

LIVING WATER

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THE FRUIT OF THE UNREPENTANT

by Jim Bedsworth

In 1st Timothy 2:3-4, Paul encouraged Timothy to pray for all men, ***“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”***

God wants all men saved and especially wants those who stray to come back to Him. He encourages us to help those who have fallen away. James says in chapter five to, ***“let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.”***

There are times, in our desire to save those who have fallen away, that we take even the slightest acknowledgement of sin as a sign of full restoration and are ready to have fellowship with the person. In 2 Corinthians 7:10, Paul tells us it takes godly sorrow for acceptable repentance. ***“For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”*** Accepting less than a godly sorrow and genuine repentance does not show love toward our brother or sister in sin. Nor does it fulfill our responsibility to protect the church and the innocent victims of this person’s sin. The Psalmist writes in Psalm 82:3-4, ***“Defend the poor and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; Free them from the hand of the wicked.”*** Our haste to accept a vague and insufficient

“apology” without genuine repentance can be very harmful to those they have victimized or sinned against.

We have an incredibly good case study of a man that expressed sorrow and a desire to be back in the graces of God but had no real intentions of repentance. By that, we know he did not have godly sorrow. That person was King Saul.

King Saul was a man that, upon introduction, seemed to be a humble man. However, as we follow the events of his life, his humility may have just been a veil for his own insecurities. His response to Samuel’s invitation to eat with him as an honored guest in chapter nine was, ***“Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak like this to me?”*** Although he was taller and better looking than most, he still had an insecurity from, what he felt was, the small stature of his family compared to other families and tribes in Israel. These insecurities became very evident when David started having success.

His insecurities led to sin by not waiting on Samuel to offer sacrifice to God before battling the Philistines. He feared losing control of his army, so he took it upon himself to offer the sacrifice. As soon as he had finished, Samuel came and asked King Saul what he had done. What was King Saul’s response? He blame shifted. The people had scattered, Samuel had not come at the appointed time and the Philistines

gathered and were ready for battle. What was King Saul to do but offer a sacrifice and made supplication as God would have surely desired? He was simply being an obedient servant to the Lord.

Samuel was not that naïve, though. Samuel called out his sin. He said, ***“You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you. For now, the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.”***

We can continue to list examples of King Saul’s foolishness, pride, harshness, feigned sorrow, feigned repentance, blame shifting and just his overall sinful narcissism. His anger and pride were evident to the point of nearly executing his own son for eating honey, which broke a rash and prideful oath King Saul made trying to ensure that he would have vengeance on his enemies.

King Saul showed disobedience, pride, blame shifting and false sorrow in chapter 15 when he did not destroy the Amalekites like God had commanded him to do. God sent Samuel to address King Saul. As Samuel approached King Saul arrogantly and falsely claimed to be obedient to the Lord. He said, ***“Blessed are you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD.”*** Samuel, again not falling for King Saul’s disingenuousness, responded by asking, ***“What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?”***

King Saul made excuses which Samuel, again being perceptive, shut down quickly. King Saul then doubled down and said, ***“But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD and gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites.”*** He then shifted the blame and said,

“But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal.”

King Saul’s manipulation did not fool Samuel, so King Saul then feigned sorrow and repentance by responding, ***“I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD.”***

The Bible records that 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.”*** King Saul’s heart and his intention was evident to Samuel. How could there be Godly sorrow while he was still blaming others for his trespasses?

How about the way he treated David, a faithful servant of God and of King Saul? He continued to hunt David down after David had served him so well. Even Jonathon could not understand his hatred for David and, at one point, could not even believe it until the evidence became overwhelmingly clear. King Saul was so cruel that he even killed Ahimelech and eighty-five priests because Ahimelech had helped David.

1 Samuel 24 records that David had an opportunity to kill King Saul but did not. Again, King Saul displayed apparent sincere sorrow and repentance telling David, ***“You are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil. And you have shown this day how you have dealt well with me; for when the LORD delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me. For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely? Therefore, may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand.”***

King Saul's false repentance became obvious as he once again sought David's life (recorded in 1 Samuel 26). David took the opportunity to spare King Saul's life while he pursued David, a second time, prompting King Saul to offer another "non-apology," feigning sorrow and repentance saying, **"I have sinned. Return, my son David. For I will harm you no more, because my life was precious in your eyes this day. Indeed, I have played the fool and erred exceedingly."** David, wisely, did not believe King Saul.

In the end, King Saul died a horrible death and out of favor with God. He was a cruel man that abused friends, God's people, and family alike. Think of how history would have changed if Samuel would have accepted King Saul's false apologies or if David would have believed King Saul had repented from trying to kill him. As bold as King Saul was, it would have only emboldened him more. King Saul had real victims that were in harm's way.



We must be wise like Samuel and David when dealing with individuals like this. There are signs of insincerity we can look for. One, do they really admit to what they have done, or do they minimize their sin or normalize it? Do they blame others for their actions? Do they qualify their apologies by saying they are sorry, "if I offended" or "if you felt" a certain way? Do they only apologize only for what they think you are aware of?

The Lord says in Ezekiel 18, **"Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?... and not that he should turn from his ways and live?"** We should have the same goal and spirit about us. Nevertheless, if we are deceived and accept a "King Saul" repentance, we have done nothing to restore the erring brother or sister, but have actually enabled their deception, and have certainly not been just to their victims. And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Cain, Lamech, Pharoah, Nabal, Ahab, Jezebel, Haman, Shemaiah, Satan and others whose rage and hardened hearts worked against and to undermine those who would be obedient to God and never relenting.