

TACTICS OF THE ENEMY: The Temptation to Rationalize Our Sin.

- *“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”* 1 Peter 5:8
- *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy;”* John 10:10a

Intro to Saul

- *“Now the donkeys belonging to Saul’s father, Kish, were lost, and Kish said to his son Saul, “Take one of the servants with you and go and look for the donkeys.”* 1 Samuel 9:3
- *“Do you see the man the Lord has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people.”* 1 Samuel 10:24
- *“But I’m from the smallest tribe of Israel, and my clan is the smallest in the tribe. Why do you honour me?”* 1 Samuel 9:21
- He was only 30 years old when he became king. He was tall, strong, humble, he was a warrior, and he loved God, and the future looked bright. He was full of promise of what might be. He began so well. He reigned for 42 years, and when he died all that promise was wasted. It was all lost. Saul, rather than coming clean about his disobedience, chose to try and rationalize the stain away or to look at it another way – using rational – lies to excuse himself. Allowing my mind to find reasons to excuse what my spirit knows is wrong.

Rationalizing (“Rational lies – ing”) = Allowing my mind to find reasons to excuse what my spirit knows is wrong!

- Get any one of us alone, search deep enough and eventually you will find in everybody an area of deep brokenness. A habit you can’t fix, a train of thought you can’t escape, traits you can’t run away from. And these are deeply troubling to us and so we often seek to avoid them. The truth is no one is totally normal.
- *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* Romans 3:23

Stage 1 Rationalizing: subtle disobedience to God

- *“Go down ahead of me to Gilgal. I will surely come down to you to sacrifice burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, but you must wait seven days until I come to you and tell you what you are to do.”* 1 Samuel 10:8
- *“He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul’s men began to scatter. So he said, ‘Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings.’ And Saul offered up the burnt offering.”* 1 Samuel 13:8-9
- **Moses’ example:** *“If you will arm yourselves before the Lord for battle and if all of you who are armed cross over the Jordan before the Lord until he has driven his enemies out before him then...this land will be your possession before the Lord. But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the Lord; and you may be sure that your sin will find you out.”* Numbers 32:20-23
- *“Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him. ‘What have you done?’ asked Samuel.”* 1 Samuel 13:10-11a
- *“Saul replied, ‘When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Mikdash, I thought, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the Lord’s favor.’ So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering.”* 1 Samuel 13:11b-12
- **Adam’s example:** *“The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”* Genesis 3:12
- My men were deserting, and you didn’t come at the set time and the Philistines were coming, Samuel, and I realized I had not sought the Lord’s favour. So I felt compelled to offer the sacrifice. (my paraphrase)

- “You have acted foolishly. You have disobeyed the command of the Lord.”
1 Samuel 13:13

Stage 2 Rationalizing: selective obedience to God.

- “Listen now to the message from the Lord...Go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everyone and everything that belongs to them.”
1 Samuel 15:2-3
- “But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs-everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.”
1 Samuel 15:9
- **The Parable of the Talents example:** ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’”
Matthew 25:24-25
- “When Samuel reached him, Saul said, ‘The Lord bless you! I have carried out the Lord’s instructions. But Samuel said, ‘What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?’ Saul answered, ‘The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the Lord your God, but we totally destroyed the rest.’”
1 Samuel 15:13-16
- “But I did obey the Lord. I carried out the mission He gave me.”
1 Samuel 15:20
- “What is more pleasing to the Lord: your burnt offerings and sacrifices or your obedience to his voice? Obedience is far better than sacrifice. Listening to him is much better than offering the fat of rams.”
1 Samuel 15:22

Stage 3: Rationalizing: loss of intimacy with God.

- “Now the Spirit of the Lord had left Saul, and the Lord sent a troubling spirit that filled him with depression and fear.”
1 Samuel 16:14
- “Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. And the Lord was grieved that He had made Saul king over Israel.”
1 Samuel 15:35

“Stage 4 Rationalizing: settling for relief instead of repentance

- “It is clear that a spirit from God is troubling you,’ they said. ‘Let us find a good musician to play the harp for you. The music will quiet you, and you will soon be well again.’”
1 Samuel 16:15-16
- “Whenever the spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better.”
1 Samuel 16:23

8 ways to Rationalize your way to Ruin

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| 1. Everyone’s doing it | 5. No one will really get hurt |
| 2. I’ll just try it once | 6. If I don’t someone else will |
| 3. It’s just a little lie | 7. I deserve it |
| 4. No one ever needs to know | 8. It’s just the way I am |

- Saul didn’t set out to do it. He just rationalized his way around giving God his full devotion.
- If God is setting a task before you, you chose to obey.
- If God is saying “Just trust me and wait,” don’t give in.
- If you’ve been disobedient to God, don’t rationalize it, don’t hide it. Fall to your knees & confess it.
- If God tells you the time has come for you to let go of something, don’t clutch just let go.
- If God is telling you there’s a distance between you - give God your full devotion.