**King Saul – Believers Trapped in a Sin Cycle**

**Psychological Observations: Validity**

We think of what we call psychology as a modern day social science, recent on the scene in human history. Yet, many years before the coming of our Lord, the Greeks were making astonishing observations and distinctions that remain influential today. Plato and Aristotle being the most famous but only a few of the many Greek thinkers who have contributed to our thinking today. The existence of the soul, different kinds of love, different kinds of knowing and thinking are just a few of the distinctions that influenced the language of the writers of the NT. The Greeks were our first recorded psychologists.

Today, the “science” has advanced to include many, many more observable distinctions that attempt to explain different kinds of human behavior. None of these explanations are rooted in biblical principles. The question is, can we use the modern developed psychological frameworks describing human behavior to understand biblical narratives. Rom 1:18-20 explains that we can discern the eternal power and divine nature of God by observing nature. My position is that psychological observations can have value in explaining some of the behaviors practiced by people in the bible.

**Mental Illness**

Adam’s sin has passed down to all of us and the impact of inherited sin as it manifests in personal sins and misdirected focus (on the earthly) causes many different kinds of lifestyle and ultimately is the source of all perceptual distortions of reality from the mildest (denial) all the way to legitimate mental illness (personality disorders). All mentally adaptive behaviors (distortions of perception) trace back to inherited sin and the beliefs we form as we develop. Some mental illnesses are brain malfunctions (bipolar, schizophrenia) while others are thought disorders developed from inherited traits & stress filled development from unhealthy parenting. All thought disorders are related to a failure to have a child’s emptiness needs/desires properly supplied and managed.

An unhealthy, highly conflictual or violent marriage produces a stressful, negative environment for children that they cannot properly handle, so they form strategies to compensate. Children will adapt to their parent’s marital stress with different coping mechanisms but they all boil down to altering their view of reality. At one end of the spectrum is disassociation (zoning out - ADD) to forming an alternate reality (Narcissism, Multiple Personalities) at the extreme end of the scale.

The OM belief system itself is a complex coping strategy arising from being thrust into the harsh, abusive environment of the devil’s world, filled with selfish people (including parents), full of need/desire to survive and thrive – all without God to properly supply our needs and having been forced to adapt because our needs weren’t met or what we were given was damaging to us.

1. Everyone begins life disconnected from God, developing unhealthy, self-centered thinking – OM beliefs
2. We are all on a spectrum/scale of mental illness with diagnosable mental illnesses at one end with the perfection of Jesus Christ who was perfectly aligned with divine righteousness at the other end.
3. A society that turns away from God and the divine principles of personal responsibility, marriage, family & common sense destroys the family unit which in turn warps children, forcing them to adapt negatively.

* People who are maladapted to reality from their early experiences struggle to make happy marriages
* Children who emerge from stressful marriages often maladapt to reality because of defense mechanism
* Denial is a mild form of altering your reality to make it more livable &acceptable – common to all of us
* Extreme adaptations form extreme defenses, sometimes forming an alternate reality in the person’s mind rendering them unable to accurately perceive their own actions – multiple personalities

1. A society that rejects grace & becomes religious & legalistic warps its children with guilt & shame, forcing them to adapt ways of developing self-esteem outside of the religious prison.
2. When nations reject God & grace, evil begins to take over causing deep damage to children & families

* Relational sin – improper relating – misdirected need/desire with unhealthy strategies - complaining
* Relational evil – vengeance, abuse, violations, using others for gain, deceptions

1. Children born into a culture dominated by evil become damaged, causing mental health problems to increase and then pass down generation after generation.
2. **Cluster B Personality Disorders**: Borderline (fear of abandonment & being alone); Histrionic (overly emotional, dramatic attention seeking); Narcissistic (over estimation of self, seeking admiration as compensation for devalued sense of self); Antisocial (psychopaths & sociopaths – devoid of emotion)

* Common thread with all of these are a devalued sense of self that motivated a child to create a distorted view of self and to form matching habitual behavior patterns
* Antisocial – psychopaths that view self & their desires as more important than others so that they can lie, steal, harm or use others without regret – no conscience
* Narcissistic – views self as worthless, compensating by creating an imaginary self that is greater and more important than others, unable to relate authentically with empathy & compassion.
* All share a distorted view of self and behavioral adaptations to the stress of marital and/or parental malfunction – abuse.

1. People who suffer with CB issues are not monsters even though they act like monsters some time and relating to them hurts, they are abused and damaged people, sinners like all of us.

* The biblical mandate to forgive is required

In stable societies .5% develop CB personalities while some estimates have it as high as 15% in the western world today because of the destruction of marriage and the family unit.

**Trauma Bonds – Creating a Child Delusion**

Trauma bonding (TB) is a psychological response to some form of trauma or abuse that creates a very strong attachment between people (parent/child, mates or soldiers). Abuse/trauma takes many forms like judging, criticism, neglect, favoritism, inappropriate dependence & is much more than physical. Abuse in its many forms is the playing out of one person’s guilt, shame and emotional pain onto another. TB occurs when the abused person forms a connection or relationship with the person who abuses them. The person experiencing abuse may develop sympathy for the traumatized abusive person, which becomes reinforced by cycles of abuse, followed by remorse. Abused people with unresolved OM baggage that have children (all parents to some degree) can easily form a trauma bond with their child, enslaving the child to the needs of the parent. The abused parent becomes dependent on the child’s love or the child’s success to ease the pain of the parent’s heart. A single mother, abandoned by the husband, sees her life as a tragedy and entangles her child in her sorrow or narrative of betrayal.

Trying to carry the burden of a parent’s grief or fear overwhelms any child. The child is born empty & is meant to be filled by the parent’s love, encouragement & assurances but instead he/she becomes the source of affection & assurance for the parent. For many reasons, facing this reality is impossible for the child and so he/she must create an alternate reality, a break from reality that attempts to meet their needs for love and to protect them from the fearful realization that their parent is unable to meet their needs. Depending on the demands that the parent places on the child (demanding affection, perfection 🡪 incest) the child will warp their view of self, others & life to adapt & survive. The hopelessness of being empty & needy but being drained by the parent, believing irrationally that he/she should be able service the parent’s need creates terrible shame & empty feelings. I once counseled with a woman whose mother died and her father had forced her into a sexual role. She had convinced herself that he needed her to play that role for him and that she was doing a good thing.

The common approach to this dilemma with the parent, is to create an imaginary self like a shell to compensate for the shame based real self, the is powerful, important, superior & entitled to always be right, to be in control of everything. The athletic boy who arrogantly declares himself the best ever or the beautiful princess who is too good for anyone but the prince.

Between the ages of 18-36 months a child begins to separate from mother. This individuation is one of the most important developmental tasks in a child’s human growth. If this window of opportunity is missed, the child continues to develop in other ways but the important step of becoming their own true self is left undone. The child remains a child, a perpetual emotional 3 year old. The longer this important maturation step is left undone, the more difficult it becomes to ever do it. Finally, the child moves into adulthood as an emotional 3 year old who is unable to give in a mature manner. So it is believed that when a hurting mother binds a child to their self, so that the child is not allowed to individuate, becoming their own person to develop their own true self, the child struggles to have a healthy self for life. Children are intended to separate from mother and grow up. The needy parent hangs on by berating, abusing or appealing to pity & need, using the child/adult’s guilt and shame to keep them bonded. The fearful, overprotective parent refuses to allow their child to take any risks so that the child never develops courage. The child who was not strong enough to break free of mother’s web ends up despising him/her self. They create a false, idealized self that they present to the world while locking their weak and abused real self in some deep dungeon in their subconscious.

One of the common characteristics observed by those who failed to separate from mother is a pull/push behavior pattern with those close to them. This is especially true of those who develop narcissistic patterns as reported by some who have experienced it. The person will find a potential mate and rather than viewing this person realistically as a collection of good & bad traits, they will idealize them, seeing them as perfect & wonderful. It appears that the goal of idealizing the person is so that they can attach to them like they originally did to their mother. They will feel a huge love for this person and practice what is called “love bombing” to draw this idealized other into an intimate relationship. They sweep them off their feet. Once this emotional connection and dependence is in place, the person with narcissistic patterns will devalue them, abuse them, berate them or neglect them in an attempt to justify leaving them. Like all people who tend to recreate their family of origin, they are instinctively trying to recreate the mother bond so that they can break free.

The imaginary grandiose false self that forms goes through life seeking to separate from the parent even after the parent is gone. This person seeks out empathetic people (empaths) to whom they can form an intense bond, idealizing the person, putting them on a pedestal, but then abusing them like their parent abused them. They appear to be trying to recreate the same parental bond (smothering mother; neglectful father) so that they can emulate the parent’s behavior (learned & familiar pattern) and then individuate by rejecting, neglecting or abandoning the other person. If/when the other person complains or seeks to break the delusion by being a real person (Pinocchio becoming a real boy) they become the enemy and must be discredited or destroyed. With a narcissistic parent or spouse the love bombing forming the attachment and then the rejection occurs over and over during the course of the relationship. Normally, the narcissist finds a reason to leave the relationship totally, trying to break free from the parental bond, to no avail.

Those trapped in Narcissistic, Borderline or Multiple Personalities patterns will constantly seek the validation of approval and admiration to compensate for their poor self-image. We will see this with Saul who was totally focused on gaining and keeping the approval of the people and the soldiers. When Saul met David, he loved him and love bombed him by bringing him into the king’s court, eating at the king’s table and playing music for him. When David began to come into his own and the people gave him great love and praise, rather than celebrate with him, Saul flipped and hated him. Saul spent many years trying to kill David in spite of David’s assurances that he fully supported him. Even when David could have killed Saul and he could see the evidence that David was not his enemy, the delusional view in Saul’s mind couldn’t reboot to see the truth. He was stuck as the victim with David as the evil one.

My father’s family were/are very legalistic, Arminian type “Christians” who attended a branch of the Church of God. My aunt was born in the early 1930’s and became pregnant, unmarried as a teenager and the man refused to marry her. This was very uncool during that day, especially in legalistic churches. She was hauled in front of the church and shamed for being pregnant & unmarried. That was trauma! She ended up having another illegitimate child with the same man. She eventually married a very harsh & abusive man with whom she had 2 more children. She was in her mid-30’s before I noticed that something was different about her. The shame she felt from the mistakes and the judgment heaped upon her was etched into her face. She couldn’t look people in the eye. Her 2 older kids, my cousins were clearly trauma bonded with her, especially the older girl. Both kids ended up doing the same thing that she had done, multiple kids out of wedlock but the younger boy adopted an air of superiority, a sense of self-importance. His step father resented him and growled at him every day and this boy formed this narcissistic, delusional bubble where he pretended to be important and superior yet while he made mistake after mistake.

Let’s look at the trauma bond formed by Jacob with Joseph but much more with Jacob & Benjamin. Benjamin is born into Rachel’s death, the greatest sorrow of Jacob’s life up to that point.

**Genesis 35:16-19** Then they journeyed from Bethel; and when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and she suffered severe labor. 17 And it came about when she was in severe labor that the midwife said to her, "Do not fear, for now you have *another* son." 18 And it came about as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. 19 So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).

**Genesis 48:7** "Now as for me, when I came from Paddan, **Rachel died, to my sorrow**, in the land of Canaan on the journey, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)."

After Rachel died, Jacob became obsessively dependent on Joseph & Benjamin, placing them ahead of their brothers, eventually fostering terrible hatred within the family. Jacob was holding onto them for his emotional stability while the rest of the family was openly hostile to these children. Jacob’s sorrow became self-pity that was then attached to Rachel’s boys so that they felt responsible for him emotionally (emotional incest). The trauma in Jacob’s life from losing his wife caused him to permanently attach the boys to himself so that he laid the burden of his happiness on them – that is abuse and it caused Benjamin to be an angry man, but a great warrior. Benjamin’s genetics were clearly passed down to the tribe of Benjamin.

**Genesis 49:27** "Benjamin is a **ravenous wolf**; in the morning he devours the prey, And in the evening he divides the spoil."

The warlike nature of the small tribe of Benjamin became well known, as exhibited in their swordsmen ([Judges 20:15–16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Judg%2020.15%E2%80%9316); and their tendency toward sexual depravity & rebellion in their ungodly defense of their extreme wickedness in [Gibeah](https://www.gotquestions.org/Gibeah-in-the-Bible.html) ([Judges 19—20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Judg%2019%E2%80%9420)). Almost wiped out the entire tribe and some of the Benjamite men ended up without wives. So they conspired to steal wives from young girls dancing in one of the feasts.

The last phrase in the book of Judges: **Judges 17:6, 21:25** in those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. It was during this time of social chaos that Saul was born and became king.

**Saul Profile**

1. *Saul grew up in a time of great social upheaval, the time of the Judges when there was no authority in Israel and everyone did what was right in his own eyes*

**Judges 21:25** in those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

* Broken families create broken, insecure children – Saul was hungry for approval

1. *He appears to have had an unhealthy bond with his father, concerned about disappointing him.*

1Sam 9 – 10 Saul is seen as searching for rebellious donkeys, a metaphor for his rule over rebellious Israel

* He is constantly concerned about finding lost donkeys and what his father might be thinking about him
* Saul is 30 yrs. old, a man about to be made king of Israel & he is terrified of disappointing his father
* Possible evidence of the trauma bond with his father that we will see play out in relationship to David
* TB keep young adults from separating & individuating, becoming their own person & developing an authentic sense of self – kept connected to the parent to service the soothing of the parent’s trauma.
* The parent sees the child as still connected, to service their need so that even as a married adult with children, the person remains tied, unable to develop, compulsively seeking approval from their parent & from anyone who will momentarily fill the emptiness with temporary admiration

1. *When Samuel assembles the leaders to make him king, he is so insecure that he hides in the suitcases.*

**1 Sam 10:20-23** thus Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. 21 Then he brought the tribe of Benjamin nearby its families, and the Matrite family was taken. And Saul the son of Kish was taken; but when they looked for him, he could not be found. 22 Therefore they inquired further of the LORD, "Has the man come here yet?" So the LORD said, "**Behold, he is hiding himself by the baggage**." 23 So they ran and took him from there, and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward.

* He was so hungry for their approval that he was terrified that he wouldn’t measure up – head taller
* One of the primary characteristics of Cluster B patterns is an inordinate hunger for admiration

1. *In one of his first important opportunities to trust & obey the Lord, he allows his fear of losing the approval of the people motivate him to disobey the Lord.*

**1 Sam 10:8** you shall go down before me to Gilgal; and behold, I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice peace offerings. You shall **wait seven days until I come to you** & show you what you should do."

**13:8-14** now Saul waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the **people were scattering from him.** 9 So Saul said, "Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering. 10 And it came about as soon as he finished offering the burnt offering that behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him *and* to greet him. 11 But Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "**Because I saw that the people were scattering from me**, and that you did not come within the appointed days, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, 12 therefore I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the LORD.' So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering." 13 And Samuel said to Saul, "**You have acted 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. 14 "But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."

1. Saul was empty inside & was seeking to fill the void within with the approval & admiration of the people
2. All that he had to do was trust the Lord, trust His messenger Samuel & wait for the Lord to take action
3. When he thought that he might lose the attention/approval of the people, he acted compulsively trying to win them back to loyalty.
4. Compulsive Behavior – thoughts, feelings & behaviors that take over your soul & body that you can’t control, that are so habituated – always indication of OM beliefs and often indicating addictive behavior
5. *Once again Saul exposes his compulsive need for public approval from the soldiers – gives in to their desires*

**1 Samuel 15:1-3** Then Samuel said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you as king over His people, over Israel; now therefore, listen to the words of the LORD. 2 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I will punish Amalek *for* what he did to Israel, how he set himself against him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt. 3 'Now go and strike Amalek and **utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey**.'"

**1 Samuel 15:8** and he captured Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. **9** But Saul and the people **spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good**, and were not willing to destroy them utterly; but everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.

**1 Samuel 15:13-15** And Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the LORD! I have carried out the command of the LORD." 14 But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" 15 And Saul said, "**The soldiers have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; but the rest we have utterly destroyed."**

1. Again Saul is so fixated on keeping the approval of the people that he once again disobeys the Lord.
2. Nothing is more important to Saul than what the people think of him – much more than the Lord
3. Saul has constructed an imaginary self that requires the approval