

## **The Same Old You 2017**

### **Week One - Emotional Healthy Christians**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

We are beginning a mini-series called “The Same Old You.” This series deals with the ups and downs of our emotions as we face difficult life circumstances. There are some who perpetually exist in chaos, drama and self-defeating behavior year after year that undermine success and relationships. I was there for the first 10 years of my adulthood.

For the next 4 to 6 weeks we will be dealing with several topics that will help each of us to take a fresh look at ourselves to become healthier Christians as we embrace healthy beliefs and practices.

The challenge found in this series is that if you can't examine your life and practices with honesty and transparency you are going to remain stuck in some aspect of the Christian life. The reason we can look honestly at ourselves is because the love of Jesus is not based on performance. We do not have to pretend to be perfect in order to access the love of Jesus Christ. Even if you do nothing right today Jesus loves you. He will transform you as you seek honesty in front of God.

That brings us to the first lesson in the series. One of the often-ignored considerations in selecting and embracing leaders within the church is the state of his or her emotional health. If you are suspicious about this fancy term “emotional health” and wondering whether it is a biblical concept, let me assure you. There are clear examples in scripture of individuals who are emotionally unhealthy and other examples of those

who are used mightily by God partially because they are emotionally healthy.

## THE ABSENCE OF EMOTIONAL HEALTH

First, let's think of some biblical characters who were emotionally unhealthy and the effect that their emotional state had on those around them. Think of the stubborn pride of The Apostle Paul before He turned to Christ. Think of the crazed jealousy of King Saul and how his jealousy of David and his emotional problems led to him being demonized and murderous.

Second, there are examples of those who are emotionally healthy and who keep their emotions and pride in check as they face serious challenges. Think of Joseph who was sold by his brothers. Think of Jesus who was threatened often but who looked out for the greater good rather than defending His ego. Think of Daniel who remained faithful and kept his eternal perspective and served God faithfully no matter where God put him. Even in prison Daniel trusted God, kept his cool and avoided self pity.

Emotional health can be revealed and measured by the reaction of people in response to difficult situations. If you have faced difficult situations, your emotional health was revealed. Hopefully today will help each of us to grow and walk in God's freedom, grace and truth.

## **CASE STUDIES IN EMOTIONAL UN-HEALTH**

### CASE STUDY: KING SAUL

God instructed Israel's King Saul to completely destroy the Amalekites. He accomplished only part of God's will because Saul had a

lack of self-awareness (emotional health) and attentiveness to God's desires (contemplation). Let's read the text.

## **READ THE TEXT**

### **1 Samuel 15:7-24(ESV)**

**<sup>7</sup> And Saul defeated the Amalekites from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt. <sup>8</sup> And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive and devoted to destruction all the people with the edge of the sword. <sup>9</sup> 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. All that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction.**

**<sup>10</sup> The word of the Lord came to Samuel: <sup>11</sup> "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments." And Samuel was angry, and he cried to the Lord all night. <sup>12</sup> And Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning. And it was told Samuel, "Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself and turned and passed on and went down to Gilgal." <sup>13</sup> And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed be you to the Lord. I have performed the commandment of the Lord."<sup>14</sup> And Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?" <sup>15</sup> 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." <sup>16</sup> Then Samuel said to**

**Saul, “Stop! I will tell you what the Lord said to me this night.” And he said to him, “Speak.”**

**<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> And 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.’ <sup>19</sup> 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?” <sup>20</sup> And Saul said to Samuel, “I have obeyed the voice of the Lord. I have gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me. I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have devoted the Amalekites to destruction. <sup>21</sup> But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal.” <sup>22</sup> And Samuel said,**

**“Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,  
as in obeying the voice of the Lord?**

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

**<sup>23</sup> For rebellion is as the sin of divination,  
and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry.**

**Because you have rejected the word of the Lord,**

**he has also rejected you from being king.”**

**<sup>24</sup> 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.**

## **PREACHING THE TEXT**

### **1 Samuel 15:7-24(ESV)**

When God called Israel out of Egypt the founder of the Amalekites did everything He could to bring harm to God’s people. His goal was to get rid of Israel and the Amalekites worshipped false gods. God gave orders to king Saul through His prophet telling Saul through the prophet to kill every single person and animal and destroy every object that came from the Amalekites.

In the Old Testament we see real time justice in many cases. Rather than waiting for the second coming God often judged immediately those who opposed Israel and fought against His will. To fight against Israel in the Old Testament is to fight against God Himself and to mock God in the sight of the nations.

So God gave King Saul the orders to move up judgment day for the Amalekites. Every one of them is to be judged and the memory and every trace of them destroyed. So here is Saul’s response to God’s order.

**<sup>7</sup> And Saul defeated the Amalekites from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt. <sup>8</sup> And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive and devoted to destruction all the people with the edge of the sword.**

<sup>9</sup> **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.**

Saul allowed the Amalekite King to live and he took all the valuable sheep, oxen, cows, lambs. Let's just split it up and take home the critters. After all, it does not make sense to destroy the animals.

In other words, we know better than God. Yes God said destroy everything. Taking their livestock is like keeping the money from a drug bust. It's dirty money and no honorable person will keep money that is earned by hooking kids on crack. But what did they get rid of? They got rid of.....

(Verse 9 cont.) **All that was despised and worthless they devoted to destruction.**

In other words, if there were personal journals or rotten food or clothing that was not their style and did not fit right or anything that did not fit their style.....statues of false gods and the like, they burned or destroyed that stuff. But whatever they could use they divided up to enrich themselves. So their primary goal turned from defending God's honor to enriching themselves.

Now dividing up what is useful like livestock makes sense doesn't it? Common sense tells us to save what can be used. But God does not always follow what makes sense. He has higher purposes, such as getting rid of a people and making a statement that we will have nothing to do with Amalekites or any of their stuff. The world needed to know that if you set

your armies against Israel and Israel's God you will get wiped out. God promised protection to Israel and His name is on the line also. So they followed common sense rather than God's command. Here is God's response to Saul.

**<sup>10</sup> The word of the Lord came to Samuel: <sup>11</sup> "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me and has not performed my commandments." And Samuel was angry, and he cried to the Lord all night. <sup>12</sup> And Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning.**

Those are powerful words. The Lord regretted that He made Saul king. And why did God regret that He made Saul king? Because Saul by disobeying His specific commands; (aka) ***"turned back from following me."*** How has Saul turned his back on God? By doing what made sense rather than obeying the direct command of God. So trouble is brewing and will soon catch up to Saul. I am speculating that Saul probably knew in his heart that he did not follow God's full command. There is probably a nagging feeling of doubt and shame. So here is how he avoids feelings of shame and a guilty conscience.

**And it was told Samuel, "Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself and turned and passed on and went down to Gilgal."**

Saul set's up a statue and praises himself. He convinces himself that he has done a great job. He is too emotionally immature to examine his heart completely and honestly. So he convinces himself that he is right. So

Saul talked himself into ignoring his guilty conscience and praising himself. He's full of bluster... and notice that Saul is not raising a statue to God but to himself. But here comes the beat down and reality check from the prophet of God.

**<sup>13</sup> And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed be you to the Lord. I have performed the commandment of the Lord."**

Saul has so convinced himself that he has done the job the way God told him to that he tells the prophet; "I did what God said." (if that were true none of the gold and spoils of war would be divided among the soldiers and livestock would be alive). Here is Samuel the Prophet's response;

**<sup>14</sup> And Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears and the lowing of the oxen that I hear?"**

WHAT IS THIS BLEATING?

So Saul says he has followed God's command perfectly which would have included destroying all the livestock. And all of a sudden the sheep who are hidden over the next hill forget to cooperate and start making all kinds of noise. Baaaaaaa.....Moooooooooo.....hee haw

Saul is busted and the straight talk of the prophet makes Saul realized that he has not done things God's way. But Saul has one more excuse to try out.

**<sup>15</sup> 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."**

So let's put God's name on our disobedience. *Yes I disobeyed God and kept the livestock. But really, honestly, we were going to bring lots of*



*these animals to the temple to sacrifice them to the Lord. Really! You have to believe me! We were not going to keep them for ourselves. (AKA...yes we robbed an ATM but it was to put in the offering plate!)*

**<sup>16</sup> Then Samuel said to Saul, “Stop! I will tell you what the Lord said to me this night.” And he said to him, “Speak.”**

**<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> And 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.’<sup>19</sup> 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?”**

So Samuel is sick of listening to Saul justify himself. And He repeats the command that the Lord gave along with the rebuke from God. “Why did you do it your way rather than fully obey what God told you to do?” So here is king Saul’s justification.

**<sup>20</sup> And Saul said to Samuel, “I have obeyed the voice of the Lord. I have gone on the mission on which the Lord sent me. I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have devoted the Amalekites to destruction.**

So Saul starts by naming all the things he did right. This is one of the ways people justify themselves today. Well I’m basically a good person. Well I help people in need. Well, I know I don’t live my life the way God wants me to but I don’t hurt anyone and I go to church on Christmas and

Easter. So he names all the things that he did...but now watch how he blames his own soldiers and people for his disobedience.

<sup>21</sup> **But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal.”**

He is still lying....the people took the livestock (to sacrifice to God??) as if disobeying God in order to give Him a sacrifice is what God wants. Meanwhile on behalf of God.....

<sup>22</sup> **Samuel said,**

**“Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices**

**As in obeying the voice of the Lord?**

The Lord told you not to even keep this livestock alive. But you did it your way. And now you pretend that you can butter up God and trick Him into forgetting your disobedience by telling God that you are offering these forbidden animals to Him in a sacrifice? That is like impressing God with putting drug money in the offering plate. Hey Im a gangster for God, so He really should be cool with what I do. Here is God’s answer;

**Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,**

**And to heed than the fat of rams.**

If you want to please God do not make up your own rules of engagement. People may be impressed by your self invented rules of

walking with God but God is more impressed if you simply listen and obey. God knows best how to please God.

<sup>23</sup> **“For rebellion is as the sin of divination,  
And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry.**

Insisting on doing things your way rather than God’s way is rebellion. And there is no distinction between rebellion of witchcraft or rebellion of making your own rules for church instead of doing things God’s way. Rebellion is rebellion in all forms.

**Because you have rejected the word of the Lord,  
He has also rejected you from *being* king.”**

One of the best ways to lose your ministry or influence is to follow common sense and treat God’s house and God’s church like a business or like any other organization. Following God is not a matter of common sense or ruling authoritatively like a worldly business. Get your marching orders from God and do things His way.

So finally after Samuel rebukes Saul for his half truths and exaggerations Saul finally stops lying to himself and gets totally honest.

<sup>24</sup> **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.**”**

WHY DID SAUL DISOBEY GOD?

**Fear**; Saul disobeyed God because he was afraid of the people. What would happen if he told Israel and the soldiers to burn everything? No one

would kill him. But they might mock him because what he asked did not follow logic or common sense. He feared that others would make fun of him so he gave in. As it turns out this man who is a head taller than everyone else and who was called and confirmed by God and by the people of Israel is so emotionally immature that he can not make a hard call if it means people will doubt him. He is so afraid of what people think of him that he is willing to lie to God, lie to himself and disobey God.

## **CHALLENGE / SUMMARY**

So how does this relate to us? Some of us need people to like us so much that we will not say a word about our faith or the way in which our great God saved our soul and transformed our lives.

Some of us are so wounded by rejection that if there is even a hint that others do not approve of your decision or direction or the way you do things in your home you will cave in, even if you were certain that we were doing things God's way. Your primary goal and mission in life is to make no one angry with you and make sure everyone likes you.

Saul disobeyed God because he was hooked on the praise of others and he would melt like a snowflake if people were upset with him. He did not have the emotional maturity to let people be upset with him as he followed God's way even over common sense.

## **TAKING IT HOME**

1. What are some examples of how we go through the motions of promising God "sacrifices" rather than obeying the word of the Lord?



7. Spiritualizing away conflict (Example: I usually miss out on true peace by smoothing over disagreements, burying tensions, and avoiding conflict, rather than disrupting false peace as Jesus did.)
8. Covering over brokenness, weakness, and failure (Example: I have a hard time speaking freely about my weaknesses, failures, and mistakes.)
9. Living without limits (Example: Those close to me would say that I often “try to do it all” or “bite off more than I can chew.”)
10. Judging the spiritual journeys of others (Example: I often find myself occupied and bothered by the faults of those around me.)