

Upside Right Living In An Upside Down World

1 Samuel 18:17-30

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 2-13-2011

Introduction

How many remember the arrest and imprisonment of California State Senator Alan Robbins? It was an incredible scandal back in 1991. He's one of the rare criminals in office who actually got caught. But let me read you part of his resignation letter. He said,

Over a period of years, as I drank the heady wine of power and influence, my priorities in office became distorted. Success and recognition were foremost; honesty and adherence to the law were not at the center of my focus... [He goes on to confess some of the things he did. Then he said,]

I wish my colleagues well and it would please me if someone benefits from what I have said and rededicates himself or herself to staying clear of the line. When you are willing to walk close to the line, whether for political success, personal gain or to help your friends, you risk waking up one day to find out that you have long since crossed a boundary that you vowed you would never cross...¹

This might have been Saul's testimony if he had been caught and hung out to dry like Senator Robbins. He might have wondered how he could have sunk to such depths. And we started looking at part of the answer last week. The first part of the answer was that he had failed to see his heart as an enemy. Jesus said, "**For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies**" (Matt 15:19). And we saw last week that Saul really didn't consider his pride, his fear, or his jealousy to be the enemy. So his flesh was able to gain more and more power.

The second enemy that Saul only half-heartedly fought against was Satan's hosts. In many ways he feared this enemy, but he didn't engage it with all of *God's* weapons of warfare. And this evil spirit was appealing to his heart's weaknesses and was fanning the flames of fear and jealousy.

But the third big enemy that dragged Saul down was the world system. The bible speaks of the *world*, the flesh, and the devil. And for many people the "world" seems like such an abstract concept. How do you even engage it?

The world system flows from the conglomerate of flesh out there who have written, entertained, spoken, ruled, felt, and valued independently of God. You can think of the world as *culture's* methods, values, goals,

¹ Los Angeles Times, 20 Nov. 1991, A23

entertainment, etc. It's an amalgam of the corporate worldview of millions of people. And if you don't think that the world impacts your life, you are naïve. It pulls at every one of us. It's hard to resist. And part of the reason it is hard to resist is that it appeals to our flesh. Another reason it is hard to resist the world is that we want to please others, and we don't want to seem to be oddballs. A third reason is that we are like a fish – we don't know we are wet because we are immersed in it. You might think that the way the world pulled upon Saul is crazy; that Saul should have recognized that. But the current world system expresses itself somewhat differently than it did back then. But that means that he would recognize the blindspots you have in which the world is pulling on you. He would think you are crazy.

So as we go through this passage, don't wag your finger at Saul and say, "What a nut case." Even David was drawn in by the thinking of the world-system of his day. I can pretty much guarantee you that none of us in this room has a consistent rejection of the world's thinking. Our worldview tends to shield us from thinking self-critically. But we must. We must always examine and re-examine our foundational presuppositions from which everything that we value, think, and do flows. Romans 12:2 says, "**do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**"

Now let me hasten to say that I don't want you to be discouraged if you find some of the world's thinking affecting you. It's direction, not perfection. No one is perfect on this subject, but we need to keep traveling in the right direction of having our thinking transformed and knowing God's will more and more.

David was going the right direction, even though he had a lot of issues that he was blind to. Saul started off well, but at some point he started going the wrong direction. Anybody who has studied the life of Saul will tell you that Saul still thought of himself as a true believer in Yahweh. There are times in the upcoming chapters where Saul repents. He reads the Bible, goes to church, and he prays. In the next chapter we will see that he will keep the holy festivals of God, all the while thinking like the world. But because he was a professing believer, he did do some Scriptural things. But too frequently he took his cues of how to function as a king from the world around him. And actually, God prophesied in 1 Samuel 8 that Israel's first king would do exactly that.

I won't review the things that we said way back then, except to remind you that the things God condemned in a king in that chapter were things that seemed normal in that day and age. And at least some of those things seem normal today in America. They even seem normal to most evangelicals. Sometime read through chapter 8 again and ask yourself, "What was the big deal?" Most evangelicals today wouldn't see the problems that God was describing because we are so immersed in a system of thinking big-government. When you are immersed in a culture, doing things the culture's way seems like the most natural way of doing things. You don't know anything different. That's the way Saul lived, and when it came to women, this was the way David lived. It was his big, vulnerable, blind spot.

But we will start by looking at Saul. And I want to phrase it in terms you can understand. Rather than saying to God, "*Thy* kingdom come, *Thy* will be done on earth as it is in heaven," Saul was in effect saying, "Lord, please bless *my* kingdom; please prosper *my* will. May *my* desires get done this day." When rephrased that way, I think some of us will recognize that we've got a fair bit of King Saul in us. Richard C. Trench said, "Prayer is not getting man's will done in heaven, but getting God's will done on earth." If you don't think that way, you've been influenced by the world. We want God to baptize and affirm man's wisdom that we have adopted. We are living upside down in an upside down world because that seems normal. When you start living right side up in an upside down world, everyone is going to be telling you that *you* are upside down. Right? Because they are looking at *you* from *their* perspective.

And we will end this sermon by showing that God blesses us despite the fact that we do that. God is so gracious. He rejoices over us when we are traveling the right direction even though we haven't arrived yet. And so even though David will suffer from conforming to the world on this day, God still blessed him. So hopefully you will find this sermon encouraging in two directions. It will keep you from getting discouraged over your failures, but it will also motivate you to realize that there are tremendous blessings that flow from being more and more transformed by the renewing of your mind and less and less conformed to the world system.

I. The World's Wisdom in Saul

A. Problem one – Saul uses people

1. He uses Merab (v. 17)

In your outlines I have listed six problems that I see with Saul in this passage. And most of this sermon is just going to deal with Roman numeral I. Problem one is that Saul uses people. Verse 17: **“Then Saul said to David, ‘Here is my older daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife. Only be valiant for me, and fight the LORD’s battles.’ For Saul thought, ‘Let my hand not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him.’”** At this point Saul decides that he is not going to take the blame for David’s death. He will lure David through the enticement of Merab into fighting in more and more dangerous situations. He hopes that David will die before that happens.

But what is astonishing is the way he is using his daughter Merab. Why would he marry his daughter off to somebody he hates? That’s ridiculous. He is not thinking of his daughter’s heart. If David is as bad as Saul thinks that he is, he shouldn’t be giving his daughter to David. Now he may think (in some perverse way) that he loves his daughter, but he is really using her.

How many of us use our children to accomplish our agendas? Or do we ask ourselves continually, “What would be in the best interests of my child?” Do we seek God’s will for our children?

2. He uses David (v. 17)

Obviously the second person being used is David. As far as Saul is concerned, he is a tool. Earlier he loved David because David could do something for him. But now that he sees David as a threat, he is trying to get rid of him. But even though he hates David, he is going to use David to do some more of his work until David dies. You can see that he has a user heart. And by the way, it’s not just rulers who are users. Anybody can. I’ve seen pastors be users. Welfare people are often users. I’ve been used many times by those who want a handout.

3. He uses Adriel (v. 19)

Saul uses Adriel in verse 19. Here is someone we know almost nothing about. But Saul gives Merab in marriage to him. It must have been pretty important to break the engagement with David. What’s with that? Some people think that he is deliberately trying to irritate and provoke David

into rash words so that he can use it against David. Others think that he needs to manipulate Adriel to keep him useful. But whichever viewpoint is true, you can bet that Saul was getting something out of this marriage.

4. He uses Michal (vv. 20-21)

Then in verses 20-21 he uses Michal, his second daughter.

1 Samuel 18:20 Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David. And they told Saul, and the thing pleased him.

1 Samuel 18:21 So Saul said, "I will give her to him, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him." Therefore Saul said to David a second time, "You shall be my son-in-law today."

That's scandalous. Sure he might think he is doing a good thing, but he is stepping on his daughter's heart in the process. It's just another illustration of how he uses people.

5. He naturally assumes that everyone is using him (vv. 9,12,15,29)

And he naturally assumes that everyone is just using him. That's just the way life is. He doesn't think it's wrong. It's just the way life is. That's why three times this passage says that Saul feared David. He assumes David will do exactly the same thing. Verse 9 says that he eyed David with suspicion from that day forward. The whole passage says that he wants to do David in and has become David's enemy. Why? David has done nothing to deserve such thinking. Why would Saul be so afraid of him? It's because we have a tendency to assume that others think the same way we do. It was one of the few observations of Freud that had any merit in it. He spoke of projection, which is a defense mechanism whereby we assume others have the same undesirable attributes that we do. And so one projects his "own undesirable thoughts, motivations, desires, and feelings onto someone else." Unfortunately Freud interpreted it within a perverted system that never gave anybody spiritual liberty. But the Bible warns us not to do this when it calls upon us to think more highly of others than we do of ourselves.

6. Notice the stark contrast in David (v. 18)

And I want you to notice that God has done a mighty work in David to avoid this. Verse 18 – "**So David said to Saul, 'Who am I, and what is my life or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king?'**" David does not jump at this opportunity to climb the corporate ladder. That's what Saul would have done. But David doesn't feel right about using Saul for self-advancement. He's living rightside up in an upside

down world. God's grace can do that in any one of our lives. Now when you see the suffering that David receives you are going to wonder if it is worth it to live rightside up, and you will have to repeatedly ask God for this user-conquering grace.

But if you are indwelt by His Spirit, He is going to make you want to be more like Him. And what was God like? He was not a user. His attribute of Aseity made it impossible for him to be a user. Aseity shows that God needs nothing and so He never takes. He always overflows generously to others. God never needs praise. Instead, the Father always praises the Son and Spirit, and the Spirit always praises the Son and Father. And they direct others to praise each other. There is always an outgoing agape love that sacrifices. God so loved the world that he gave. He selflessly gave. Jesus humbled himself and took on the form of a servant. The apostles learned this grace by seeing themselves as servants of the people.

And if you ever get elected to office, don't act like Senator Alan Robbins. Don't let politics corrupt you into using people – even if it is for a good goal. Retain a servant's heart. Your political trainers may tell you that you won't get anywhere with that attitude. Your trainer in sales may tell you the same thing. But I've got a book that brilliantly portrays servant salesmanship, and it has made people even more effective salesmen. This book tells you to never sell people what they don't need, but rather direct them to people who will sell them the product that they need. It seems counter-intuitive, but top executives have been picking this book up as they see that God's methods benefit the bottom line. It's called, *The New Conceptual Selling*. It is the antithesis of this point and I think demonstrates beyond any shadow of a doubt that if you are a user, God will not bless. I know rightside up thinking seems upside down, but it's not. The wisdom of God works better than the wisdom of the world. David illustrates that point.

B. Problem two – Saul's promises lack integrity

1. His promise of 17:25 broken in 18:17

Of course, that book is a great illustration of point B – we need integrity if we are going to have long-term success. And Saul lacked it. Back in 17:25 Saul promised his daughter in marriage to the person who would kill Goliath. It's been a while now, and Merab has not been even offered to David. He's gone back on his word.

But once Saul thinks of various ways of killing David, he begins thinking that he can have his cake and eat it too. Maybe I will give him

Merab after all. But rather than giving Merab based on what he had promised at the battle with Goliath, he adds new conditions to having her hand in marriage. There's just no integrity there.

2. His promise of 18:17 broken in v. 19

Of course, his promise of Merab in verse 17 is broken pretty quickly in verse 19, isn't it? He gives her away to somebody else.

3. He has no intention of fulfilling his promise of verse 21

And then later, even while making the promise in verse 21 he has no intention of fulfilling it. Verse 21 says, **“So Saul said, ‘I will give her to him, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him.’ Therefore Saul said to David a second time, ‘You shall be my son-in-law today.’”** Does he become Saul's son-in-law that day? No.

Saul's beginning to lose credibility. He breaks promises as fast as our Congressmen do. So in the remaining verses he makes his promises through intermediaries. That gives plausible deniability. But the point is, he totally lacks integrity. He doesn't keep his promises. If you think that the lack of integrity in American politics is something new, it's not. This has always been part of the world system that we need to buck.

4. He naturally assumes that no one else has integrity

And if you buck the system and approach sales, marketing, politics, or anything else with total integrity, people will either think you are stupid or that you are lying yourself. Saul naturally assumes that no one else has integrity. That's why he has to constantly be on guard. That's why he has to give favors and play one person against another. He doesn't think he can win with integrity.

5. Notice the stark contrast in David's truthfulness (vv. 18,23) and his going beyond the call of duty (26b-27)

I want you to notice the stark contrast in David. In verses 18 and 23 he tells the truth about himself even though the truth hurts. In verses 26-27 he goes beyond the call of duty. The last sentence of verse 26 says, **“Now the days had not expired.”** He had so many days in which to kill these Philistines in order to marry Michael. David is going to fulfill Saul's request way ahead of schedule. So he is going to give better on time, and he is going to give better on price. Saul had only asked for 100 foreskins. It's David's personality to go above and beyond the call of duty. He never cheats. He

never cuts corners. He is always good for his word. The text says, **“therefore David arose and went, he and his men, and killed two hundred men of the Philistines. And David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full count to the king, that he might become the king’s son-in-law. Then Saul gave him Michal his daughter as a wife.”** Saul has no way out of this without getting egg on his face, so he has to follow through. But he doesn’t learn from this to have integrity himself.

Though David wins in God’s eyes, and wins in the eyes of many Israelites, he becomes a target of Saul. He becomes a threat. Saul can’t afford to have men of integrity. Isn’t that interesting? Part of the reason is that it makes him look too bad. I’ve had friends who have lost their jobs because of integrity. They have refused to lie for the boss, or to do something unethical, and in one case refused to sign off on government forms that would have involved the person in criminal activity. And when they refused, they got fired. And when you are tight on money and the pressure is on to do something or you will lose your great job, living upright seems upside down. It’s hard.

You probably saw the news last year of Aleksei Symovsky. He was a 32 year-old police major in Novorossiysk, Russia. Sick of the corruption on the police force, and knowing that this is a Mafia system all across Russia, he told his wife that he had to do something about it. He told her that he might get killed, but he will for sure get thrown into jail if he does this. But he said that he couldn’t live without integrity. So he sat down and made a simple YouTube video of himself talking about the problem of corruption, appealing to the president to deal with police corruption across that nation. He became a big hero among the people after about two million views. But he was fired from his job, the police interrogated him, his relatives, his close friends, and raided their homes. They then tried to plant drugs on him. They arrested him and charged him with embezzling. He sat in jail for six weeks, but because of huge public outcry, he got released. But then he was immediately charged with slander and the court ordered him to pay the equivalent of \$3500 in slander damages. Just like David, he discovered that having integrity can sometimes backfire. It can back fire in even the good old USA when people are whistleblowers. But integrity is absolutely essential if we are to have God’s blessing.

And what I’m doing here is I’m trying to describe these things in a way to show that it is hard to resist the pull of the world. I want you to realize that the world-system really is an enemy that must be resisted if we are to have the favor of God long-term.

C. Problem three – Saul uses manipulation similar to “the spirit of Jezebel” and “the spirit of Ahab”

1. Manipulation rather than authority (18:17-30)

Problem three is that Saul used manipulation rather than true Biblical authority. And this is always a temptation for those in authority. It’s a temptation for us fathers when children or wives don’t respect their authority. When that happens, they feel like they have got to do something more than standing in God’s authority. That doesn’t seem to work. So they add manipulation and force. But there is a big difference between exercising authority by faith and leaving the results on God’s hands, and trying to rule by power. Some people speak of what Saul is doing here as the spirit of Ahab. And the inverse is the spirit of Jezebel. Both were such masters at manipulating others into doing what they wanted.

This is a problem that plagues the Christian church in America. Many of the leaders in Omaha have said that this is a common problem in most of their churches. On the one hand, the spirit of Jezebel seeks to use, intimidate, control, or manipulate those who are in authority. But the spirit of Ahab responds with the same thing. I believe it is really the same demon. But this demon motivates leaders to use intimidation, manipulation, alliances, etc rather than exercising the authority that God has given.

It takes faith to exercise authority and to leave the results in God’s hands. Very few modern leaders do that. When they can’t get their way, they try to force their way.

2. Power rather than authority (chapter 19)

And that’s what we see in this chapter. Just as Jezebel and Ahab would later do, when manipulation didn’t work, Saul resorted to power plays in chapter 19. He tried to force his way. It’s the world’s way of thinking, and it should be foreign to us. There should be no manipulation within the family and within the church.

3. He naturally assumes the same of David

4. Notice that David exercises servant leadership (vv. 13-16,18)

And it was foreign to David. In stark contrast to Saul, David exercised servant leadership. You can see that in verses 13-16. You can see it in verse 18. He served Saul even when it didn’t look like he would get anything out of serving Saul. He served the people. But above everything, he served God. And God was with him. Yes he suffered from the attacks of this demonically

influenced king, but God was with him. Husbands, when you exercise authority, you stand as a representative of God, and God will back you up even if no one is following. But the moment you resort to manipulation to assert your leadership, you are operating from the principles of the world, not the principles of Christ. But I think many of you men will testify that it is hard to do that. And when you wives have to live with sinful husbands, it is hard not to respond with the same manipulation.

D. Problem four – Saul uses secret caucusing rather than a sunshine policy

1. Hidden agendas (vv. 17,21,25b)

Problem four – Saul used secret caucusing rather than an open sunshine policy. In verse 17 Saul keeps his true agenda away from David. In verses 21 and 25 he does the same. We expect hidden agendas from some of the pagans in Washington DC, but why does the church do this? Even in godly denominations like my previous one I found true men of God using this wisdom of the world. They had agendas of which direction they wanted the denomination to go, but they also knew that they might not win a vote if they had open discussion. So they strategized on which parliamentary procedures could be used to stop debate, to tangle things up, to confuse people. They were deciding in secret caucuses which people they would line to stack the mics when a certain overture came up, what gaudy-colored suit the leader would wear so that the followers could see which way they should vote on people and issues, and which leaders they would try to get onto which committees, and it was all done behind closed doors in secret. You see this in so many denominations. It's not just pagans who live by the wisdom of the world. Christians are conformed to the world as well. But when you confront them on it, they don't see it as wrong. This is the way all debates are handled. You're the one that seems upside down. Sometime read the early church debates related to the creeds and you will see a lot of the world's wisdom governing the methods of promoting arguments – especially among the Arians.

2. He trades favors (v. 19)

So there were hidden agendas. Secondly, Saul and his cronies traded favors with each other. If you support me on this, I will support you on that bill. We see Saul trading favors in verse 19. "I know I have promised Merab to David, but if you do this for me, you can be son-in-law." Is that any

different than the changes Senators make when they trade votes? And Adriel jumped at the opportunity, even though it was a bit scandalous.

3. He works behind the scenes secretly (v. 22)

In verse 22 Saul told his servants, “**Communicate with David secretly...**” And this behind-the-scenes secrecy is not conducive to honest discussion of issues. When even churches engage in such behavior, they cannot expect the favor of the Lord.

4. Notice the stark contrast with David’s openness (v. 16,18,23,30)

I want you to notice the stark contrast of Saul with David in verse 16: “**But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.**” In other words, David did everything in the open. You have to trust God to do that. But God loves an open sunshine policy in politics, in church, in business, and in all of our dealings.

And it would have been hard for David. Since, failure in the field could have been an excuse for Saul to demote or punish him, it would have been easy to be cagey. But David was an open sunshine policy guy.

In verse 18 David admits his weaknesses. It doesn’t worry him that this could be a cause of demotion. The world will tell you, don’t ever admit your weaknesses. I’m sure this was very surprising to Saul. He could definitely take advantage of it. And if you admit your weaknesses, or you admit your inabilities, you might be worried that people will think less of you. But in Ephesians 4:25 Paul tells us to put off this worldly thinking and to start speaking the truth with each other for we are members of one another. He is in effect saying that we should be able to be vulnerable with each other within the church. That seems so upside down when you are immersed in the world. But the only way to fight the *world*, the flesh, and the devil is to be counter-cultural. In verse 23 David does the same thing. He is not about to inflate himself or make himself look better than he really is. And we would do well to imitate him.

E. Problem five – Saul is driven by pride, self-seeking, selfish ambition, and the rules of the dog-eat-dog world

1. Resents competition (v. 8) but is always competing (v. 9)

Problem five – Saul was driven by pride, self-seeking, selfish ambition, and the rules of the dog-eat-dog world. You can see it in verse 8 where Saul resents competition, and yet he is constantly competing with

David. Verse 9 says, “**So Saul eyed David** [or as some translate it, “eyed him with jealousy”] **from that day forward.**” Verse 29 says, “**So Saul became David’s enemy continually.**”

2. No matter how great the promotion, he is not satisfied (vv. 6-8)

And no matter how much people praised Saul and promoted him in their mind, he was going to keep stepping on people’s fingers to climb higher on the ladder of respect and esteem. Look at verses 6-8

1Samuel 18:6 Now it had happened as they were coming *home*, when David was returning from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women had come out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy, and with musical instruments.

1Samuel 18:7 So the women sang as they danced, and said:

“Saul has slain his thousands,
And David his ten thousands.”

1Samuel 18:8 Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, “They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed *only* thousands. Now *what* more can he have but the kingdom?”

1Samuel 18:9 So Saul eyed David from that day forward.

He’s assuming that David will have the same dog-eat-dog approach that he does. And it doesn’t faze Saul that he wants to be promoted more than he really deserves. He hadn’t slain thousands on that day. Why does he want that praise? That’s ridiculous. But this is the way unrestrained competition is – “If David gets credit for ten thousands (deserved or undeserved), I want to be ahead of David!” And this to me looks so much like the business world out there. People keep seeking more and more promotions until the Peter Principle kicks in and they are promoted above their competencies and they begin to hate the job that they had tried so hard to get. And despite the fact that this guy is miserable in his job, everybody else envies him and would take a shot for that job too, if they could. But do you think that Christians who do that today recognize the sin in themselves? No. They are as blind to it as Saul was. Why? Because their mind has been conformed to this world.

You guys have all bucked culture hugely. I’ll give you huge credit for that. Just being willing to homeschool your children proves that you don’t want your minds to be conformed to this world. But there are probably blind spots in you that are *still* conforming to the world. Ask yourself if there is any Scripture that you simply can’t obey, and ask yourself why? Your answer to that question may give you a hint that you are indeed, in some

small way, being conformed to the world. Even saying, “Oh it’s a small thing,” is being conformed to the world’s way of thinking. And if you give in on that principle, before you know it you will be like Saul and start giving in on more and more principles of the world’s system. This was the slow process leading up to the Bathsheba event with David. The only way we know if we are being conformed to the world is by Scripture. You can’t know by saying, “It makes sense.” If you are upside down, the only thing that makes sense is upside down. Paul called us to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2Cor. 10:5). He didn’t just say the big thoughts – every thought captive.

3. The goal is more important than the people you step on in the process (vv. 17-27)

Notice in verses 17-27 that the goal Saul is seeking to achieve is more important than the people he steps on. Some of us do the same thing – we get it in our heads that we want to win a given argument, and it doesn’t bother us that we hurt feelings in the process. We’re going to protect our turf. We’ve got to constantly be on guard against this world value.

4. He is not thinking of the interests of others above his own

The fourth problem I’ve listed under point E is that Saul does not think of the interests of others above his own. Like a child, the whole world revolves around him. Perhaps his parents didn’t train him young that this isn’t the way of a believer. By the way, we do need to train our children very young on this issue. If you give in to every squeal, cry, or fussiness of your babies, you will be reinforcing their natural tendency to think that this world is here to serve them. And when they enter the terrible two and threes, you will have your hands full trying to undo everything that you have trained them to expect. And by the way, do not believe for a moment the wisdom of the world, which says that your kids must go through the terrible twos. Nonsense. Psalm 131 tells you what your kids should be like when they are weaned. The whole psalm teaches us about what should be in place by the time our children are weaned. It says,

Psalms 131:1 LORD, my heart is not haughty [So there is pride that needs to be dealt with by the time of weaning],

Nor my eyes lofty [There’s selfish ambition].

Neither do I concern myself with great matters [There’s discontent],

Nor with things too profound for me. [There’s a smarty-pants attitude.]

Psalms 131:2 Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul [there's temper completely dealt],

Like a weaned child with his mother;

Notice that there are no terrible behaviors after weaning. Those who have bought into the world's thinking imagine that this is impossible. They think, "That is so naïve. That's upside down." But Scripture says that this can be done if we will use the Bible's right-side-up methods for raising children rather than the world's methods. When people try to tell you, "Oh, yes, your child will go through the terrible twos, the thankless threes, the fiendish fours, the flagrant fives, the sad sixes, the scandalous sevens, the egregious eights, the naughty nines, and the tormenting tens and teens, don't accept these negative affirmations. Always affirm the Scripture by faith. And if you need help in getting your child to be a weaned child like this, or if you have older kids who still have not been weaned (so to speak), ask to join a parenting class that puts off the wisdom of the world and puts on the wisdom of God. By the way, William and Sarah are quite willing to have a class at their home. They would like to attend the parenting class themselves, and I'm sure that some of the rest of you might like to learn right along with them as well. The Scripture has a lot to say about that subject. So let me know if you are interested in that.

But anyway, back to Saul. He probably never did get this training as a kid. And so he keeps being driven by pride, self-seeking, selfish ambition, and the rules of a dog-eat-dog world where I will take your toy away or break your toy if you won't let me have it.

5. He assumes David will have the same approach to life that he does (v. 8-9)

6. Notice the stark contrast in David's humility (v. 18,23)

Notice the stark contrast in the humility of David. In verse 18 he has the godly attitudes of the weaned child of Psalm 131. In verse 23 we see the same attributes of a humble person with a servant's heart.

F. Problem six – Saul sees government as being above the law, whereas David behaved wisely (v. 14,15,30)

Problem six – Saul sees government as being above the law, whereas David behaved wisely. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and it is through the Scriptures that we gain that wisdom. David had no doubt learned from the Scriptures and from Samuel the godly way to lead a government. But as we saw from chapter 8, Saul took too many of his cues from the world system.

And in case you think Christians wouldn't do that today, look at the voting record of Christians in our state legislature, Christians in the Congress, and Christians in the Senate of the United States of America. Based upon their voting record I can say with absolute confidence that the vast majority of these Christians act like they are above the law. They certainly have ignored numerous Biblical laws about economics, limits on government, etc. But they have not even submitted themselves to the original intent of the Constitution they swore to uphold.

But here is the thing that we have been seeing throughout this sermon – if you were to accuse them of that, they would hotly deny it and be surprised that you would think it. They are just as oblivious to their compromises to the world system today as Saul was back then. I've read these evangelical arguments for the Health Care System. They are oblivious to the fact that the Bible would call them thieves and robbers. They are violating Biblical economic law. And like a fish probably doesn't know that it is wet (since it has never experienced dryness) these Christian politicians don't know that they have embraced the world rather than fighting the world – and it's for the same reason – they are immersed in the world. They don't know anything different. That helps us to be understanding of them rather than being judgmental, but it also gives us strategies for dialoguing with them. Unless we help them reexamine their presuppositions, they will not be able to even see how much of the world is in them. They just won't.

II. The World's Wisdom in Seeking a Mate (v. 26)

Let's spend at least a couple of minutes on how David shows that he has been impacted by the world in his seeking of a mate. Based on the eight wives and several concubines that David selected over the course of his life, we know that he showed little wisdom in the area of romance. It's just a fact. You cannot get away from that conclusion if you read all of first and second Samuel. You can blame some of that on thinking with his hormones. But I believe a lot of this was entered into sincerely because he was thinking like the world system around him. His parents had apparently taught him well on many other subjects, but he didn't have his head screwed on straight when it came to women.

And he role modeled the same wisdom of the world to his children. They had lousy choices. By the time we get to Solomon, we find absolute foolishness when it came to romance. And Solomon admits it toward the end of his life.

A. Those who naively think that problems will disappear when arranged marriages are substituted for dating need to study the depravity of parental decisions for marriage.

1. Saul is willing to step on his daughter's heart for his own selfish gain.

And there are two applications that I make from that fact under Roman numeral II. Point A says, "Those who naively think that problems will disappear when arranged marriages are substituted for dating need to study the depravity of *parental* decisions for marriage." I'm not saying that parents should be involved. You know that my views on that. I believe that parents should be highly involved. But parents can have messed up decisions too. Courtship and betrothal is not a magic bullet.

We've already seen that Saul is willing to step on his daughter's heart for his own selfish gain. You don't want *that* kind of a person arranging a marriage for you. The Puritans railed against parents who promoted marriages simply for economic gain, or political gain. And they were talking to Christians. These Puritan pastors realized that the parents were thinking from the world's wisdom. It's not in your bulletins, but I should point out that parents can have problems with any system of romance. The dating game that many parents push is part of the world's wisdom. But so can a bunch of approaches that people take toward romance. It's one of the reasons I am writing a book on Biblical romance. We can only have our thinking and our lives transformed as we immerse ourselves in the Bible. Too many Christians look at Biblical romance and they say, "That's upside down. That looks crazy." It only looks upside down because *we* are so upside down. In College Kathy and I actually had friends who persecuted us because we weren't willing to kiss or hug before marriage. We weren't even telling them what they needed to. But they were so immersed in the world that they were convinced that were upside down and needed to cut it out. Do not be conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

2. Saul seeks to bypass David's headship of the home

A second thing we will see in Saul is that he seeks to bypass David's headship of the home. Verse 21 says, "**So Saul said, 'I will give her to him, that she may be a snare to him...'**" That's part one of his plan. He thinks he can control David because so far he has been able to manipulate and control his daughter. But his whole goal here is wrong – he is trying to inject himself into David's household. And the Bible says that parents are

not allowed to do that. They leave one authority and come under another authority. Yet in chapter 19 Saul rebukes Michal for standing with David rather than with him as her father. She is fearful, and she lies about David, further jeopardizing David's life. That is the first of several evidences in Michal's life that she responds according to the wisdom of the world.

B. Those who think that problems will disappear when strict courtship is replaced with romance do not know the depravity of human hearts.

1. Was she attracted to David because he was a hero (vv. 6-7,20)?

But, strange as it may seem, both control and total hands off can be just as much driven by the thinking of the world. One's just a little older than the other. And there has been an overreaction to such controlling in home schooling circles away from the supposed legalism of courtship and betrothal into dating. What they fail to realize is that both sides of the debate have been allowing the world to impact their decision making more than the Bible.

What were Michal's criteria for romance? It doesn't seem to be built on much, but at least she saw more of David's character than David did of hers. David after all is a pretty public figure. But the text seems to indicate that Michal had the same crush on David that the maidens in verses 6-7 had. He's handsome, dashing, brave, studly. Verse 20 says simply, "**Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David. And they told Saul, and the thing pleased him.**" He hadn't even been aware that Michal had this romantic attachment. And a lot of parents today are oblivious to the ways their daughters give their hearts away. They have never been instructed not to. Having a crush on someone seems like being right side up. And by the way, God has made women to give their hearts away more readily, and they need Biblical guidance before they do that. Once the heart is given away, it is often too late – though I tell parents not to think "too late" until a marriage has happen, because I have seen God do some rather miraculous things.

2. Was David seeking God's will on this issue (v. 26)?

But what are David's criteria for getting married? In 17:25-27 David seems like he is interested in marrying Saul's daughter and getting tax exemption. And he likely knows very little about Merab. In 18:18 he suddenly gets cold feet, and wonders if he is up to it. But the question is not whether Merab (and later Michal) is godly or, like her dad, whether she is

going to operate by the wisdom of the world. In fact, it doesn't seem to enter his head to ask how much of Saul has rubbed off on her. We will see in later chapters that a lot of Saul had rubbed off on her. But what is David's reason for marrying? In verse 19 his previously scheduled marriage to Merab was apparently moving forward, and that marriage seemed to simply for the expedient goal of marrying into the family. Then look at the second choice in verse 26: **“So when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to become the king's son-in-law. Now the days had not expired.”** The rationale for getting married has little to do with whether Michael is qualified. It says, “it pleased David well to become the king's son-in-law.” *That's* the reason. It was marriage for advancement. And the last phrase of that verse indicates that based on that, they set a schedule. Verse 28 says that Michael loved David, but there is nothing said about David's love. I'm sure he grew to love her and tried to be a good husband.

C. On several women's issues in this book, David thought like the world rather than taking all of his cues from Scripture

Anyway, even if they both fell in love, later we will see that they fall out of love. In fact, Michal despises David when David did not act like her father. There was a lot of influence of her family upon Michael. Biblical romance can involve “falling in love,” but the falling in love should occur after you have determined that it would be a biblically good marriage. The Biblical finding of a spouse involves examining worldview, the character of the parents, evidence of maturity, and other things. And I would urge you to think through what the Bible says about romance and not to fall into the world's way of thinking. We'll have more to say about that in future lessons, but I want to end on a happy note.

III. Though Living in an Infected World, Yet God Was a Shade at David's Right Hand (vv. 27-30 with Psalm 121:)

Verses 27-30 show that God blessed and protected David despite the fact that he had been infected by the world. He does the same for us. And if he didn't, we would all be in deep trouble. It's not that David willfully compromised. He did willfully compromise much later in the Bathsheba event. But here, I am convinced that he thinks this will be a good thing. He doesn't want trouble with Saul, and becoming a son-in-law might be a good way to patch up relations. This was the same philosophy that Solomon took when he entered into treaties with other kings by marrying their daughters. He's trying to do a good thing through sub-Biblical methods. But if you look at verses 27-30 you will see that God continues to bless and bless and bless.

1Samuel 18:27 therefore David arose and went, he and his men, and killed two hundred men of the Philistines. And David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full count to the king, that he might become the king's son-in-law. Then Saul gave him Michal his daughter as a wife.

1Samuel 18:28 Thus Saul saw and knew that the LORD *was* with David, and *that* Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him;

1Samuel 18:29 and Saul was still more afraid of David. So Saul became David's enemy continually.

1Samuel 18:30 Then the princes of the Philistines went out *to war*. And so it was, whenever they went out, *that* David behaved more wisely than all the servants of Saul, so that his name became highly esteemed.

What's with that? God blessing a guy who marries for the wrong reasons? It's called grace. In fact, God could have caused this marriage to turn out real good. He has redeemed countless marriages that weren't entered into properly. Praise God. And it appears that David's whole life is being blessed. But it doesn't mean that you should encourage your kids to make the same mistakes that you did.

It's not as if the laws of harvest don't continue to work. They do. David will suffer from this decision and other romantic decisions in the future. He ends up marrying eight wives, and a number of concubines. That's the wisdom of the world. And the laws of harvest always produce negative ramifications, whether you are a David after God's own heart or not. We need to be aware of that. If you plant a dandelion seed, you will start to get more dandelions. And David reaped some pretty nasty stuff by not thinking biblically in the area of romance.

But the point is that God knows David's heart. Unlike Saul, David is moving in the right direction. And one of the theme phrases that distinguish this church is the phrase, "Direction, not perfection." Obviously in our counseling, shepherding, our emails, phone calls, and preaching the elders want to keep moving you further into the upward call that you have in Christ Jesus because we want you to have more blessings, and we want you to avoid as many problems as you can.

But I think as a church we need to take these last verses to heart. It is too easy to expect perfection out of others when we are not perfect ourselves. It is too easy to expect perfection from the church.

Conclusion

And that's what I want to conclude with. Every person in this church is at various stages of growth. Some may have issues that they will never change – they just won't get it. But we can love them anyway. When we get

to look at the some of the heroes of faith that gathered around David in the upcoming chapters, you will find people with huge character issues. And yet they too were blessed by God. God is with us not because we are perfect. He was not with David because David was perfect. He was with David because David would come to the cross every time he stumbled. He would cling to Jesus when he felt weak. He would ask God to open the eyes of His understanding to see more things out of His law. He was willing to fight against the world's pull upon him whenever he recognized it was there. He was on the pathway of the upward call that he had in Christ Jesus. And you could sum it all up by saying that he lived by grace. To the degree that David was rightside up in an upside down world, it was God's grace alone that drew him there. And my admonition to you is to keep pressing forward into the rightside up world, and don't get alarmed when others tell you that you are upside down. Just show them the mirror of the Word, and pray that the Spirit would open their eyes to see that they are the ones who are really upside down. And may we be willing to change when others do the same to us. The Bible the only tool we have that can convince us of what is right side up and what is upside down. God bless you as you use it. Amen.

Upside Right Living In An Upside Down World

1Samuel 18:17-30

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 2-13-2011

Introduction

I. The World's Wisdom in Saul

A. Problem one – Saul uses people

1. He uses Merab (v. 17)
2. He uses David (v. 17)
3. He uses Adriel (v. 19)
4. He uses Michal (vv. 20-21)
5. He naturally assumes that everyone is using him (vv. 9,12,15,29)
6. Notice the stark contrast in David (v. 18)

B. Problem two – Saul's promises lack integrity

1. His promise of 17:25 broken in 18:17
2. His promise of 18:17 broken in v. 19
3. He has no intention of fulfilling his promise of verse 21
4. He naturally assumes that no one else has integrity
5. Notice the stark contrast in David's truthfulness (vv. 18,23) going beyond the call of duty (26b-27)

C. Problem three – Saul uses manipulation similar to “the spirit of Ahab”

1. Manipulation rather than authority (18:17-30)
2. Power rather than authority (chapter 19)
3. He naturally assumes the same of David
4. Notice that David exercises servant leadership (vv. 13-16,18)

D. Problem four – Saul uses secret caucusing rather than a sunshine policy

1. Hidden agendas (vv. 17,21,25b)
2. He trades favors (v. 19)
3. He works behind the scenes secretly (v. 22)
4. Notice the stark contrast with David's openness (v. 16,18,23,30)

E. Problem five – Saul is driven by pride, self-seeking, selfish ambition, and the rules of the dog-eat-dog world

1. Resents competition (v. 8) but is always competing (v. 9)
2. No matter how great the promotion, he is not satisfied (vv. 6-8)
3. The goal is more important than the people you step on in the process (vv. 17-27)
4. He is not thinking of the interests of others above his own
5. He assumes David will have the same approach to life that he does (v. 8-9)
6. Notice the stark contrast in David's humility (v. 18,23)

F. Problem six – Saul sees government as being above the law, whereas David behaved wisely (v. 14,15,30)

II. The World's Wisdom in Seeking a Mate (v. 26)

A. Those who naively think that problems will disappear when arranged marriages are substituted for dating need to study the depravity of parental decisions for marriage.

1. Saul is willing to step on his daughter's heart for his own selfish gain.
2. Saul seeks to bypass David's headship of the home

B. Those who think that problems will disappear when strict courtship is replaced with romance do not know the depravity of human hearts.

1. Was she attracted to David because he was a hero (vv. 6-7,20)?
2. Was David seeking God's will on this issue (v. 26)?

C. On several women's issues in this book, David thought like the world rather than taking all of his cues from Scripture

III. Though Living in an Upside Down World, God Blessed David (vv. 27-30 with Psalm 121:)

Conclusion