### Warm Springs Church Logo June 25

# Bad Things Always Happen To Me

**1 Samuel 18:8-9 NIV**

**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?"**

Do You Ever Feel Sorry For Yourself?

This past week I felt sorry for myself. It was not a twinge of self-pity but a full-on raging bull rush of self-pity. I was bent that I felt like nobody cared about my blog posts and the devotions I put up on Facebook. Now I realize that this is the silliest of things and a man my age should be completely done with such concerns but I was thoroughly over the top scornful of all my friends who were ignoring my work. I went so far as to stop posting (for three days) anything new while I gathered myself. It seemed to me that the world did not deserve my work and I was too bright a writer and too spiritual a poster for them all. So what if there might be someone in Munich Germany reading my blog. I did not care. I felt scorned and disregarded by those I considered my friends and I was done with trying to help the world grow closer to God. Now you must realize that I did not start writing devotions so that I could become a renowned writer. I did so because the Lord spoke to me with brilliant clarity several months ago. I was so certain it was the Lord I wrote it out on a post-it on my computer. One individual life may be of priceless value to God's purposes, and yours may be that life. Write diligently about the things of God. So that was the instigation for my daily posting of devotionals on Facebook, the blog and in emails. I was doing it because I was certain the Lord had given me my marching orders on it. Yet when I began to realize that what I was doing wasn’t overly valued, I fell apart. Soon enough though this week I squared up with the Lord on the whole matter of putting together devotions and it became clear it wasn’t my work to own but God’s to do with as He wished. He knew full well my talents and abilities and when He gave me my directive, I had no right to worry about its acceptance. Now here is the funny part as I resumed the writing. On the same day I posted a devotion on Facebook, I also put a note reminding the church of the potluck on Sunday. I received seven times as many “likes” for that as I did for the devotion and many did not come from people who live in this state. Go figure!

So what makes you squirm with angst? What makes you feel sorry for yourself? Is it the way your marriage has gone? Are you upset with the way your parents treat you? Are you bent with your teacher, frustrated by your grades? Do you wish you had more talent, looked more attractive or scored higher on achievement tests? Do these things grate at you…make you disgruntled and unhappy? Do you complain about your job, gripe about your in-laws, fret over your finances? Are you upset with how your friends treat you or the lack of respect you get at home? Do certain people make you want to scream? Do you ever feel like God has given you a “raw deal”?

One of the more fascinating aspects of the Bible is the brutal honesty with which everyone is described. No one gets “whitewashed” in the accounts. It is refreshing to find in the Bible life as it really is rather than some sensationalized, exaggerated mythology as is so often put out as real life in popular novels and movies. The description of the first king of Israel is an example of the Bible’s honest depiction of the people discussed. King Saul was a popular and successful king who could not stomach the cheers his young associate David garnered. **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. As they danced, they sang: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." 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?" And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.** (1 Samuel 18:6-9 NIV)

Now you and I would probably never get upset like this if others received more attention and praise than we did! We of course would not feel sorry for ourselves that our hard work and devoted effort had gone unnoticed but Saul did and it sent him spinning. The depression and anger he felt as he tried to smile during the parades could not be buried forever and eventually it robbed him of the ability to enjoy his own successes and made him unable to develop a friendship with someone who genuinely liked him and was unbending in his loyalty.

A similar situation occurred later after Saul died and David became king of Israel. David’s ascension to the throne did not come easily. He wound up waging war with Saul’s only surviving son Ish-Bosheth. Now, if you can ignore for a moment the lisp you need to develop to pronounce his name, consider what a terrible moment in the nation’s history it was for these two men to vie for the crown. Divisive alliances were formed within the country, lives were lost in the ensuing battles and long lived grudges were established once the matter was settled. The civil war ended when two of

Ish-Bosheth’s own army officers murdered Ish-Bosheth in his bed. Of course few of Ish-Bosheth’s family members and supporters were completely convinced David did not have a hand in the assassination; it was just too convenient and beneficial for him. Thus there was throughout David’s illustrious reign no small number of people in Israel who resented David’s political power and held it against him that they had not been given the same sorts of privileges and benefits they might have had if Ish-Bosheth had become king instead. Many from the same clan as Ish-Bosheth had looked forward to the influence they would have garnered with the king if Ish-Bosheth had bested David but it didn’t happen and resentment brewed among them when those from David’s clan got the best political appointments and government contracts. To the winner go the spoils in nearly every national coup and in this case many Benjamites thought they were losers all the way around.

A Benjamite who was especially bitter and held a grudge against David for nearly thirty years was Shimei, a distant relative of Ish-Bosheth and his father Saul who most likely felt aggrieved that he had not ever had the same political influence and financial benefits he might have attained if Ish-Bosheth had been king instead of David. His longstanding grievance spilled out into some pretty bizarre behavior when David was being hunted down by his own son Absalom who wanted to rip the rule of Israel from him. In David’s weakened and devastated emotional state as he and his friends fled Jerusalem, the bitterly resentful Shimei came after David. **As King David approached Bahurim, a man from the same clan as Saul's family came out from there. His name was Shimei son of Gera, and he cursed as he came out. He pelted David and all the king's officials with stones, though all the troops and the special guard were on David's right and left. As he cursed, Shimei said, "Get out, get out, you man of blood, you scoundrel! The Lord has repaid you for all the blood you shed in the household of Saul, in whose place you have reigned.** (2 Samuel 16:5-8 NIV) Shimei’s bitter self-pity eventually cost him his life when David’s son Solomon avenged his father’s honor and executed Shimei after David passed away.

It is hard to imagine someone so discontented that he would attack an elderly and distraught poor soul fleeing for his life but such was the embittered Shimei. Nothing looks uglier on paper than the description of someone who feels sorry for himself not realizing there are others in worse shape than them. The pitiful tale of Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob, who tore into her husband because she hadn’t been able to have children with him is sad indeed. But sadder still is Leah, the rival wife to Rachel, who although she already had four children with Jacob, when Rachel, desperate to have children any way she could gave her own servant girl to their husband to sleep with him so the servant girl could bear children in her place, Leah, feeling sorry for herself, did the same with her own servant girl so she could best her sister in baby production. When we feel sorry for ourselves, we can make a mess of our lives trying to alleviate our bitter feelings of being wronged.

The Lord has no room for self-pity. Even Job, who certainly seems to have had reason to complain, he who lost his business, his children and his health all in one day, was silenced by the Lord when he took his gripes too far. **“Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man…”** (Job 38: 2-3a NIV) God is clear on how he thinks we should react to what we see are our grievances. “**Do everything without complaining or arguing…”** (Philippians 2:14 NIV) Complaining is a habit like smoking and overeating. We decide if we are going to be complainers or not. God finds it reprehensible when we complain and the truth is no one likes to be around chronic gripers. We are told in Philippians 2 that those who stop complaining become **“blameless and pure, children of God without fault…”** Our character is upgraded when we fight the urge to complain and instead rely upon Christ to make sense of our difficulty. We don’t have to complain about our finances, our meals, our supervisors or our homework. We can be glad for what we have and the opportunity set before us when we face troubles.

The famous passage that tells us in Isaiah that we have access to God’s help in any situation asks the question of each of us. Why do you complain? Why do you get upset with God over your circumstance? **Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God"? Do you not know? Have you not heard? ...He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak…but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.** (Isaiah 40:27-31 NIV) If rather than complaining, you turn to God for help and trust Him right then, you are promised that you will be empowered at that moment. God will lift up from you your bitterness and dreary outlook and renew your strength. You will stop being weary. You will be uplifted. This is true in every trial you face. As soon as you hope in the Lord rather than complain about the problem at hand, the Lord does something in you, recharges you, warms your heart and energizes you with hope and encouragement.

We can at each moment we are about to be aggravated by some difficulty or upset with some trouble get upset and complain about what we face. We will be tense, unable to concentrate, maybe get a headache, raise our blood pressure and perhaps even spiral out of control and make everyone around us miserable and wish we weren’t there. Or, we can go to the Lord and we can gain encouragement and comfort from Him and we can be strong and see things more clearly and gain insight from the Holy Spirit on how to tackle what we face. The Lord is ready to carry our burdens and make us clear headed and peaceful. He wants us to be pleasant and joyful and not overwhelmed by problems. But we must go to Him rather than complain. Can we try this new approach? Can we give it a go? Can we go to the Lord rather than gripe about the mess we face and gain the fresh happiness and peace the Lord has to give us? I guess we could just keep complaining…Everyone needs a good ulcer to go along with a sour disposition to make the day better.