**Entering The Badlands**

**1 Samuel 18:6-9 KJV** And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick. **[7]** And the women answered *one another* as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. **[8]** And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed *but* thousands: and *what* can he have more but the kingdom? **[9]** And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

**1 Samuel 19:9-10 KJV** And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with *his* hand. **[10]** And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night.

1. **INTRODUCTION—FAIRNESS???**
2. **A Sense of Fairness About Us**

-Most all of us have a sense of a feeling of fairness. I believe that most all people have a desire to treat others fairly and be treated fairly themselves. Basically we think that if we treat people in a certain way that at the end of the day, we will have that same treatment given back to us.

-Yet despite that thought, we have heard it said and we have said it ourselves, “That isn’t fair!” Whether we were thinking of some injustice toward others or ourselves, we just did not agree with the way that things turned out.

-Most of us can remember very early on in life someone telling us, usually someone in a position of authority over us, that “life isn’t fair. . . get over it!” It stung our sense of well-being because we just thought that everything would turn out just right because there was a sense of fairness in the world.

-But the fact remains that the old adage is right. . . Life is not fair! We can work hard, make right choices, and do the right thing but at some point there will be something that will enter your life that will fortify this truth that life is not fair.

1. **God’s Way Is Different**

-Can I tell you that often this is God’s way? God’s way is for His men to live above their injustices and be shaped into men and women that exhibit His grace and His power. For that to happen, we will be bent and twisted and shaped into His pattern.

-The problem with that idea is because of the nature of Satan and his twisting of what worship is really all about. Satan says to worship self and exalt self and please self. But God says that we are to worship Him (John 4:23-24; Ephesians 3:21) and when true worship starts to unfold in our life, then we are shaped into the man after God’s own heart.

-As for David. . .

**1 Samuel 13:14 KJV** But now thy kingdom shall not continue***: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart***, and the LORD hath commanded him *to be* captain over his people, because thou hast not kept *that* which the LORD commanded thee.

**1 Kings 15:3-5 KJV** And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: and ***his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father.*** **[4]** Nevertheless for David's sake did the LORD his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem: [5] Because David did *that which was* right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any *thing* that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.

**Acts 13:22 KJV** And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the *son* of Jesse, ***a man after mine own heart***, which shall fulfil all my will.

-I am sure that some would look to David’s great sin of adultery and then murder that followed to cover it all up and question whether or not that he was really a man after God’s own heart. Can I encourage you to pursue the higher calling of God and the high mark of the prize of the high calling of God (Php. 3:13-14)? But I also need to remind you that you are going to have to contend with the messiness that sometimes comes into the life of people. Don’t ever forget that we are living in a fallen world that can only find redemption through the blood of Jesus!

-You can choose to focus on the great virtues of life or you can focus in on the viciousness of life and live defeated.

-Sometimes that messiness of life helps us to see the grace of God in action and not the power of human potential. God uses it all as a shaping process of His hand to turn us into a man after His own heart and that makes all the difference in the world.

1. **ENTERING THE BADLANDS**

-There is an incredibly ominous phrase that we read in our text. It is found in 1 Samuel 18:9. . .

*And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.*

**New Berkley**—Kept an envious eye on David.

**Jerusalem**—Turned a jealous eye on David.

**Amplified**—Jealously eyed David from that day forward.

-One day we find him as a shepherd kid out in the pasture and the next day a giant-killer and hero of Israel. In rapid succession, he goes from a court musician to the king’s son-in-law to an outlaw in the wilderness. He is the leader of some bad men then he becomes a mercenary soldier. It is so quick but it is a necessary path.

1. **The Badlands Are Necessary**

-It almost doesn’t seem fair that God is about to let David enter into the badlands of life to let him be spiritually fit. It is going to be the badlands of his life that will last for the next seven to eight years of his life (1063 BC-1056 BC). He will be hounded by Saul having to endure more than twenty different efforts of Saul to have him killed or do it himself.

-It seems to me as if I were God and I was going to make a man after my own heart, this is not the method that I would have chosen. But God’s ways are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:9) and He knows the exact amount of pressure to exert.

-As for David, he was raised to fame he never chose to pursue after Goliath’s death. He did his best to offset it by modesty and service to King Saul and yet that was not enough for this madman.

-David passed under the hard hand of discipline and training in preparation for when he would become the king of Israel. Nothing will ever be accomplished by habits of idleness and self-indulgence. Nothing is ever accomplished when we become slaves to lesser and base pursuits of our flesh.

-Look to the biographies of great men and you will always discover that men who were an honor to their fellows had to endure a time in the badlands of life. In the struggles of the badlands, there are blessings that come to us because of self-denial.

**William Blaikie**—O adversity, thy features are hard, thy fingers are of iron, thy look is stern and repulsive; but underneath thy hard crust lies a true heart, full of love and full of hope; if only we had grace to believe this, in times when we are bound with affliction and iron; if only we had faith to look forward a very little. . .

-The badlands are necessary for us to make it!

I have just recently finished reading a book entitled “The Pastor” by Eugene Peterson. He is the same man who wrote the paraphrase of the Bible called The Message which is the Bible in modern American vernacular. The book is memoirs of fifty years in the ministry.

He wrote about the start of a small church plant in the Washington, D.C., suburbs of Maryland. There was much energy generated by the little band of congregants as they went through their first five years of existence. Three years after the congregation was established they went into a building program that lasted for two years. They went from his basement to a very nice building that would seat 300 or so. He wrote that the energy was contagious and the excitement was almost palpable as they worked through all of it.

When the building was finished, Peterson just knew that this was the beginning of the greatest thing that had ever happened to the region. He felt that the sky was the limit! But then he began to notice about two months after the building was completed, the attendance began to drift downward. People were suddenly finding more important things to do than to grow a church. He said that he would let people miss about six weeks of services and then he would go and seek them out. What he found was troubling to him. He said that not a single one of them were disgruntled, angry, or upset about anything, it was that the goal of building a church had been accomplished and now it was time for them to get involved in something else.

He said that as the malaise spread through the congregation, he said that he could feel the adrenaline slip out of his own soul. He desperately longed to recapture that sense of spirited purpose that had brought them their energy but he could not just seem to do so. He noted that in writing his memoirs and looking back, he was about to enter a time that he called the “badlands” of his life. The other thing that he did not know was that it would last for six years.

How he came up with the concept of the “badlands” was because of a summer trip that he and his family would take every summer from Maryland to Montana. His family lived in Montana and when school was out they would head west. On the way they had to pass through the Dakota Badlands.

Nothing is green or growing. No trees, no water, no towns. The only sign of life was an occasional vulture trolling for something dead and even the vulture was a reminder of death to him. The only thing that interrupted the tedium of the drive was the huge signs telling them to stop at Wall Drugs that was an unlikely oasis in the middle of the Badlands. When you finally got to it, it was a huge structure that resembled a collection of army barracks that had all been merged together in a hodge-podge of construction. He said the only thing appealing about it was the cold soft drinks and ice cream cones that the owners sold.

He wrote that the Badlands was a place that had all the color drained out of it. It could pull energy off of your soul like no other geographical location on the earth could do. He said that was exactly how he felt about things. No life, no energy, no sense of accomplishment, and no purpose.

He said that as the annual pilgrimages were taken, the Dakota Badlands began to preach sermons to him. One year he wrote a poem about it.

*Flash floods of tears, torrents of them,*

*Erode cruel canyons, exposing*

*Long forgotten strata of life*

*Laid down in peaceful decades:*

*A badlands beauty. The same sun*

*That decorates each day with colors*

*From arroyos and mesas, also shows*

*Every old scar and cut of lament.*

*Weeping washes the wounds clean*

*And leaves them to heal, which always*

*Takes an age or two. No pain*

*Is ugly in past tense. Under*

*The Mercy every hurt is a fossil*

*Link in the great chain of becoming.*

*Pick and shovel prayers often*

*Turn them up in valleys of death.*

He learned then that building a group of people called the church would not always be a fertile farmland and rolling green hills. There wouldn’t be grand horizons and majestic mountains to see every day. He learned that any growth—character, spiritual, church, soul—had periods of dormancy.

He wrote that all of the sudden he was no longer living a life that went from the accomplishment to accomplishment and goal to goal. He now had to learn to submit to the conditions, enter into those conditions, embrace those conditions, and work with those conditions. All of the sudden his competitive spirit and achievements in previous venues were worthless.

He said that when he returned the first time that the Lord had considerably chastened him. He said that he did not know what he was going to do but he knew what he *wasn’t* going to do. He *wasn’t* going to turn church into a pep-rally for Jesus but rather he was going to learn how to let the badlands of life turn him into a worshiper.

-You don’t grow lush gardens overnight! It takes time! It takes the experiences of victory and defeat to make us into men and women for God.

1. **The Badlands Create Character**

-When God starts making a man after His own heart, He works far differently than what we think. The badlands create character that brings out the shaping of a saint of God.

* He becomes a man of prayer.
* He becomes a man of self-control.
* He becomes a man who considers others over himself.
* He becomes a man who understands hope.
* He becomes a man who senses vitality in the trials.

-David, that man after God’s own heart, has the cup of honor jerked away from him before he can taste its nectar.

-Consider the badlands of David’s life:

* Promises from Saul are deliberately violated and broken.
* Rewards of dangerous service are withheld.
* Forced separation from the family and friends he has grown to love.
* He sees some of his friends killed by Saul for assisting him.
* Ungrateful treatment from someone he had helped (Nabal).
* Betrayal by the men he had helped to deliver (the men of Keilah).
* Deceit on the part of one he had trusted, Cush.
* Assassination threatened by some of his own followers at Ziklag.

-There would be more badlands that David would have to endure after the death of Saul but it was early on in his life that God was using these things to prepare him to be a king.

-David’s complaint could have been, “Wait a minute, I have been anointed! Wait a minute, I am on my way to being the king!” But it takes the badlands to purify and cleanse us and to prepare us.

1. **The Badlands Create Dependence**

-Perhaps the most important thing that the badlands do for us is to create an absolute dependence on God.

**1 Samuel 19:9-10 KJV** And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with *his* hand. **[10]** And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night.

-Note that phrase. . . *David fled and escaped*. That is a phrase that will be replayed some 25 times in 1 Samuel. God starts stripping David of some things when he is in the process of running.

* He is stripped of his good name and position.
* He is stripped of his wife, Michal. Over time she begins to turn on him and becomes just as murderous toward him as her father.
* He is stripped of Samuel. Death takes out the voice of his “pastor” so to speak.
* He is stripped of his closest friend, Jonathon.
* He is stripped of his self-respect. We see him wallowing on the ground and foaming at the mouth in front of Achish, the king of Gath.

-It is the trip through the badlands. . . . *All in the name of making a man after God’s own heart.* You might argue that it’s not fair but I can tell you that at the end of the day, that what God is painting into or out of your life, will be a masterpiece!

-The things God pulls away from us in the badlands helps us to become entirely dependent on Him.

**Deuteronomy 33:27 KJV** The eternal God *is thy* refuge, and underneath *are* the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy *them.*

**Isaiah 41:10 KJV** Fear thou not; for I *am* with thee: be not dismayed; for I *am* thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

1. **CONCLUSION—GOD’S HAND AT WORK**

-How is it that the hand of God works in the badlands?

* Sometimes it is enormous pain of a broken relationship.
* Sometimes it is the instability of some support that we had in the past.
* Sometimes it is a broken romance.
* Sometimes it is a golden opportunity that seems to vanish.
* Sometimes it is the death of a dream.
* Sometimes it is a period of time that hope seems to die.
* Sometimes it is a diagnosis—like cancer, like renal failure, like heart disease, like physical pain that will not leave.
* Sometimes it is when our joy has evaporated.

-But I have to tell you this. . . All of God’s greatest men had to endure the crucible of the badlands.

* Abraham with a promise that seemed to take forever.
* Joseph with a dream that almost never materialized.
* Moses with a mistake that sidelined him for forty years.
* Jeremiah with eyes and a heart full of tears.
* Paul with an irascibly nagging thorn.

-There are a host of others that we find along the way of the badlands that led to greatness. It is God’s hand at work!

-Andrew Murray, the great writer who encouraged prayer and the deeper life, once found himself facing a terrible crisis. Gathering himself into his study, he sat for a long time while quietly, prayerfully, and thoughtfully. His mind flew at last to his Lord Jesus, and picking up his pen, he wrote these words in his journal:

***First****, He brought me here, it is by His will that I am in this strait place: in that fact I will rest.*

***Next****, He will keep me here in His love, and give me the grace to behave as His child.*

***Then****, He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons He intends for me to learn, and working in me the grace He means to bestow.*

***Last****, in His good time He can bring me out again—how and when He knows.*

*Let me say I am here,*

1. *By God’s appointment*
2. *In His keeping*
3. *Under His training*
4. *For His time.*

-By the grace of God, let the badlands do its work on all of us!