Sunday, October 30th sermon: "Saul Descends into Madness -- Put Not Your Trust in Princes (Part 8)"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS, by John Pittman Hey

1 Samuel 16:14-23; Mark 9:14-29

No matter how much hope we place in our kings, or leaders, or institutions, they always fail in the end, because the people always fail.

Samuel warned that if the people continue in sin, God will destroy both the people and their king.

King Saul started off well, but he sinned against God's commandments, and the people sinned, and together they dragged each other down to destruction.

Saul disobeyed God, he catered to the people's carnal desires, and then began the long descent into paranoia, delusion, and madness.

God took away the Holy Ghost from Saul, and tormented him with an evil spirit from the Lord. This was a part of God's judgment against Saul for his sin.

Saul's courtiers suggested they find a man who could play calming music for Saul, and David was brought in.

When Goliath challenged the army of Israel, Saul was full of fear. Gone was his holy boldness when his people were threatened.

When David presented himself to fight against Goliath, Saul scoffed at the lad. But God prevailed through David, and he slew Goliath, and wrought a great victory over the Philistines.

But the women of Israel began to sing David's praises, and Saul was very angry because David was getting better "PR" than he was!

Saul became very envious of David's popularity, because he knew that the Spirit of God had departed from him, and now rested upon David.

Saul tried to murder David on several occasions, and attempted to orchestrate David's death on the battlefield at the hand of the Philistines.

Saul told his servants and Jonathan that they should kill David. Saul tried to extract David from his home and murder him.

Before it was over with, Saul was trying to track David down across the countryside, and it descended into a farce when Saul began to prophesy and lay all night on the ground naked.

When Saul took offense at David for a small slight about a feast day, Saul exploded against his own son Jonathan, cursing him, slandering his mother, and declaring that as long as David lives, the kingdom itself is under attack and subject to being ripped from Saul's hands and those of his heirs. Saul then tries to murder Jonathan in his rage.

And when Saul finds out that a priest has innocently helped David along the way, Saul has that entire branch of God's priesthood liquidated. Indeed, Saul did more to annihilate the priests than he did to destroy the Amalekites!

Meanwhile, Saul pursues David across the countryside, and twice, David spares the king's life. Saul is repentant, for a time, but then back in hot pursuit to murder David.

Finally in the depth of his madness, Saul is destroyed by the Philistines. When God won't answer his questions, Saul resorts to witchcraft. The spirit of Samuel tells him that tomorrow, his whole house will be slain, and the people with him.

Saul could have gone to David, surrendered the kingdom to him, and pledged his loyalty and sought his protection. No doubt the Lord would have blessed David and the people of Israel in the battle.

But Saul was obsessed to madness to retain his kingdom. He started out not wanting to be king, but very soon, the power went to his head.

Saul turned from obedience to the Lord and humility, to pride, disobedience, and appeasement of the people to maintain his position.

When the evil spirit from the Lord began to torment him, Saul started to attack the very people who supported him and tried to help him!

Saul became envious, paranoid, and then murderous. He tried to kill David, he tried to kill his own son, and he butchered the Lord's priests.

Then Saul wondered why God wouldn't answer his prayers!

When Saul finally turned to witchcraft, he fulfilled Samuel's judgment against him: to disobey is as the sin of witchcraft. Saul disobeyed over and over, until he turned to witchcraft.

The root of Saul's sin was his grasping at the kingdom, to stay in power, to preserve his legacy and his dynasty. In all that, he became morally and spiritually broken.

Saul did some mighty and good things for Israel. Sometimes, he seemed to grasp his sins, and repent for a while.

But Saul always descended further and further into paranoia, madness, and criminality.

Can we not see similar conduct in our own leaders today, grasping at power, to hang onto it, descending into irrationality, foolishness, bitter

accusations, wild flamboyance, paranoia, lawbreaking, all to hold onto power and not let go.

The evil spirit merely exacerbates a man's sin nature and disobedient streak, and we lose control of ourselves, behaving in self-destructive ways.

The Lord Jesus dealt with the worst forms of demon possession and madness.

One day a father brought his son to Jesus for help. The son was torn with convulsions, writhing, foaming at the mouth, and self-destructive conduct involving water and fire.

The poor man cried out to Jesus, "If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us!"

Perhaps those are the saddest words ever spoken! The Creator, the King of Glory, in the person of Jesus Christ, has all power to set right all things, and to destroy all demonic forces!

Yet this man didn't know whether Jesus could help his son or not!

Note the difference between this man and the leper: the leper had no doubt at all that Jesus could cleanse him; he only did not know whether Jesus had the will to do so! Christ told him, "I will! Be thou cleansed!"

This poor father had a very weak faith.

But praise God, Christ's power to save does not depend upon the strength of our faith, but rather upon His infinite power to redeem and rescue us!

The poor father cried out to Jesus, "I believe! Help thou mine unbelief!" Here is the proper position of all poor sinners before the Savior.

Only Jesus can save us from our foolish disobedience, our fears, our manias, our paranoias, and even our demons.

This salvation comes not by calming music, or drugs, or psychiatrists. Only the power of Jesus can save any of us.

We must always be calling upon the Lord Jesus to deliver us, in all things.

To us, Christ's deliverance comes as a free gift!

But to the Savior, it cost Him His life. He laid down His life to save His poor helpless sheep.

Thus for all believers, we must call out to Jesus, Lord, I believe! Help Thou mine unbelief!