

Healing Our Wounded Heart - 3 'Low Self-Esteem'

1 Samuel 18: 6-16

A Gallup Poll posed the question to a lot of people “Are you satisfied with your appearance?” Only 28% of men and 13% of women affirmed that they were satisfied with their appearance. More astonishingly, 94% of men and 99% of women responded that they would change their appearance if they could. These results point to the fact that the majority of people are not satisfied with their appearance and existence. Maxwell Maltz thus argued that over 95% of the people in this world are living with some sort of inferiority complex.

Today is the third Sunday of Lent and the third sermon of my sermon series. I'd like to share with you low self-esteem, or inferiority complex. We will search for the cause of inferiority complex and look at how people try to cope with or address low self-esteem. Among the numerous characters of the Bible, we can pick King Saul as the man who was ruined by inferiority complex. In determining why King Saul had a low self-esteem, we will discern ways to overcome this damaging condition.

1. Inferiority complex arises from comparison.

We can evade inferiority complex by not comparing ourselves to others, although it is nearly impossible not to compare in this world. When discovering that their appearance, skills, familial background, and academic credentials fall short of others, people tend to feel inferior.

When I was in elementary and middle school in Korea, I had to take several surveys on my parent's academic background. It was not some

surreptitious research; rather, my teachers would ask the students who had college-graduate parents to raise their hand. The questions would work its way down to, “raise your hand if your parents had no formal schooling.” On the days of these surveys, students with educated parents had something to be proud about. For someone like me, whose parents were relatively uneducated, these days would be painful and emotionally scarring.

All misery starts with comparison. Comparison is the seed of low self-esteem. People feel unnecessarily arrogant, and others are unreasonably inferior due to the act of comparing. When we see that someone may be inferior to us, we feel superior. When we see that someone is better than we are, we feel inferior. Inferiority and superiority complex stem from the same root. They sprout out of unhealthy hearts and minds. As long as we compare ourselves to others, we can never be happy and content. We cannot find true freedom in our hearts.

Let us take a look at King Saul from today's bible scripture. Why does he feel enmity towards David and attempt to kill him every chance he gets? In comparing himself to David, Saul felt a degree of inferiority. David slew Goliath of the Philistine, and Israel went on to defeat the Philistines in war. All was well until David's triumphant return amid singing of victory songs. When King Saul and his entourage returned to Israel, all the women were out of the cities, singing and dancing with tambourines and musical instruments to welcome Saul. Yet the verses of the song sounded peculiar to Saul. “Saul has slain his thousands, and David has slain his ten thousands.” While Saul faced thousands of enemy soldiers, David fought

with and killed tens of thousands. The song praised David over Saul. David became a bigger hero than Saul, the King of Israel. Many people will probably feel humiliation in Saul's place.

Saul's problem was that from that point forward, he compared himself to David at every turn and began suffering clinical inferiority complex. The inferiority complex that arose out of comparison eventually would lead to tragedies for Saul and his family.

We should not compare ourselves to others. We are all unique among all the beings in this universe. We are His masterpieces. Genesis 1: 27 states that God created man in His image (Imago Dei). "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

God's holy image resides within each of us today. From this point forward, let us try not to compare ourselves with others and feel inferior or superior to others. We are all God's unique works of art.

2. Inferiority complex afflicts those who are captured by the evil spirits.

This means that those who are full of the Holy Spirit can overcome low self-esteem. Take a look at verse 10 of today's bible scripture. "The next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully upon Saul. He was prophesying in his house, while David was playing the harp, as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his hand." Hatred flared up in Saul's heart, and he threw two spears at David to kill him. Whenever the evil spirit came upon Saul, inferiority complex mushroomed in his heart. And he tried to kill David every time. Upon reading 1 Samuel, the evil spirit came upon Saul six

times (16: 14, 16: 15, 16: 16, 16: 23, 18: 10, 19: 9). When the evil spirit captured him, inferiority complex, jealousy, and rage engulfed his heart.

We live in the midst of a spiritual war as Christians. We need to hold onto God's spirit. We should never become complacent. We must be watchful against the evil spirits and ward them off through constant prayer. We need to make our hearts surrender to God and be ruled by the Holy Spirit. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit in order to evade inferiority complex. We need to be positive and optimistic in the midst of the Holy Spirit. I hope that all of us can be full of the Holy Spirit and lead our lives with optimism and positive self-esteem.

3. Low self-esteem is a result of fear.

Therefore, it dissolves when our fear of the present and future disappears. Saul became a prisoner of his fears after developing a strange inferiority complex against David. He had no fears when he did not harbor an inferiority complex. He did not fear the Philistines when they attacked Israel. Yet, after he developed his inferiority complex, he became a prisoner to his fears.

Let's take a look at verses 8 and 9 of today's bible scripture. It shows the extreme disassociated thoughts of Saul's. "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?' So Saul eyed David from that day forward." This clearly shows the inferiority complex that Saul felt against David and clearly illustrates Saul's pessimistic and extreme point of view regarding all matters at hand. Even though David himself had no such

thoughts, Saul presumes that David is after his throne. In fact, Saul could have thought positively, how they wouldn't need to worry about future wars with this nation due to David being a brave warrior, but instead Saul had a contorted and pessimistic view of the situation. He felt a sense of uncertainty and a lack of confidence after comparing himself to David. He became overly sensitive to issues that warranted no such attention, and he ended up overreacting to his false presumptions. He did not look at the whole picture; rather, he had blinders on, distorting facts and arriving at false conclusions. Coupled with his anxiety and fear, Saul's inferiority complex blossomed into a disease of his mind.

When dogs bark at strangers, it is out of fear. Dogs do not bark at people they recognize. Why do people fall into spousal obsession or extreme jealousy? Because they hold fear, not confidence, in their hearts.

Because of fear, they are easily hurt by meaningless words and glances. We need to drive this damaging fear out of hearts. When fear is eliminated, inferiority complex and paranoia disappears.

We are children of God, created in His image. No one is above us and no one lies below us. We are all equal in the eyes of God. In our natural state, we are all the same beings.

There was a delivery boy for Domino's Pizza. He was very diligent and industrious; as a result, he was the subject of all the customers' praises. An impressed customer asked the delivery boy for his name, for the customer intended to call the delivery boy's supervisor to praise him. The boy's name was Theodore Roosevelt. As we all know, Theodore

Roosevelt was the 26th President of the United States. The customer, upon hearing the boy's name, smiled and said, "That's quite a famous name." But the delivery boy replied in a serious tone. "That's right, it should be. I've been delivering in this neighborhood for almost three years now." What a healthy self-esteem! This boy had the pride equal to that of the President of the US while delivering pizzas!

God wants each one and every one of us to lead a happy, healthy, and victorious life. The true obstacles to our happiness and healthness do not exist outside of us. They reside within us. It is our internal enemy, the inferiority complex and low self-esteem.

Trying to fix our appearance through millions of dollars' worth of plastic surgery will prove futile in the end. If we do not address our self-confidence and the image we have of ourselves, then the exterior work will have no meaning.

There is a renowned plastic surgeon that tends to people's hearts and minds. He is our Jesus. Do you, by any chance, harbor some sort of inferiority complex or low self-esteem? Leave our problems up to our heart and mind doctor, Jesus Christ. With the bandage of the gospel and Holy Spirit, He will surgically repair our hearts and minds and restore us to health.

He will treat our hearts and minds so that inferiority complex and low self-esteem can no longer preside in our hearts and minds!

Amen.

Let us pray!

Loving God, thank you for creating us according to your image, so that we may become the children of God. We honestly confess that we are living with low self-esteem rather than with the self-confidence that you gave us when we were born. Recover our self-confidence and courage that Jesus Christ gave to us with free grace through the shedding of your blood on the cross. Help us not to compare ourselves to others and not be captured by distressed and evil spirits but rather be filled with the Holy Spirit. Help us to leave our problems, worries, and fears up to our doctor, Jesus Christ. We pray in the name of Jesus.

of Jesus.