

“Setting up a Rival Kingdom” // 1 Samuel 15:1–28 // Search for a King

Intro:

- How many of you like to cook? Some recipes hard to mess up—bacon and eggs, pop-tarts. Some you have to get just right. This is one of those. I’m nervous...¹ Anointed or annoying...?
- This is going to be rough. You will need a great deal of humility and faith to hear this passage. For me, this is one of those, “God, am I still going to have a church next week after I preach this?” Did your dad ever tell you, This is going to hurt you even more than it hurts me. Yeah, right, then let me have the belt. Well, I feel that way about this passage... this is going to hurt me, and it has hurt me, thinking about my own life... as it does you.

If you remember from last week...

- 1 Samuel 8 Israel demanded a king and God considered this to be a betrayal of Him because He was supposed to be their true King... but Israel didn’t trust God enough to really lean their weight on Him so they required something in addition to God to feel secure.
- So God gave them what they asked for, which is sometimes God’s judgment on us—giving us what we demand (be careful what you demand from God). **One of the Psalms says he gave them the king they demanded but sent leanness into their souls...**
- Well, Saul was in many ways everything you’d want for a king.
 - He was good-looking; well-built, tall (it says he stood head and shoulders above everyone else) he was a great military leader; by all indications he was a good dad... this guy is like, “Mr. Israel.”
- And, he starts off pretty well. And he’s pretty humble, too.

¹ I first heard this analogy from James MacDonald.

- Little story in 1 Sam 10 that tells you when it came time to anoint him as king, everyone had come together at this place called Mizpah and they were like, “Where’s Saul?” And they look everywhere for him and they can’t find him. So God says, look for him among the baggage. There were some rooms where everybody dropped off all their bags and Saul is hiding beneath all the baggage—didn’t want to be king...

- So, Saul started off pretty well.

That all changes in 1 Sam 15...

[1 Samuel 15:1] And Samuel said to Saul... [2] Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘I have noted what Amalek did to Israel in opposing them on the way when they came up out of Egypt. [3] Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have.’”

- Little background here... the Amalekites were the perpetual enemies of Israel, and they were some pretty bad people. It started Exodus 17,² when Israel was on their way out of Egypt to the Promised Land, and alone and defenseless in the wilderness, the Amalekites attacked them. God saved them, but He never forgot that.
- And this wasn’t a onetime event, either. Read through the history of Israel... Deuteronomy; Joshua; Judges; 1 Samuel—the Amalekites are constantly provoking and pillaging Israel. And they were really violent.
- And God finally says, “That’s it. I’ve had enough.”

So he says to Saul, Go wipe them out. [3] Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.”

- This was not a war of conquest, this was a war of justice. This was not a war where Saul was to get rich. He was not to take any

² Exodus 17:8–16; Deut 25:17–19

prisoners, and not to touch any wealth. God was executing his justice upon these people.

- Now, before I go on, I know many of you might get hung up right there... Why would God order something like this? You say, “Maybe I can understand a self-defensive war, but a war where you go and kill everything... animals, women, kids...?”
- And, listen, I can’t get too distracted trying to explain that, because that’s not the point of today’s message, but I do feel like I at least need to address it so you don’t stay hung up on it or think I’m a chicken and skip it.
 - So the short answer is this: We as Westerners think about justice individually; Eastern peoples (like these) think about justice communally; we in the West think that every person stands alone; Eastern people would say that you never stand alone, you are always part of a group—the group lives and dies together.
 - The truth is that East and West are both partially right... there is a sense in which, as Eastern people say, we are inextricably united to our community. We’re never just lone individuals. What we do affects others in our community and what they do affects us.
 - You can certainly see this in your own family: the child born with fetal alcohol syndrome didn’t do anything different from the baby that is born into a good, healthy family. No, the child born with fetal alcohol syndrome is suffering for the mistakes of her parents. The sins of our parents affect us.
 - And it works the other way, too. My kids are blessed by my obedience to God.
 - In this passage in fact (vs 6)... **Kenites**... God says don’t touch them. Preserve them. They had helped Israel when they were in need. So the descendants of the Kenites were blessed by the righteous acts of their parents.
 - So, the Eastern view of is partially right. We can never be separated from our community.
- But it is also true, and biblical, as we say in the West, that justice is individual, and everyone ultimately will stand before God’s throne as an individual, and be judged individually for their sins, not for the sins of their fathers.
- So both are true. In a passage like this, when God delivers over someone to death because of the actions of another, you are seeing one side of the justice equation. But what you are not seeing is that in this action, God is turning over the innocent ones to His justice. After death, these children will stand before God where they would answer only for themselves and not for their parents. When God delivers over someone to death in the Bible, He is delivering them over to His justice, **and there is no one more merciful than God.**
- You know, in at least one sense, this is a great blessing to these kids.
 - What would have happened had these Amalekite kids grown up? They would have become just like their parents and walked in their wicked ways. In one sense, they are being delivered from that evil.
 - Now, that doesn’t mean that you and I could ever justify violence against the innocent in this way. We’re not God, and God doesn’t work now like He did then. In the Old Testament, Israel was often used by God as His instrument of justice.
 - No nation or individual hears from God like that anymore and so when a government executes justice today it should be only against the guilty.
- OK... I know that doesn’t satisfy some of you... but I at least wanted to acknowledge it.. can we come back to that at some point? Can’t get bogged down here...
- ***The main point to remember here, as it relates to the story, is that this was not a war of conquest, where Saul could enrich himself and expand his empire; this was a war of justice. So Saul was to touch nothing for himself.***

- In fact, conquering people and enriching yourself off of their wealth was the very thing the Amalekites were being punished for. God was not telling Saul to go and do the very thing he was punishing the Amalekites for. **Saul, this is not about you.**

So Saul went and did what God said... sort of. [7] *And Saul defeated the Amalekites from Havilah as far as Shur, which is East of Egypt.* [8] *And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive and devoted to destruction all the people with the edge of the sword.* At that point you should be like, "What?" Wasn't God crystal clear about what to do?

[9] *"But Saul and the people spared Agag* and the best of the sheep and of the oxen and of the fattened calves and the lambs and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them."*

- Important textual note... in Hebrew, the verb spared is singular even though Saul and the people are plural, which indicates that Saul, singular is the main actor here. You'll see why that is important in a moment.

Well, vs 10, God's word comes to Samuel and He says, *"I regret* that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments."* (15:10) Now, some of you will get hung up there, too.

- *Repent
- You're like, "Repent? Does God repent?" Is God like, "Man, I sure blew it on that one... How did I not see that one coming?"
 - One of the other members of the Trinity says, "Yeah, we should have seen that, especially since we can see the future and everything."
- Did you know, passages like this one have caused some Christian theologians today to say that God doesn't really know the future? He was surprised like everyone else at what Saul did? It's called "Open Theism," the idea that God does not really know what's going to happen.

- But that's not at all what this means. When God uses language like this, "He regrets," or "He repents," He is speaking in terms we can understand. It means He feels sadness, not that He doesn't know the future.
- In fact, look ahead to vs. 29... just a few verses later, God clarifies, [29] *"The Glory of Israel does not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret."*
 - So, in one passage you have one verse saying God has regrets; in another verse it says, 'No, God doesn't have regrets.'
 - What does that mean? **That means that God doesn't have regrets like you and I do, in the sense that, "Oh, if I could just go back I'd make different decisions." But he does feel sadness, and regret, for our sake, because of the decisions we make.**
- Now, I know, some of your minds just went (explosion). But that's what happens when you start thinking about God. Get used to it, and don't make the mistake of reducing God to neat little categories you can shelve in your mind.

Vs. 10 goes on to say that Samuel was angry, and he cried and prayed all night. He was chapped. [12] *And Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning.* (Ever had one of those things you had to do... couldn't wait to get it over with... so you're looking at the clock and you're like, "Is it too early to call them?")

And Samuel heads down to where Saul is throwing his victory jam... dancing girls and the beer kegs and karaoke machines.

And as Samuel is making his way down there... *it was told Samuel, "Saul came to Carmel, and (get this) behold, he set up a monument for himself..."*

- Samuel is like, "You got to be kidding me." **No seriously.**
- Saul has set up a monument to himself. Saul was like, "Hey, all you people, go get some rocks and bring them over here and

we're going to stack 'em all up here, and put a plaque on it that says, "Saul rocks."

- *This is about me!*

So Samuel heads off to find Saul, and Saul sees Samuel coming and now the drama really starts. Saul says, "Blessed be you to the LORD. I have performed the commandment of the LORD." (15:13) And Samuel says, "Oh really? Well, I love this phrase... "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?" (15:14)

Do you get how ridiculous of a set-up this is? (can we relive this just so you see how absurd this is?)

- One plays Samuel; one group plays the sheep...
- Do you see how ridiculous that is? The evidences of disobedience are all around him, and he still carries himself like, "Yeah, I'm doing what God wants."
- How about the fact that some of you are sitting in church this weekend... like everything is right with God... singing worship songs, telling everyone, "Yeah, I'm right with God," evidences of disobedience all around you. Your spouse is sitting beside you... they know... Yet you still put on the God-face and say, "Blessed be you of the Lord; I have obeyed the commandment of the Lord."
- Do you realize how offensive that is to God?
- There are times I have walked into this pulpit... some area of disobedience just glowing in my life and I stand up here like, "Yeah... me and God are cool."

Can I tell you something? We all get caught in our sin. All of us. We are all hypocrites from time to time.

- But what you do next when the Holy Spirit confronts you is of life or death importance... What Saul does next here... if you go down his path, there is hardly any coming back.
- Saul at this point still had a chance... but he chose a path you can't hardly come back from. *Do not go down this path!*

[15] Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared* the best of the sheep and of the oxen to sacrifice to the LORD your God, and the rest we have devoted to destruction."

- Who? The people. I already showed you that was a lie. Remember, the verb for "spared" is singular. Saul was the main one giving the orders.
- Why did they do it? For God's sake.
- Saul is blameshifting, Saul is like, "Hey, I'm a victim here..." then justifying... and what I did is really not that bad anyway...

[16] Then Samuel said to Saul, "Stop! In our terms, cut the **. I will tell you what the LORD said to me this night."

[17] And Samuel said, "Though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel."

- Saul, don't you remember that when you were nothing God gave you all of this? Saul, you were appointed by the Almighty God to serve as king over His nation! You were nothing. God made you everything! Saul, was that not enough for you?
- **You see, the reason Saul spared King Agag and kept him prisoner was in the ancient world, having an enemy king in your prison was a status symbol.** Once a year they'd have a parade in which they'd cart out all these conquered kings... emaciated, in chains... and that would be like, "See, I'm the conquering king. I'm the king of kings."
- Remember that thing about him building a monument to himself?
- Riches...
- **What is Saul after?** A name. He wanted to enhance his own kingdom; his own stature; elevate his glory in the eyes of the people.
- And Samuel was like, "Really, Saul? Really? After all that God has given to you... that's not enough for you, you feel like you need more than that?"

[18] The LORD sent you on a mission and said, 'Go, devote to destruction the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.' [19] Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you pounce on the spoil and do what was evil in the sight of the LORD?"

- "Pounce?" You were greedy for it. You craved it. You had to have this reputation as the king of kings, didn't you, Saul?

[20] And Saul said to Samuel, (No, no, no, but...) "I have obeyed the voice of the LORD. I have gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me. (I did 98% of what God asked me!) I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have devoted the Amalekites to destruction.

Look at Samuel's response:

[22] And Samuel said, Saul...

"Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
as in obeying the voice of the LORD?"

- Is God as excited about your token offering to him, Saul, as he would have been at your just obeying Him?
- Is God as fired up about you coming and sitting in church, and singing some songs, and giving a little money, as He would be in you just obeying? Is that really what God is after... He wants a few hours in the week and some of your money? Is God bored and poor so that what He most wants is your time and money? No. What God wants is a surrendered heart.

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
and to listen than the fat of rams.

- God doesn't want your offerings; he doesn't want your religious rituals, he wants a fully surrendered heart!

And now comes a verse none of you believe. (You're like, "Yeah, I believe it." No you don't.) No offense.

[23] For rebellion is as the sin of divination,
and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry.

- Halfway obedience, 98% obedience is like worshipping Satan.
 - Say, you come over to my house for dinner, and I say, "Hey, before you go, I'd like to invite you to come upstairs with me. I have a **pentagram and some candles** spread out on the floor, and I thought we could have **sex with prostitutes** and sacrifice some **kittens** and **offer ourselves** to Satan tonight before you go, and then **tomorrow, we'll go to church**, and act like everything is cool. How about that?"
 - Would you react with revulsion to that? Of course.

Yet, there are all kinds of you in this room who are giving half-way obedience, 90% obedience, like Saul; and it doesn't bother you at all.

- Some of you are dating somebody you shouldn't be dating.
- Sleeping with your girlfriend... we love each other.
- Cheating in a small way on your schoolwork, on your taxes.
- Something God has told you to do and you're just not doing it... maybe you're not tithing. Or maybe God has told you go and serve overseas but you don't want to be far from your family.
- You haven't forgiven someone you know you should forgive... you say, "I'm too bitter! But you don't know what they did."
- You willing to put that in the same category with Satan-worship?
- I told you that you don't believe this verse.
- God puts it in that category.
- Here's why:
 - Satan's sin was telling God, "I want to do my own thing, God." When you follow in Satan's footsteps, you are essentially worshipping him.
- **Sin is not wicked because of what you do (get that out of your mind), but because of whose authority you reject.**
- See the next verse?

Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
he has also rejected you from being king.”

[24] Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice.”

- Is this repentance? Now, it looks like it on the outside, doesn't it? But it is not.
- 2 ways we know this:
 - 1st, for the rest of Saul's life, he is going to repeat this mistake. Repentance means you change. The word in Greek literally means a change of mind. Meta-noia. Saul has no real repentance, no new mind.
 - 2nd way we know this is not real repentance: look at the next phrase.

[25] Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me that I may worship the LORD.”

- By “worship the Lord,” Saul doesn't mean let's go sing some God songs together and wash each other's feet... Saul is talking about offering the national thanksgiving sacrifice to God on behalf of the victory. Big ceremony.
- You see, Samuel is the only one that can offer that. And if Samuel won't do it, if he boycotts it, then that's going to be a major loss of face for Saul.
- ***This is what Saul is primarily worried about.*** Saul's main concern is still what he looks like in front of the people. He is still worried about his kingly status.
- You ever get more worried about being caught in your sin than you do the fragrance of your offense before God?
 - Again, you sit in church, and if I started to read out a list of your specific sins you'd get embarrassed, and leave, and probably sue me for slander.
 - But you sit here in the presence of God knowing you are in disobedience and the fact that He knows that

and you're living in rebellion to Him doesn't bother you.

[26] And Samuel said to Saul, “I will not return with you. For you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel.”

[27] As Samuel turned to go away, Saul seized the skirt of his robe, and it tore. [28] And Samuel said to him, “The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you.”

- You gotta admit... This is some great screen writing. Samuel goes and Saul grabs his robe. Rip... and Samuel looks at his torn shirt and says, “God has torn the kingdom away from you, fool, and given it to a neighbor of yours that is better than you (that's going to be David).”
- David would not be a perfect man, but he knew how to repent, and he knew how to let it be about God's Kingdom and not his own.
- But we're not done.

[32] Then Samuel said, “Bring here to me Agag the king of the Amalekites.” And Agag came to him cheerfully. What a scene dripping with irony this is... Agag is all like, “Hey, hey... alright, alright. I've killed people. You've killed people. (Agag said,) “Surely the bitterness of death is past.” I know people with money... Surely we can work a deal.

[33] And Samuel said, “As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women.” And Samuel hacked Agag to pieces before the LORD in Gilgal.

- Is this the Bible? It is Halloween.
- In a movie, Samuel's character would definitely have to be played by Jack Bauer.

All right, that's the end of the story... you guys ready to sing some worship songs?

This story shows you the anatomy of disobedience

1. **Disobedience is anything less than full, immediate obedience**

- Witchcraft-level rebellion is any kind of partial, or conditional, or delayed obedience.
- Satanists are people who worship the devil. Practical Satanists are people who do not live fully under the authority of God.
- Where are you not obeying fully?
- Let me tell you how religion works? Religion covers rebellion with rituals, and substitutes ceremony for surrender.
 - I'm sure you've heard of carbon offset... this is like a religious offset. I won't do exactly what God says, I'll make up for it with an offering in other area.
 - I'm not going to the field, God, like you ask... but I will be involved in my church and tithe heavily.
 - God, you've told me clearly that as a believer I should not be dating an unbeliever... but I really like this guy... so, I'll bring him to church and share Christ with him.
 - I'm not going to tithe my income, because that would really strain me... I'll tithe my time.
- Religion pays God off. Religious people try to earn the right to retain control of their lives.
- Religion wants to obey God, but on its terms. Terms which mean partial, delayed, or conditional obedience.

2. **Disobedience grows out of greedy desire**

- The heart of Saul's disobedience is he wants to be a famous king with world class power... That's why he keeps Agag and the spoils and why he builds a monument to himself, and why what he's really concerned about when confronted is how he'll look in front of the people.

- Remember last week I told you that everyone has a king, something they crave and must have to feel happy and secure? Personal recognition is Saul's and that's what fuels his rebellion.
- Your sin always grows out of some deep soul dissatisfaction... something you feel like you have to have for life, happiness, and security.
 - If you cheat on your taxes and you can't be generous it's because you idolize money and have to have it; if you have to have the **RESPECT** of your friends, it's then you'll compromise your morals; if you have to have **ROMANCE**... so I'll date people God does not approve of me dating, or I'll divorce my spouse to find a new lover; I have to have **PLEASURE** so I'll get drunk or look at pornography; I have to have **ENJOYMENT** so I won't volunteer my time, and instead spend every waking moment at the golf course... I have to have **CREATURE COMFORTS OR FAMILY**—so I won't go to the field or move into that downtown area God has laid on my heart to move into.
 - Our real problem, like Saul, is that our soul is not content in its possession of God, and our idolatrous, greedy desire for other things fuels our disobedience.
 - And until you deal with your idolatry, you'll never really be able to quit sinning and really surrender to God.
 - Any change you make to your behavior will be superficial and short-lived.

3. **Disobedience further estranges us from God, which leads to increasingly irrational behavior**

- One of the things you'll see as we study David is that Saul's life from this point on goes into a tailspin.
- And rather than repent, Saul hardens himself. Chapter 16 says the Spirit of God departs from Him.

- The absence of God and God’s approval leaves Saul with this void in his life. Jealousy literally consumes him. The slightest criticism; the slightest unfavorable comparison with somebody else sends Saul into a violent rage.
 - David plays the harp in Saul’s court and Saul looks at him and thinks about how much everyone like David since he killed Goliath and he tries to pin David to the wall with a javelin.
 - Saul traipses around the wildernesses of Israel for 10 years (how do you say wildernesses, plural?) Whatever they are, he traipses around them for years trying to kill David.
- Can I ask you something? Are you like that? Are you the kind who just can’t handle criticism? Do you get really jealous of others? Does being compared unfavorably to a friend send you into despair?
- It might be that you are consumed by the same selfish desire Saul is, a selfish desire that grows out of your feeling of separation from God. **Nakedness:** One of the things we teach around here a lot at the Summit Church is that the result of our being sinners and separated from God, which is the way we are all born, is that we feel naked, like Adam and Eve were. God was supposed to be our clothing...we were to be clothed in His acceptance and love, but when we reject Him we feel naked and look for something to replace him.
- The only way you’ll deal with the problem is to return to God.

4. **Disobedience can only be overcome by the Gospel**

- Samuel’s statement to Saul is an OT version of the Gospel. “Saul, when you were nothing, God made you king.” To us, God would say, “When you were a sinner, I came to earth and hung on a cross and died for you.” Literally the God of the Universe sacrificed Himself for you and loves you. He is now your possession for eternity. Samuel would say, “God

gave Himself to you... for eternity. No condemnation. An eternal inheritance. He came to live inside of you and promised you surely goodness and mercy...”

- **When you get that—that should liberate you from the need to be great.**
 - **Knowing how valuable a gift God Himself is to you should break the captivating power of sin and rebellion over you.**
- Now, you say, wait... one problem with that: How am I supposed to know I have God’s approval? If rebellion is as witchcraft... who here has obeyed sufficiently? Who here can say, “My life has been lived in surrender to God?”
- And this is the great news.
- The Gospel is that Christ fulfilled obedience perfectly for you, but then was given rejection and punishment at the end of his life.
- He lived the life of obedience but suffered the penalty of rebellion. He did it in your place. On the cross He suffered the penalty for Satan worshippers. He died the witch’s death, so you could have the saint’s acceptance.
- Theologians call this the **great exchange**. Jesus took our place; so that because He took our rejection, we can have His acceptance.
- It’s called **gift-righteousness**. God gives you His acceptance as a gift, because of what Jesus did for you.
- To obey is better than sacrifice. Hebrews 3 quotes 1 Sam 15:22 and then applies it to Jesus: Jesus obeyed fully, and then sacrificed Himself on top of that. So now, His sacrifice earns our acceptance before God, if we will receive it.
- That means that if I have received Christ, I will never have to fear God’s rejection.
- **In Christ, we have the absolute approval of the only One whose opinion really matters.**
- And when you get the beauty and value of the Gospel, when the reality of that settles into your heart, that will

break your need for Agags and monuments and everyone else's approval.

- **And if you can ever get that, it will break the power of disobedience in your life, by** setting you free from all your anxieties, all your captivating and driving dissatisfactions, all your fears and dysfunctions and insecurities.

5. **Disobedience exposed creates a choice: self-deception or repentance**

- The temptation is to, like Saul, come up with a narrative that excuses our sin
- For Saul:
 - Blames others
 - It's so little: I'm a really good person otherwise.
And,
 - I'm making up for it in some other area.
- Do you tell yourself that? Don't go down that path! There is hardly no coming back!
- Like I told you... we all have sin... what you do next is crucial importance
- Don't rationalize. Repent.
 - People pursuing divorce: my husband is a jerk. God wants me to be happy.
 - People who cheat on tests or their taxes: at least I'm not the Enron guy. It's been a hard year.
 - People sleeping with other people outside of marriage... well, we love each other.
- God doesn't want your rationalisms; He wants repentance. He doesn't want your sacrifices; He wants your submission.
- This story is an invitation. We are all Saul! God says to us, "When you were nothing, I made you everything. When you were a rebel, I gave my life for you!"
- Take Him. Receive what Saul would not receive.
- The invitation is to know God, to rest your soul in God, and to obey Him fully. Will you make the choice Saul did not?

- The Gospel is that Christ has paid the full price for your sin. He offers you Himself, full reconciliation to you, as a gift. If you will value that, and forsake all to hold on to it, He'll give Himself to you.

Bullpen:

- - Forgiveness: you haven't forgiven... you don't understand what they did to me
 - Dating unsaved people... justify it by saying, "I'm going to win them to Christ."
 - Mission field: God has called you... so you give more, obey more.
 - Tithing: I tithe my time. \ (won't commit, it's their fault)

What disobedience is

- Anything less than full obedience: no moral offsets
- Loving human praise more than God

Why Saul disobeyed

- Delighted in

- We see this with our kids, don't we?
 - Sometimes I ask my kids to do something, and they'll get around to doing it, on their terms. My kids are in the middle of a game, or coloring something, or playing Wii, and I tell them to go get ready for bed and their natural tendency is to just ignore it until they are at place they want to stop... Kharis: I've only got 19 more worlds to go through on Mario Bros.

- What they are saying is, "Dad, I'll obey you on my time and in my terms." So the phrase we teach them is "delayed obedience is disobedience."

Today: A rival kingdom. Two types of rebellion to God: religion and irreligion. Which is more relevant for the church. Saul becomes a tyrant; obsessive and vengeful. Pursues David, an innocent man. There is often a question about how people are capable of such evil things...

That's what Saul is doing. He's not satisfied with God or with what God has given to him in the Gospel, so he is looking to make himself great in the eyes of the world and in the eyes of history to make up for that. This leads him to irrational, jealous, possessive, self-destructive behavior. You too.