

## Connection to the Passage

Saul became convinced that everyone was conspiring against him, even his own men. Unchecked ambition will lead us down a path to paranoia and irrational conclusions.

## Introduction/Opening

God is not against ambition. Jesus was ambitious to obey God and accomplish His mission (John 4:34). Paul was ambitious to preach the gospel where it had never been preached (Rom. 15:20). Paul was also ambitious to please God (2 Cor. 5:9). Ambition encompasses desire, longing, and unending effort. Can you imagine Michelangelo being able to lie on his back and paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel without ambition? However, like everything else, ambition is susceptible to corruption. When ambition is about self-promotion and greed, it becomes what the Bible refers to as *selfish* ambition (Jas. 3:16; Phil. 2:3; Gal. 5:20; 2 Cor. 12:20). Selfish ambition is a desire or longing to inflate one's self over others and God. Misguided ambition leads to protecting ourselves against any threats to whatever we believe to be ours. The results are always destructive, both to others and to us.

## Outline

- I. Paranoid Assumptions (1 Sam. 22:6-8)
  - a) Saul threw himself a royal pity party and concluded that everyone was involved in a silent conspiracy because no one cared about him. Saul was equally paranoid that his own son had conspired against him and helped David set up an ambush. Paranoia is what happens when you focus on yourself and believe everyone is out to get you. It causes you to assume things that aren't true and to jump to conclusions that destroy relationships.
- II. Personal Ambitions (1 Sam. 22:9-13)
  - a) Doeg the Edomite seized the opportunity to gain Saul's confidence by betraying Ahimelech. One person's selfish ambition tends to open the door for others with selfish ambition, distorting both people's sense of reality.
  - b) Saul's personal ambition now ran amok. He was blinded to Ahimelech's loyalty to God and the king and blinded to Ahimelech's obedience to come when summoned. When selfish ambition determines your focus, it is like looking at a distorted mirror at a funhouse: reality becomes misshapen.
- III. Poisonous Actions (1 Sam. 22:14-16)
  - a) Saul refused to acknowledge reality (the facts) and ordered the priests of the Lord to be killed. Ahimelech's suffering was not due to his sin, but to the sin of Saul. This was echoed by the religious leaders in Jesus' day who refused to see reality and demanded that the sinless Son of God be crucified.

- b) Saul had drunk the poison of his selfish ambition and was willing to kill the Lord's priests rather than open his eyes to reality. There are countless people today who refuse to listen to the Lord's servants. Rather than obey the truth, they find it easier to "kill the messenger" through faultfinding or avoidance. The longer one refuses to believe in the truth, the harder his or her heart becomes. It becomes easier and easier to simply protect our sinful hearts from God's truth and mercy.

## **Conclusion**

The prophet Jeremiah declared, "The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable—who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9). We can easily be led astray by our own ambitions. All of our goals and desires need to be filtered through the will of God. When Jesus called for His followers to deny themselves, He included personal ambitions (Luke 9:23). God is not out to strip us of the joys of life. Instead, He wants us to experience the greater joys of life, not settling for what the world has to offer. We must trust that His ways are better than our ways. We must allow Him to shape our ambitions so that we can find true and lasting satisfaction.

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