

Session 6: The Pressures of Promotion and Preparation (1 Sam. 18)

As young adults and as a young movement we will experience the promotion of God in the future as God releases greater favor and greater power upon us. In this session I want to talk about the pressures associated with promotion as well as the preparatory element of it so that we're aware of the Biblical "package" that promotion comes in.

We all naturally seek out the positive side of promotion without always understanding its downside; promotion is a double-edged sword. It requires the renewing of our mind to understand how God orders promotion in our lives. God sends promotion in a package that will protect our hearts from pride and the many sins that flow from pride. In this session I want to call us to adjust our vain imaginations about God's promotion of individuals and movements in this life. To seek promotion without seeking to develop meekness (a servant spirit) with even greater urgency inevitably and invariably results in disappointment; it can also cripple and sideline individuals and movements.

I. AN INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF 1 SAMUEL 18

- A. King David was chosen by God to lead an unprecedented move of the Holy Spirit and usher the people of God into a new season of grace, revelation and power.
- B. In 1 Samuel 18 we read of David's first promotion after his anointing at Bethlehem by Samuel. The promotion was the result of his incredible victory over Goliath. This period of promotion lasted about 3–5 years when David was between the ages of 18–23.
- C. At the heart of the story of the life of David is the reality that God trains those who He anoints with unusual favor and power through rigorous pressures.
- D. The first few decades of David's life were designed by God to train him for that season of dynamic leadership. Seasons of early promotion are 99.9% of the time part of God's plan to train us. But unfortunately 99.9% of people misinterpret and misunderstand early promotion and sell out to it without seeing the big picture. David's greatest external successes AND failures were during his later years. The early years were designed with God's foreknowledge of the pressures associated with them.
- E. There are 3 sections in 1 Samuel 18
 - 1. David's Promotion and His Relationship with Jonathan (18:1–5)
 - 2. Saul's Jealousy is Aroused Because of David's Success (18:6–16)
 - 3. Saul Plots David's Death (18:17–30)

II. GENERAL PRINCIPLES RELATED TO THE PRESSURES OF PROMOTION/POWER

- A. **God judges sin more severely where ever He comes in greater power.** This happened in the case of Ananias and Sapphira being struck dead in the place where God's power was being manifest openly (Acts 5). It is simply because God is present in an unusual way in the places in which He manifests great power openly. God cannot manifest Himself as other than the God of holiness who wars against sin, even if that sin is in the vessels that He releases power through.
- B. **Satan attacks more forcefully the people who are most anointed with God's power.** This happened in the case of Jesus (Luke 4) and the New Testament apostles (Col. 1:24; 2 Cor. 11–12). Satan is threatened by those who disrupt his kingdom.

- C. **People clamor more desperately around vessels who have unusual power because they are idolatrous or envious.** People want their personal agendas enhanced by anointed vessels. People will turn in anger as quickly as they came with enthusiasm if they become disappointed in the process. And people will do crazy things to get 'in' with the anointed vessel. The anointing of the Spirit resting on individuals tests the saints. They can idolize them, envy them or honor them in meekness and integrity.

III. THE PRIMARY MESSAGE OF 1 SAMUEL 18: GOD IS SOVEREIGN, RESPOND BY PURSUING INTIMACY & MEEKNESS

- A. An integral theological reality that is laced throughout the life of David is the idea that God was active in leading David to train him. This training was aimed to bring David forth in **intimacy with God** and **meekness before men**.
- B. Central to David's revelation of God was his conviction that God was sovereign over his life circumstances and deliberate about training David's heart in love and obedience. David navigated through tumultuous seasons because he understood the sovereignty of God. A low view of God's sovereignty cripples us in seasons of uncertainty and difficulty; it paralyzes us by stripping us of the confidence that God is our source. The story of the life of David is so radically centered around the sovereignty of God that it stretches the intellect to the point of breaking.

"...the Lord will fulfill His purpose for me." (Psalm 138:8)

"I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills His purpose for me." (Psalm 57:2)

- B. Because David viewed God as sovereign and because He understood his life's circumstances as being under the direction of God's affectionate plans and purposes he lived as though God was his source in all things. This is one of the most foundational realities that we come in contact with when we study the life of David.
- C. Most people live as though **people** are the source of the things they desire (honor, position, finances, possessions, affirmation, affection, etc.) and not **God**. And if people are seen as the source of the things we desire then people are seen as the reason we don't get them when we want them. People naturally view people as the source of their promotion or demotion, release or resistance and honor or mistreatment. And living like this will destroy us and all of our relationships. We live in constant conflict with ourselves and with everyone around as we take things into our own hands.
- D. David's life is a testimony concerning the faithfulness of God to care for us and to fulfill His promises to us. When Samuel came to David's house for dinner the whole family had to wait for David to be called from the fields before eating. No one knew David except for God. And that was enough. When Saul sought to kill David, the ones closest to David counseled him to kill Saul. They said "God has given him into your hands!" And David's response was, "And I will relinquish it and place my future back in his hands." David knew that taking his future into his hands was disastrous. David trusted in the sovereignty of God and the lovingkindness of His heart.

IV. HOW DAVID RESPONDED TO THE PAIN OF RELATIONAL CONFLICT ASSOCIATED WITH HIS PROMOTION (PSALM 55)

- A. Psalm 55 details David's personal pain and anguish related to the 'backlash' of his calling and promotion more than any other Psalm. It was most likely written when his son Absalom revolted against him. Though this Psalm wasn't written during David's years at Gibeah described in 1 Samuel 18 its one of the most helpful Psalms in revealing the heart of David during seasons of pain that was the product of his calling. Psalm 55 was written when David was older in age but the pain was just as real and the response was to be the same: prayer (intimacy) and meekness.
- B. This Psalm is a Psalm of "complaint and moaning." It describes the relational turmoil that surrounded David's life from the moment Samuel anointed him until the day he died. The power of God is a magnet for relational conflict.
- C. This Psalm gives us profound insight into how to carry our hearts when we experience pain related to relational conflict. The stunning reality about David's life is that he never lashed out and defended himself. He lashed out in prayer but never in action to defend his own honor.
- D. An outline of Psalm 55:
1. Pleading to God to Hear Him in His Complaining and Moaning (1-2)

2. The Reason is Because of the Treachery, Betrayal and Slander of His Enemies (3)
 3. David is in Anguish, Fear and Trembling because of this Malice (4–5)
 4. David's Desire to Retreat if Possible (6–8)
 5. David Asks God to Intervene and Overthrow His Enemies (9–11)
 6. David's Pain Was So Intense Because His Enemy was Once His Close Friend (12–14)
 7. David Prays for Judgment (15)
 8. David's Commitment to Call On, Trust In, and Complain to the Lord (16–19)
 9. The Conduct and Character of the His Enemy (20–21)
 10. David Exhorts the Saints to Trust in the Lord (22)
 11. The Fate of the Wicked (23)
- E. There is a profound difference between crying out for justice in prayer when we've been mistreated and asserting ourselves to establish it on our own. David was hostile in prayer and gentle in person whereas most people are hostile in person and gentle (dull) in prayer.
- F. Most people are offended by David's prayers for justice and with the way he went about practically pursuing it (through meekness) assuming that prayer doesn't matter and that its wiser and more practical to vindicate ourselves.
- G. God uses treachery to fulfill His global purposes:
"When you are reading the story of Scripture, and you are reading the story of the Church, and you are reading the story of your life, remember that treachery is archetypical. A servant is not greater than his master. Something can be a kink in the story without being a kink in the Story. God uses traitors to advance His kingdom. After all, He used a traitor to save the entire world (Acts 4: 27–28)." (Douglas Wilson)