come?" and the LORD said, "Behold, he has hidden himself among the baggage." ²³ Then they ran and took him from there. 1 Samuel 10:20-23a; Genesis 3:8

Shame in the Garden

- "Hiding is the natural response to shame. This is especially true when we experience it in a toxic form, but most of our hiding takes place in the everyday comings and goings of life. We hide from everyone, not least being ourselves, in every imaginable way. Furthermore, all the hiding I do from others begins with all the smoke and mirrors I employ within my own mind. There are multiple parts of myself that I don't want to know. It would be too shaming. For I know the parts of me that I don't like, and that I presume that God does not either. They include my judging, lying, stealing, gluttonous, hoarding, lusting, adulterous, arrogant selves just to name a few. But as David Benner points out, quoting John Calvin, we cannot expect to know God fully if we are not willing to know ourselves, for one depends on the other." -Dr. Curt Thompson, *The Soul of Shame*

Shame on the Cross

- Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and

perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1-2

- “Good Friday is God coming to find us...saying that there is no place in your shame that I am not present and already there waiting for you...and I am going to wait for you until you open your eyes to me being with you in that space and let Resurrection take us both home.”

-Dr. Curt Thompson, *The Soul of Shame*

- Ultimately, the story we must continually rehearse to ourself, especially in the face of insecurity and shame, is a narrative of a Gracious **God who is not only invested our good but is pursuing us to establish an intimate partnership** that pardons sinners, accepts the alienated, empowers the weak, and produces a deep sense of gratitude for God’s lavish generosity within all who lovingly abide in Christ.

Discipleship Homework:

In Lewis Smedes book *Shame and Grace: Healing the Shame We Don’t Deserve*, the author describes the power of grace to counter shame:

“The lightness of grace does not lift all the sandbags that drag the spirit down. It lightens life by removing one very dead weight in particular—the weight of anxiety about being an unacceptable person. It extracts the internal threat of healthy shame. It gives us courage to track down the sources of unhealthy shame, see it for the undeserved pain it is, and take steps to purge our lives of it completely. It sets loose the lightest feeling of life; being accepted; totally, unreservedly accepted”

We experience the grace of God at one or more of four levels:

- When we experience grace as **pardon**, we are forgiven for wrongs we have done. Pardoning grace is the answer to guilt. 1 John 1:9, Isaiah 55:7, Mark 11:25, Matthew 6:14-15, Isaiah 1:18, Jeremiah 31:34
- When we experience grace as **acceptance**, we are reunited with God. Accepting grace is the answer to shame. John 6:37, 2 Peter 1: 10-11, Matthew 11:28-30
- When we experience grace as **power**: it provides a spiritual energy to shed the heaviness of shame and, in the lightness of grace, move toward the true self God means us to be. Ephesians 6:10, Exodus 14:14,
- When we experience grace as **gratitude**, it gives us a sense for the gift of life, a sense of wonder and sometimes elation at the lavish generosity of God. 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Philippians 4:6, Colossians 3:15-17

***Take time and reflect on your story and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal false-truths that have distorted how you understand your narrative.** Review the four levels of grace with accompanying scripture and spend time with God and seek to have the Holy Spirit reveal any ways that grace has impacted you life in a way you are unaware.