

This morning, we are in the fourth week of our look at the life of David. At this point, David has been anointed by the prophet Samuel as the next king of Israel, and he has slain the giant Goliath and won the affection of the people, but he has not yet become the king. The king is still Saul, even though God's Spirit and favor has left him because of his disobedience. Saul is a hard person to understand. He seems like a good guy at first, but over the course of his life he descends into a man bent on murdering David. The question is, what could cause this man to become so evil?

Let's begin by reading 1 Samuel 18:1-15, which takes place after David has slain Goliath.

*1 Samuel 18:1-15 - After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. ² From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return to his father's house. ³ And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. ⁴ Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt. ⁵ Whatever Saul sent him to do, David did it so successfully that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This pleased all the people, and Saul's officers as well. ⁶ When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes. ⁷ As they danced, they sang: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." ⁸ **Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?"** ⁹ And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David. ¹⁰ The next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully upon Saul. He was prophesying in his house, while David was playing the harp, as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his hand ¹¹ and he hurled it, saying to himself, "I'll pin David to the wall." But David eluded him twice. ¹² Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with David but had left Saul. ¹³ So he sent David away from him and gave him command over a thousand men, and David led the troops in their campaigns. ¹⁴ In everything he did he had great success, because the LORD was with him. ¹⁵ When Saul saw how successful he was, he was afraid of him.*

The key turning point in this passage is in v. 7-9: ⁷ As they danced, they sang: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." ⁸ **Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?"** ⁹ And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

According to this passage, **Saul comes undone as a result of his jealousy of David, his envy of David (slide)**. Although Saul is the king, he is clearly threatened by this younger man who has won the hearts of the people and who seems to be more successful than

him. So at first he keeps him close – in v. 5, he gives him a high rank in the army. And then he sends him away and gives him command over a thousand men. But as David grows more and more successful and wins the hearts of more and more people, Saul decides that he must kill David before he takes the throne away. Over the next few chapters, he tries multiple times to kill David or have him killed, until finally David has to flee out of fear for his life.

Even though this is centuries ago, nothing has changed regarding the destructive power that envy and jealousy can have on a person. **For some of you out here today, your lives are being torn apart by envy.** And it is probably happening in a very subtle way, just as it did with Saul.

I want to answer four questions this morning as we look at the life of Saul - What is envy? What does it do to you? What is at the root of envy? And how do you deal with it?

Listen again to the words of Saul – “they have credited David with tens of thousands, but me with only thousands.” Envy is what the psychologist Windy Dryden calls “comparison-it is” (slide) – you compare what you have with someone else, and as you do so, you become miserable. You are unable to celebrate what they have because of the comparison, and even more so you are unable to enjoy what you have because of comparison. You can’t appreciate someone else’s success without comparing it to yourself – “they’re happily married but I’m not. They’re successful but I’m not. They are better looking than I am. Their life is so easy compared to mine.”

To envy someone is to wish you had someone else’s life or the aspects of someone’s life – it is noticing something that is good about someone else, but instead of rejoicing over the good they have, you weep over the fact that you don’t have it. For example:

- Someone shares with you how great their marriage is (slide) and you resent them for it and hate your husband all the more because your marriage is not like theirs (or because you are not married)
- Someone else gets a promotion at work, or you see someone more successful than you in their field, and you hope they fail at it and you hate your job all the more
- You see someone good looking and you say to yourself “well, they’re probably really shallow and stupid.”
- You see someone with kids that are obedient and you can’t wait for them to go bad, or you say “just wait until they grow up”
- You see someone having a great time on vacation (slide) or having gotten all the breaks in life, and you resent them for it.

Are you beginning to recognize envy yet? We all have to fight against this comparison-itis in our lives, where we find ourselves wanting what someone else has and being dissatisfied with our lot in life.

Now – please recognize that there’s nothing inherently wrong with comparison. A person with a healthy outlook on life sees someone who is more successful and celebrates with them, praises them for their skill, and learns from them what they can. There is nothing wrong with noticing someone else’s strong marriage or job skills and praising God for that and learning from that example. But a person affected by envy sees someone else’s strong marriage or job success and **resents them for it and finds themselves wanting the other person to fail. The person affected by envy feels worse about his or her own life because of the good he or she sees in others.**

Paul writes in **Romans 12:15**, “*Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.*” Envy causes us to do the opposite, to rejoice at people’s unhappiness, and to weep when they are happy.

What makes it worse is that our culture encourages envy and covetousness. Our whole ad industry is based off of that. It’s designed to make you want more and better cars, toys, even a better life.

I read an article online entitled, “Instagram psychology – how consumer envy can drive sales.” (slide) It said:

“Envy is the bridge between your company and the Instagram user.... Step 1: Find influencers. Find popular Instagram accounts (called influencers) in your space and reach out to them for promotional deals... Step 2: Make exemplary images. The goal of the envy-driven promotional post is to make the follower feel as much envy as possible.

And social media has made it 100x worse. Our lives are filled with envy, and if you don’t know how to handle it, it will destroy you.

- **That’s what envy is. Now what does it do to you?**

In the case of Saul, envy turned the king into a murderous madman. Do not underestimate what envy is doing to you. Let me give you four examples of what envy does to you:

- 1) It makes you hyper-critical

One way envy affects you is that you become **hyper-critical**, needing to find the faults in people. Think of the tabloids, the need to see the famous fall, to pick out every little thing that is wrong with them. When you envy someone, something within you needs to take them down, needs to prove that they are not all they seem to be. When you hear or notice one of their faults, you magnify it in order to convince yourself that you are better than them. And when they fall, you rejoice – **schadenfreude** – pleasure at another's misfortune. (slide) You can't rejoice when others are happy.

2) It fills you with self-pity

Another way is that it fills you with **self-pity**, as you become more and more unhappy with the way your life is going. As it says in **Proverbs 14:30** - *A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.* (Slide). Envy is not like the other deadly sins, which all are fun for a time – greed, lust, gluttony, pride, wrath, and sloth. Envy just rots the bones. Envy sucks the joy out of your life, because you can not stand that others have better lives than you. Envy poisons your ability to enjoy the life you've got. **You compare yourself to others and come up short.** You can't appreciate your own body because you're too fat, or your nose is too big, or your teeth not white enough, or your skin not tan enough. You don't appreciate your position at work because others get promoted when they shouldn't, or get rewarded when you work harder. You can't appreciate your life because others seem to have it better.

3) It influences your decision-making

A third way envy affects you is that it causes you to make decisions and choices out of your desire to have what others have. Consider **Ecclesiastes 4:4** - *And I saw that all labor and all achievement spring from man's envy of his neighbor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.* When you begin to make decisions out of envy, out of a desire to have what someone else has – keeping up with the Jones' - you are acting in foolishness. And nowadays, you're not just trying to keep up with your neighbors, but with people all around the world whose lives you see on social media. Think about it – are you making decisions about work, relationships, etc. because they are what God wants or because of how you want to appear to others?

4) It opens you up to spiritual evil

Finally, envy opens you up to spiritual evil. Remember 1 Samuel 15:9-10 - *And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David. ¹⁰ The next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully upon Saul.* Giving place to envy opens you up to spiritual forces of evil, allowing Satan to whisper into your ear how God has let you down, how others have hurt you, and making you miserable. It gives the devil a foothold to ruin your life.

- If we're going to deal with envy, we must understand the root. **What is underneath our envy?** What is behind this jealousy? What is going on under the surface that makes this so powerful?

Why does it upset you so much when you see someone else's post about their marriage, or someone else enjoying a vacation, or someone who looks more beautiful than you? The bottom line is:

We are trying to find our self-worth or happiness in something other than God

Look at Saul's life - He seems like a good guy at first, and he didn't even choose to be king, but was chosen by God. Consider this comical scene from his anointing:

1 Samuel 10:20-24 - When Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen. ²¹ Then he brought forward the tribe of Benjamin, clan by clan, and Matri's clan was chosen. Finally Saul son of Kish was chosen. But when they looked for him, he was not to be found. ²² So they inquired further of the LORD, "Has the man come here yet?" And the LORD said, "Yes, he has hidden himself among the baggage." ²³ They ran and brought him out, and as he stood among the people he was a head taller than any of the others. ²⁴ Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see the man the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people." Then the people shouted, "Long live the king!"

From the beginning we can see that he lacks confidence in the calling God has on his life. He is incredibly insecure in his calling as king. He lacks faith in God and in who he is in God. He begins well, but eventually is rejected as king for not heeding God's word. In 1 Samuel 15:10, we read:

*¹⁰ Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel: ¹¹ "I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions." Samuel was troubled, and he cried out to the LORD all that night. ¹² Early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, "**Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honor and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal.**"*

See the insecurity? Not praising God but setting up a monument in his own honor?

What a great metaphor for what insecurity can cause us to do – set up monuments in our own honor so that people will bow down to us or think well of us. (slide) What a great commentary on what social media can become for us if we are not aware of what we are doing.

Samuel said to Saul. "Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night." "Tell me," Saul replied. ¹⁷ Samuel said, "*Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel?*"

You were small and humble, but I raised you up. But you still see yourself as small, and don't have confidence in God's exaltation of you.

Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king." ²⁴ Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned. I violated the LORD's command and your instructions. *I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them.*"

Ah-ha! Saul knew that he was not obeying God. He was afraid of the people and so he gave in to them. His insecurity caused him to listen to the people and not to God.

²⁵ *Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD."* ²⁶ But Samuel said to him, "I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you as king over Israel!"

Why doesn't he heed the word of the Lord? He was afraid of the people and so he listened to them instead of to God. He was so insecure that he set up a monument in his own honor. Instead of trusting that because God had chosen him as king, that this was enough, he was constantly trying to convince everyone that he was kingly. And when his identity as king was threatened, whether by the people or eventually by David, he made some terrible decisions.

If you want to know what is underneath the envy, you need to first pay attention to what it is that you envy. Is it the success of others? The relationships of others? The looks of others? All of the above? Where do you find the happiness of others causing you to be unhappy or bitter? What is this revealing about what your heart really desires? Someone or something is threatening your self-worth, or you believe that something other than God will give you the happiness and joy you are seeking for.

If you get your self-worth from your work, then you envy those who do better than you and you want to see them fall. If you get your self-worth from relationships, then you envy those who have better relationships than you. Or, if you believe that happiness and joy are found in relationships, you will be envious of those who have better relationships than you. If you get your self-worth from your looks, or believe that your happiness and joy comes from being good-looking, then you envy those who are better looking. And if you are filled with envy, you will continually make unwise, foolish choices, as you act out of your envy.

Saul got his identity from being a king, but was insecure about it, and David's success threatened that identity. Saul was insecure in who God has called him to be. Look at what you envy. They reveal that you are building your identity on something other than God. And that is a dangerous place to be.

- **How do we deal with envy**

God's desire is **contentment**. Not complacency, but contentment. As 1 Timothy 6:6 says, Godliness with contentment is great gain. God's goal is that we would be grateful for what we have, for our situation in life, and be able to praise him for it instead of always envying what other people have and grasping for what is not ours. **Look at David and the contrast between him and Saul**. Notice David – he will not force God into anything, won't demand what God has not yet given him. Twice while he is on the run he has the opportunity to kill Saul, but he will not do it – he cuts off a corner of his robe while he's relieving himself in a cave, and then he steals a jug and spear while he is sleeping.

How do we find contentment?

- 1) **Contentment comes from trusting that all you are longing for will one day be yours**

Listen to Proverbs 23:17-18 - *Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the LORD.* ¹⁸ *There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.*

I think envy often comes from feeling like we only get to live once, and we get stuck with bad parents, or a bad spouse, or a bad job, or a bad body. We despair at the hand we've been dealt and wish we had been dealt another hand or made better choices. But there is surely a future hope for you.

What is that future hope? One thing about envy is that underneath it are good desires – desires for the perfect spouse and family, a fulfilling life and vocation, a flawless body. And one day, the Bible tells us, we will have all of that, and even more than we could ever desire. **1 Corinthians 2:9** *However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"--*

There is a future hope in the new heavens and new earth, and this life is not all there is. We have the perfect lover in the Lord, and one day we will be the bride of Christ, the spouse that is greater than all spouses. One day you will have the perfect resurrection body. One day you will have the perfect family, and live in the perfect heavenly city.

And one day you will reign with God in the perfect job, have more wealth than you could ever imagine, and find perfect fulfillment. One day you will have all that you have ever desired. **That is truly what your heart is after – eternity (Ecclesiastes 3:11).** Not John Smith's wife or Joe Brown's job, but something infinitely greater – God Himself, eternity. Even if you did get someone else's life, you would eventually find that you would want someone else's life, and then someone else's, because that is ultimately not what you are looking for; eternity is what you are looking for. God is what you are looking for. When you realize that everything you are looking for will be yours one day, you no longer need to envy others. There is surely a future hope for you.

***Proverbs 23:17-18** - Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous **for** the fear of the LORD. ¹⁸ There is surely a future hope **for** you, and your hope will not be cut off.*

2) Contentment comes from trusting that whatever your circumstances are, God is with you and can use it for His glory and your good

***Ephesians 2:8-10** - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's **workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

I think this passage is crucial in finding contentment and dealing with envy. Often envy comes from being dissatisfied with who God has made us or the situation in which we find ourselves. We don't like the way we look, our family, our jobs, and so we envy others and pity ourselves. Contentment comes when you realize that you are God's workmanship, and that there are things God has prepared for you that you will only be able to do because of your circumstances, because of your disabilities, because of your painful experiences or handicaps. Instead of envying others, recognize that God has you in the situation in which you are in for a reason, that you are his workmanship, created to do good works that only we could do. Instead of throwing yourself a pity party, declare your trust in Him and get busy doing the good works He has given you to do in the situation in which you are in.

***Philippians 4:10-13** - I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be **content** whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being **content** in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*

Contentment comes from knowing that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens us, that He is enough for you, that no matter what situation you find yourself in, no matter what hand you were dealt, you can make it through with Him. David knew the Lord was for him, and so he could wait on him.

Romans 8:28-29 - *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*

3) Trust in God's love for you

What will deal with the insecurity that we don't matter, that we aren't worthy of love?
The gospel –

Romans 5:6-8 - *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

He willingly gave up his beauty, his comfort, his status, all of it for you. He wants you to know how loved you are, how valuable you are to Him, so that you would not seek that love or self-worth in anything in this world.

So live content with God and who He has made you and where He has you and what He has in store for you. And get busy doing the good works He has prepared for you to do.