

Tonight, in 1 Samuel 16, we begin our studies through the life of David as we're going through 1 Samuel - from his rise to the throne, which really covers the rest of this 1 Samuel bunch of chapters down through chapter 31. His triumphs are found in the first ten chapters of 2 Samuel. His troubles follow after that for about eleven chapters. And ultimately the LORD takes us all the way through his death in 1 Kings 2. So, the LORD gives us forty chapters. That's a lot covering one man's life, one man's ministry. Lots to learn from.

We have told you, in the weeks that we've gone by, that when we study the historical books and all, they are in narrative form just like the book of Acts. And the best way to learn narrative is to put yourself in the picture, stand with the people you're studying. God doesn't give us all the information. I find myself reading, saying, "Man, I wonder what happened to that guy," or, "I wonder what went wrong there." And we only have to go on what God's given us. So that's what we are studying, that's what we want to learn from, and so we'll try to carefully look at each illustration and story and lesson and insight from David's life.

For nearly 400 years up to this point, since the death of Joshua, the people of Israel mostly did poorly. They waned in their relationship with the LORD. In times of repentance, God sent them good judges who, for a time, brought them back to the things that they should have been doing. They even had, for the last sixty years, Samuel the prophet - ministering to them; the first national, really, prophet that the nation had. But the majority of the people, even during those years, were not really on board to walk with God though they were God's chosen nation. Sin had a big problem, obviously. Poor leadership could be blamed for some of it. But when it got right down to it, the lack of individual devotion was at the core of most of the things that were going on. As a result, when Samuel got old, it was that kind of lack of hunger for the things of God that, in 1 Samuel 8, motivated the people to come to old, aging and nearly-blind Samuel and ask to have a king that would be able to lead them like the other nations around them. And it broke Samuel's heart, but God gave them what they asked for.

Saul's life, though it is covered for many chapters (as he chases David down for the next seven-and-a-half years before he dies), is really summed up in a couple of

chapters and two campaigns - one against the Philistines, the other against the Amalekites. In both cases, the LORD found Saul to be defiant to God's direction. His responses to the LORD were "no" most of the time though God had called him, made that calling sure, been anointed by His Spirit, and God had been patient. In fact, it had been now thirty-three years that Saul has been in office, and yet Saul continues to be a guy that doesn't want anything to do with the LORD.

Last week, we looked closely at Saul's last chance to obey the LORD. He was told to completely destroy the Amalekites. It was God's judgment against the people that had gone beyond His grace and His mercy. It was time for judgment; He was going to use Israel as the hammer. Instead, he disobeyed again, as he always did, God's clear demands and commandments through the prophet Samuel. When confronted by the prophet later, he used spiritual language to cover his lack of obedience. He lied, he shifted blame, he had excuses for every sin in his life. And Samuel was asked by the LORD to deliver the bad news; the bad news was: first he had been told years earlier, "You're not going to have any descendancy in your life. Your children aren't going to follow you to the throne." This was a one-term sort of kingship. But now the LORD said, "You're finished, and I'm done with you." Now Saul, like I said, will hang around for another seven-and-a-half years, but he's going to do it alone; he's going to be on his own. And Samuel, to be honest with you - if you read through those chapters that we studied the last few weeks - it broke his heart. He loved Saul, we read there in chapter 15. He had sought to train him; he had hoped the best for him, certainly for God's people; he had been the focus of Samuel's prayers for years. But Saul continued on his own to turn away from the LORD. So the whole experience left an 80-plus-year-old prophet, priest, Samuel in tears. He had served faithfully, virtually alone for many of those years, and by the time Saul's demise was complete (if you read the end of chapter 15), it almost sounds like Samuel's ready to cash in. "What good have I accomplished? What's the use?" And when he told Saul that God was through with him, it seemed to have a greater impact upon Samuel than upon Saul. Saul seemed to care less, but Samuel couldn't have cared more. Samuel found it hard to continue his ministry to the LORD. If you look at verse 35 of the last chapter, it says, "And Samuel went no more to see Saul until the day of his death. Nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul, and the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel." And we talked about what it meant when we read "the LORD regretted" or "regrets" something, but that was last week's lesson. But just that to say we leave this prophet discouraged and spiritually distraught. He's tired, he's old. His sons aren't doing too well. The nation certainly isn't. And it almost seemed to him to be an

overwhelming setback. Samuel was down and out. What did his life mean? What had he done for eighty-plus years? It crushed this old guy.

And I point that out to you because sometimes the work of God is going to continue on even when it doesn't look to be like you're making much progress in your walk with God. The LORD's going to continue. Even faithful men, all of their lives, can experience these kinds of disappointments and all. I've certainly seen people in ministry, over the years, quit because either other people failed them or opposed them, or there wasn't immediate enough fruit. I talked to a fellow just a couple of months ago who quit his church because he could only get fifty people to show up. And he said, "Nobody's coming." I said, "It's fifty people! That's four times as many apostles as Jesus had, plus a few." And it didn't help. He was just.....he'd had enough.

But here's a fellow who has been faithful to the LORD, but it was like Saul's failure became his, and so he was bummed out about it. And I don't know about you, but I'm going to stay the course. God's ways are never thwarted by men's failures. And if you put your confidence in the LORD, you'll never be disappointed. There's a great verse in Isaiah 43:13 that says, "I'm the LORD. There's no one that can deliver out of My hands. I will work, and who can reverse it?" or turn it around. So, Samuel's a great example of a fellow who stuck it out, but yet he had a hard time with it. All Samuel could see was his own failures. He reminds me of Elisha when Jezebel threatened his life after the battle with the others, and he said to the LORD, "I've been so zealous for You, and I'm the only one left" (1 Kings 19:10). And the LORD went, "You're a knucklehead." I'm pretty sure that's in the original Hebrew. "I've got thousands more like you. Now get on. Are we going to go to work or not?!" So we left Samuel kind of in the dumps, I guess, last week.

But we start chapter 16 with these words, "Now the LORD said to Samuel, 'How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite. For I have provided Myself a king among his sons.'" For Samuel, this incident that broke the camel's back, I think effectively shut him down for a while. I don't know how long but long enough for the LORD to say, "Samuel, really? How long are you gonna sit there and mope?" Satan's ploy always. Right? Feel sorry for yourself. "I've rejected Saul. The decision has been made. But I have plans, and I need you to go carry them out. So get your stuff together, get your oil, go to Bethlehem. I've picked a guy that's gonna be the next king. I've picked." Now, understand God fully

knows how Samuel feels. He knows we are just dust (Psalm 103:14), but He's also willing to move us along sometimes when we're not willing to move. "There's work to be done. Get movin', man." And the LORD speaks to His faithful old prophet with a word of, "Get back in the saddle."

Jesse was a great grandson of Ruth and Boaz. Boaz was from Judah. It lines right up with the prophecy that the LORD had given back in Genesis 49 to Jacob in regards to his sons when He told them in prophetic terms that the Messiah one day would come through the tribe of Judah. Saul was from Benjamin. It wouldn't have worked out prophetically anyway. God had a plan. But notice He says, "I have provided Myself a king." In other words, this king is God's choice. Saul was the people's choice in the sense that He gave them what they wanted, He gave them what they asked for, He gave them what they believed would be the best. But understand these are people that are not walking very closely to the LORD, so they wanted a leader like other nations had. That's what they got. But David had been who God was looking for, and he would be best for the nation. And David's ultimate qualification - over everything else - is that he had a heart for God. Did a lot of dumb stuff, came up short in a lot of ways. When we get to chapter 11 of this next book, we'll spend ten chapters looking at misery and failure and stumbling. But here's David's caveat: he always repented, admitted his sin and sought God's grace. Saul never did. He mouthed the words a few times, but that's about as far as he got.

So David had been chosen by the LORD. In fact, when David writes Psalm 22:9, he writes that the LORD had taken him out of the womb. In other words, David, looking back (in the Psalm), was able to say, "God had this plan for me all along." In Psalm 89, in writing that psalm, David wrote that God "made a covenant with me, and I was His chosen one; He has sworn them to me that my seed would remain forever, and He would build up the throne for all generations" (verses 3-4). Unlike Saul, this was going to be an everlasting work that God would ultimately finish through His Son. So David would become a type of Jesus in that regard; but then we're getting way ahead of ourselves, so we won't do that tonight.

Verse 2 says, "And Samuel said, 'How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.' But the LORD said, 'Take a heifer with you, and say, "I have come to sacrifice to the LORD." Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; you shall anoint for Me the one I name to you.' " So Samuel not only is discouraged, he's now.....the guy he cares for, he really believes he probably would

kill him. So he's in a tough place. Not always the easiest job in the world to deliver God's Word. It can certainly make you the object of scorn. Maybe you've experienced that, especially from people who don't want to hear what God has to say. But Samuel....if there's one person that loved Saul, it was Samuel, and yet he was afraid of him, "Man, he might kill me." Yet this is the first time - in our Bible account, in the report - that we find Samuel afraid at all. He's been through some tough times, and the first thing you question is - why do you think he's so afraid now? And I think maybe, when you're discouraged, every emotion gets exaggerated. Doesn't it? You're already down, so you're just lookin' for reasons to be even worse down. And I think that God doesn't rebuke this aged servant any further, other than just saying, "Come on, man. We've got work to do." He knows what we're going through. But Samuel is now not only discouraged, but he's afraid.

If you have a map of Israel, you know that, in order to go from where he lived in Ramah to go to Bethlehem, they'd have to pass through Gibeah, which happened to be Saul's hometown. And because he was in his eighties and he's been around for so long, everyone looked at Samuel as the voice of God. Wherever Samuel went, people would watch. That would be a report. He couldn't just sneak in and sneak out. He was a well-known guy, and so there's some need to be, I think, concerned. It was well-founded and all. He was the elder statesman for the nation. So the LORD gives him some advice. "Well, then, just do what you always do. Take an offering. Gather the people for worship. Lead in prayer. Pray for the others." We read, a couple of chapters ago, that for many years, the only report that we get in the narrative is that Samuel had a circuit where he would just go to different cities, and the people would gather, and they'd look for God's Word; and so, "Do that, Samuel. Go out and serve the people as you've always done." So God's prophet was going undercover. "Go, and I will show you what to do." And I underlined that in my Bible years ago because I've learned, I think, over the years that God very rarely gives you a big map of what He's going to do. But He will give you the next move. Right? "Do this next." It's kind of like when you're drivin' with your GPS. It'll just tell you where to turn next. You may not know all where you're goin', but, "I'm gonna turn right down here, pretty soon." That's kind of the way the LORD works. Right? He leads us in a way that it's almost like duty by degrees. "Here's what you need to do." Because I think if He showed you the whole thing, it might frighten you, or maybe we'd just never go. "And then we're gonna do this, and then that's waitin' for you. No, I'm not goin'." But one step at a time. That way we can really go no further until we go as far as we see. And maybe the best example of that is Philip in chapter 8 of Acts. He is the leader of a great revival in

Samaria, where God is moving and people are getting saved; and it's been goin' on for weeks on end. It couldn't be more exciting, and yet the LORD spoke to him and said, "I want you to go to the desert." And God gave him a direction, but He didn't tell him why or what would wait for him there when he got there. He just said, "Go." And to his credit, Philip, knowing God's voice and just being interested in His will - not so much in the success of the ministry in Samaria, he just went. And when he showed up in the middle of nowhere, then the LORD said, "See that chariot? I want you to go talk to that guy," and He explained why He had brought him out there. But He didn't tell him Step B until he had done Step A. So sometimes, maybe you're saying, "Well I want to know what You want to do with my life or what You want me to do," you can sometimes undercut yourself by just not doing what you know to do. In other words, go as far as you can see, and then, when you get there, then the LORD can show you what you have to see next. There's a Scripture in John 7 that says, "If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority" (verse 17). In other words, it is acting upon what God says that then brings God's revelation. So, "Samuel, get goin'. And I'll show you what to do. Just get over there and do what I've shown you to do."

"So," we read, in verse 4, "Samuel did what the LORD said, and went to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, 'Do you come peaceably?' " See? He had power, didn't he? "And he said, 'Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Sanctify yourselves,' " (or set yourselves apart) " 'and come with me to the sacrifice.' Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons, and invited them to the sacrifice." Now, when you're down and out, when you're not sure that God can continue to use you, here's a pretty good way out of depression - do what God says. Just begin to do what God says. You may not feel like it. It didn't look like Samuel felt like it. Samuel was as bummed out (in an Old Testament sense) as he could have been. Ready to cash in. He's an old guy. "I've lived my days. Let me alone." But God had other plans. And the way out - and we'll watch Samuel get better - is just by simply obeying the voice of the LORD. And I like verse 4 - he did what God said. He went there, and God again began to move. And the response of the people Samuel used to make these circuits to preach and encourage the people - if you've been with us a while, you might remember that the Ark of the Covenant is now in Kirjath Jearim. It isn't a place where God has called the people together to worship, and so presently it isn't a centralized worship place which means that, when the visit came from Samuel, that was more important than anything, man. He would come. But sometimes he'd come with judgment. And

people in Bethlehem saw a man of God and immediately saw their own sin. Interesting. "Are we all right? You haven't come to kill anyone, have ya?" It was like right away that conscience of your own sin. Right? It kind of moves you. It reminds me of the LORD sitting with the disciples at the last supper, and when He talked about someone betraying Him (in Matthew 26), they all said to Him (verse 22), "Man, is it me?" Nobody said, "Is it Judas? It's Judas, isn't it? I never liked him." They all wondered about their own sinfulness. They were all aware of their own culpability. "Is it Me, Lord?" And here come the elders of the town, the spiritual leaders. "You all right? Everything good?" "Yeah, everything's fine." So, "I've come to worship and to sacrifice. I want you to come and tell the elders, and then I want to invite Jesse's large family to join us as well."

Verse 6, "So it was, when they came, that he looked at Eliab," (happened to be Jesse's oldest son) "and said," (to himself or maybe out loud) " 'Surely the LORD's anointed is before Him!' But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.' " Now, Samuel had Jesse begin to bring in his son - this was the oldest - and Samuel immediately, in his head - 80 years old - spiritual guy, says, "That looks like kingly material." My question would be: what does that look like? And the only answer I can come up with is just what the people saw in Saul: big guy, tall guy, good-lookin' guy, tough guy - probably all of those qualifications. None of them matter to the LORD. God wants to use you, you don't need any of those. Right? You need His Spirit. You need faithfulness. But you don't need anything else. Looks can be deceiving. Remember Saul and how the people picked him. So the LORD corrects Samuel, and He tells him not to look in an outward manner, and He shares this very memorable insight in verse 7. And the insight is: this is an important truth - don't go by what you see, go by what the LORD would lead you to. God sees what you can't. Because if your judgment is just based on what you see, it's going to be faulty when it comes to determining God's will. It's not enough. It's not enough information. And sometimes it can just lead you down the wrong path altogether.

So, if kingship was based on outward circumstances, by the way, Jesus would never have qualified. We read in the Bible, in Isaiah 53:2, that "He has no form or comeliness." He wasn't a good-lookin' guy, necessarily. That wasn't an attraction. He wasn't large. He wasn't powerful. He was Jesus. He was all He needed to be. But that wasn't the standard that the LORD would use.

So it's an essential truth for us to learn, and it sticks out in this chapter, and the answer is: look, we can't make decisions based on outward appearance. And I mention that to you because Samuel is in the LORD for sixty years. He was the guy that learned, as a young kid, to hear God's voice to discern the difference. He'd been speaking God's Word to people. It never failed. We see it mentioned two or three times that everything he said, God backed up. But here comes Samuel, and he's already kind of out of it, and, "Here's a good-lookin' guy. Maybe that's the next guy." And the LORD has to remind this old timer what he should have learned once before. And that is: you can't find God's will by your sight. It's kind of like good looks don't make for good marriages. It's a good start. Just won't finish very well. Better you look for qualities that are of the heart, of God's work.

So, Eliab looked the part. God knew better. His choice would be based on the unseen - upon the heart - because God picks differently than us. Do you believe that? "My ways are not your ways. My ways are beyond your finding out." That's what it says in Isaiah 55:8. So, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (verse 9). In other words, "You have no clue so you'd better check it out with Me." Which is fine with me. I'd be happy to do that. And the same lesson, by the way, applies to picking elders in a church or overseers in ministry. In fact, if you read 1 Timothy 3 or Titus 1, there's a whole list of qualifications there of how to pick elders or what to look for in those that God has been raising up. And you'll find that all of the qualifications there for ministry have nothing to do with talent or ability. They have to do with character and relationship with God. So you don't have a whole, "Is he tall? Is he good-lookin'? Does he have hair?" For Calvary Chapel, most of you just don't have hair. (Laughing) That was....when we were young, everybody had hair; now, nobody has hair. So, Eliab - "God of his father" - great name; the LORD says, "No, not him."

Verse 8, "So Jesse called Abinadab," ("father of generosity" is what his name means) "and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, 'Neither has the LORD chosen this one.' Then Jesse made Shammah pass by" ("astonished" or "ruined" - I don't know if he got tired of naming his boys; maybe he scared him - he was astonished; he looks like he's been ruined; I don't know). "And He said, 'Neither has the LORD chosen this one.'" So, "No, no, no, no." Verse 10, "Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, 'The LORD has not chosen these.'" No, no, no, no, no, no, no. Seven no's.

"And Samuel said to Jesse," verse 11, " 'Are all the young men here?' Then he said, 'There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep.' And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and bring him. For we will not sit down till he comes here.' So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the LORD said, 'Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!' " I guess Samuel probably wondered if he had heard right. "Did you run out of sons, and I missed it? I'm not havin' a good week, you know." "No, no. There's one more kid. He's the runt. He's outside. He's not gonna smell good. He'll smell like the sheep. He's a red-haired young man." And the LORD said to Samuel, "That's the guy!" What did David have to prove? Nothing. Lowest on the scale. He was so low on the scale of his family, dad didn't think it was wise to bring him in at all. It's like that uncle that you have that you don't want anybody to meet, you know? (Laughing) "I've got a kid in the back, but he's just a kid in the back." Unqualified, not exalted. No one thinks much of him. He's just a little punk. And he's got red hair. And he smells. And God saw right through that and said to Samuel, "Anoint that kid. He's the one that I've chosen." It was God's choice alone.

In fact verse 13 it says, "Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah," went home. God chose this one. Samuel tried to help, chose the wrong guy. So often, even in churches, we are called, as pastors, to raise up elders where God has raised them up. But really that's God's work, not ours. You can say, "Well, we're gonna make you an elder. Here's a badge, and it says elder on it and everything." Hardly makes you an elder. The key for those in ministry is to look to see who God is using and then to recognize His hand upon them and then to agree that they're the ones that God wants to use, and then to give them a place where they can continue to do what God wants. I mean, that's how it works. Right? In a lot of churches, it's politics - somebody you know. "Vote for me. I'm runnin' for office." It gets as ugly as the whole world politics thing is. But in the church it should be.....I remember Pastor Chuck, years ago when we were in church at Costa Mesa.....someone would say, "Well, where are your elders?" and he'd go, "Oh, it's easy. Look around. They're eldering." They didn't have name tags or hats or shirts. "Just pick them out. They're the ones doin' the work." So, God chose. And God should always choose. It shouldn't be who you know or who you don't or what connections that you have. It should always be one of not politics but the moving of God's Spirit. So you see Paul when he plants the churches, you'll read this very interesting verse, "And he ordained elders in every city" (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5). Waited upon the LORD to

raise people up. "All right. You're in charge, buddy. Here are the keys. Now you'll be in charge." Because you could see already the work of God in their lives.

So, when we get to chapter 17 next week, verse 28, and one of his brothers - when David shows up at the battlefield where Goliath is taunting Israel's armies - starts to sarcastically speak to this little guy, "You left that few sheep of yours to come out here and spy out what's goin' on. You're kind of curious. You're in over your head. Get out of here." That kind of thing. You can see how that developed now because here's the big prophet, Samuel, in their house, and he's passed on all the boys. And now he's applauding David, "Come here, young man. We're gonna pray. God's gonna use you to be king of Israel." You can just hear the brothers, right? How are they gonna respond to David's being chosen? Certainly not the way that we would suspect. And so his dad seemed to show little love for him. Brothers were pretty bitter and envious, I think, at this point. Little is said or little is done at this ceremony. We just read it. It's only been the second time it's taken place. Once with Saul and that didn't turn out so good in private. Now the prophet had come to their home. This is the first three anointings of David. This is private. It is early. It is anticipatory. Nothing, really, will change for now. No outward circumstances change.

David's life, for that matter, doesn't change much except when Samuel leaves to go home and David goes back to his father's sheep, he has now this anointing from God of the Holy Spirit upon his life. That's the only change. Right? Not that the LORD wasn't speaking to him before, but God is now working upon his life in a way that would prepare him for what comes next. Saul had been rejected. God's man had been chosen. And now God wants to prepare him. Wants to prepare him. It doesn't look like he's king. But I'll tell you what - look at both Saul and David, and you'll notice neither of them seemed to have changed much. And God's work oftentimes follows after. Right? He's doing things out of sight. Whether He's set you down or raised you up, sometimes that isn't seen until later. But David is going to be faithfully beginning to learn what God wants to do and what God is going to do in his life. So the prophet leaves town, leaves Bethlehem. David goes back to work. But now the Holy Spirit is upon his life. And it is the single greatest difference that we shouldn't miss. Because if you want God to use your life, be sure the Holy Spirit is upon your life. It isn't by might, it isn't by power, it's by His Spirit (Zechariah 4:6). Always. It doesn't matter what gifts you have or how talented you think you might be, or what you think you have to offer, who you know. If the LORD does the work, then it's gonna be great. But if the LORD's not in it, they labor in vain (Psalm 127:1). The watchman gets up for nothing. Nothing can be

accomplished. If you go back to Exodus 31 or so, where Moses is gathering the people to build the tabernacle and all, you read of him picking a man who was filled with the Spirit, and what was he able to do? He had a knowledge in artistic crafting of gold. You say, "Well, he's a jeweler," or, "He's a craftsman." Yeah. But what set him apart was he was filled with the Spirit. So, later on, in Numbers 11:16, when Moses - overwhelmed with work and his father-in-law gives him some advice about getting some help - it is, "Gather Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders; and bring them together, and I will take the Spirit which is upon you, and I will place it upon them; and they'll help you to make decisions, to lead, and if they can't, then they can bring them to you." But the key qualification, again, was the anointing of God's Spirit. So we should be careful as we go about doing spiritual work - reaching the lost, praying for the sick, reaching out to those who need help - that we rely upon God's Spirit, not upon ourselves. If the Spirit of God is moving, then we're gonna be fine. It's always the case. And you certainly see it here. It's the one thing that God points out about David's life, early on. David would be in the fields watching his dad's sheep, but he would be in the school of the Holy Spirit, and he would begin to see and to hear and to understand the heart of God. In fact, as you go through in the years to come, David will say, oftentimes, "This is what I learned as a shepherd." He would become a good king because he learned to be a good shepherd. Even in the next chapter, again, when he goes to fight Goliath (and we're gonna skip a few years before that happens, even though it's just in the next couple of pages), David will say to King Saul, who really shouldn't be there at all, "I had a bear come in and take one of my father's sheep, and I chased him down and killed him. The LORD was with me. This Goliath could be like one of those bears that came into the camp. I can do it because the LORD's with me." His confidence is developed here. So, want to be in ministry? If you have aspirations to be in a place of serving, learn to let the LORD work in your everyday life. So David goes back to..... "You're going to be the king of Israel." "Okay, thank you. Am I done now? I'm goin' back." Not very eventful but amazing.

We read, in verse 14, that as the Holy Spirit fell upon David, "the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him." Two things we're told about Saul: he is now left without the presence of the Holy Spirit upon his life, and, instead, an evil spirit from the LORD has come to distress him and to bother him. Sometimes people go, "Does God allow evil?" Well, since He's the LORD of all, He could certainly stop it if He wanted to. But we read through the Scriptures that even the devil works for God - what He allows and what He won't allow the enemy to do. Though the enemy would like to destroy, God

uses it for correction, for punishment, for warning. Satan doesn't know that, I guess. But he has no other choice than to do what the LORD tells him to do. So, it was Job, when he lost his children, who said to his wife (who said, "We should curse God and die), "Should we accept good from God's hand and not accept adversity?" (Job 2:9). And then it says, "In all of this, Job didn't sin with his lips" (Job 2:10). So we have to trust the LORD, right? And God is now dealing with Saul, and this evil spirit that comes to torment him and all is going to be the way that God actually introduces David into Saul's life as we go through the Scriptures.

It's an important point to note also that Saul chose this path for himself. Right? This isn't God mean to Saul - He didn't like him. Saul had thirty-three years, now, to just say "yes." Saul said "no" for thirty-three years. And now, seven-and-a-half more years to go, he's gonna say "no" for seven-and-a-half more years. He's a wicked-hearted man. And so I know we look at it and go, "Oh, I don't know." God allows him to be tormented.

But, by the way, the Holy Spirit, in the Old Testament sense, was given by the LORD selectively to those who He desired; most of the time for service, for insight, for prophecy, even for courage. That relationship that you have with the Holy Spirit once you get born again is different. He comes to live in you forever. He will finish the work that He has begun (Philippians 1:6). He will present you one day faultless before God's throne (Jude 24). He won't leave you - He will never leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5, Joshua 1:5). But that wasn't the case in the Old Testament. First of all, the Holy Spirit didn't live within you; He came upon you. Your heart was not changed, but He changed you from without by His power. But it could be temporary. When David sinned with Bathsheba, and he hid it for maybe a year or longer, when he was confronted by the prophet, Nathan, the only thing David was afraid of was he was going to get killed because he did pretty much everything that was worthy of death. He committed adultery - that's worthy of death. He killed a guy - that's worthy of death. And the prophet said, "You're not gonna die" (2 Samuel 12:13). But when David wrote Psalm 51, he wrote, "Take not Your Holy Spirit from me" (verse 11). He realized that that was a gift that God could definitely remove. He'd seen it with Saul, and he feared it for his own life.

So, it's different for you and me. But this evil spirit would give Saul bouts with rage and insanity. He would try to kill David on several occasions. But here's what happens when you forsake the LORD. His road just gets worse.

So we read, in verse 15, "And Saul's servants said to him, 'Surely a distressing spirit from God is troubling you.' " By the way, these men around Saul - if we read earlier on in his life - were men that God had touched. And they're right; that's a true word. " 'Let our master now command your servants, who are before you, to seek out a man who is a skillful player on the harp. And it shall be that he will play it with his hand when the distressing spirit from God is upon you, and you shall be well.' " ("It'll remove its hand from you.") Verse 17, "So Saul said to his servants, 'Provide me now a man who can play well, and bring him to me.' Then one of the servants answered and said, 'Look, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a mighty man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a handsome person; and' " (most importantly) " 'the LORD is with him.' " Isn't it interesting that the decision on the part of godly men around Saul was that if they could just get some music, some worship, that they could relieve the anxiety of this evil spirit? Which is interesting to me because it might say to you what music can or cannot do in a spiritual sense. We read, for example, in the Bible, "God inhabits the praises of His people" (Psalm 22:3). You've read that before, right? what do you think that means? I mean, when you're worshipping.....what does that really mean to you? Does He fill the hearts of the worshipper? Does He fill the room of the worshippees? How does God inhabit His praises? But He does. He interacts with us as we come to worship Him. Music has a definite effect. It moves us, doesn't it? So, like I said, this is how God will orchestrate David's introduction to the throne of the king. He will put him together with the guy he's about to replace. It will happen over a period of time. How long, I can't tell you. I could guess for you, but it wouldn't do you much good. But, needless to say, it's not long. A year, six months, maybe less. But David would come, play; Saul would feel better, and David would go back home to work. It isn't until this confrontation (next week) with Goliath where David - still a teenager - now comes, and Saul is so impressed with him that he wants him to come fulltime to work for him, which he does; because the king, though he shouldn't be in that place, the LORD had said, "He's going to take your young men out of your house and have them serve him." That's exactly what he does with young David. But, for now, David will be introduced to Saul in this manner, not for the fact he'd been anointed king, but that he's a really good harp player.

Notice in verse 18, also, that, as a young teenage boy, his reputation was already a good musician, a valorous man - a mighty man of valor who was a man of war, who was careful in the things that he said. Besides he was a good lookin' guy, and God was with him. That's a pretty good ..... how many teenagers could you describe like that? It's an amazing description, right? David's reputation was established

somewhere between verse 13 and down to verses 18 and 19. God was with him, and it showed.

Verse 19, "Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse, and said, 'Send me your son David, who is with the sheep.' And Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread, a skin of wine, and a young goat, and sent them by his son David to Saul" (who everyone, by the way, was afraid of). "So David came to Saul and stood before him. And he loved him greatly, and he became his armorbearer. Then Saul sent to Jesse, saying, 'Please let David stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight.' And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him." So here's David's introduction to Saul. David's a young kid in his teens. His reputation among people that knew Saul was stellar. Saul had power to demand servants, which he absolutely did. And he asks for David (from his father) that he would come and serve. Eventually he would, like I say, go fulltime; but for at least some time, it was back and forth kind of serving whenever Saul needed him. God's timing in all this - pretty cool, right? "You're gonna be king. Go back to watchin' the sheep, but watch what God is doing." And notice something - David doesn't pitch himself. He doesn't go, "Hey, can I see your office? I'm pretty sure it's gonna be mine pretty soon." Doesn't do anything like that. He just kind of waits for the LORD. And I would point out to you one of the most amazing things that you read is that David loved Saul. Right? That "he loved him greatly" and began to serve him as an armorbearer; because he was a tough guy but he had a great love for the king, even though the king had very little to love. This was not a lovely man. This was a horrible guy who slaughters priests and kills everything that gets in his way and wants to pin David to the.....pin the tail on the David is what he's playing. Right? With his spear, here, in a few weeks. So, David's heart before God is amazing. It is just amazing.

So David, like I said, will go back and forth for a while. In fact, verse 15 of the next chapter says, "But David occasionally went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep in Bethlehem." So he had.....I know you're reading these compressed into verses, and it's easy to think, "Gosh, this all happened in a day or in a week." It probably happened over the course of six months to a year or so, at least, if not more. But notice how the LORD is calling David. His foot is in the door. His music and his reputation have gone before him. And he loves a guy who everyone is afraid of, and he becomes his armorbearer; he becomes Secret Service for the king. And he's a tough guy. Amazing to me.

David brings, by the way, to the king and to his court, love as a motivation to serve. Saul never had that; neither did everyone who worked with Saul. So, as far as loving the people and serving them, this is a new experience for everyone. It was greatly lacking with Saul. David was brave and godly at the same time. He would quickly gain the respect of the people. It wouldn't be long before they were singing his praises. It could very well be - and we've gone through the psalms on Sunday morning, each one, and kind of looked at the origins of the ones that we know about - but a lot of the early songs of David could certainly have been written during this time of transition; and we'll point those out if we can, at least by number, as we get to them so you can mark them down.

In the process, Saul unwittingly becomes dependent upon the guy that would replace him, which is interesting to me. Through David, Saul would see the kind of man that God would honor. In fact, as his minstrel and as his armorbearer, David probably spent more time in Saul's presence than anyone else. So I just see God's grace. He set him aside, but now he could still wake up. Okay, he lost his kingship; he doesn't have to lose his soul here. But unfortunately I think he's going to lose that as well.

But here's God's continual love set on display. In the end, it's gonna be miserable for him; but not for now. I like the fact that, as we read down in verse 23, worship drove evil spirits away, and I say that to you who would come late for worship. (Laughing) It's good for you to get here on time. I know Wednesday night is real tough because, man, it's hard to get here through work and freeways, and I'm glad you make the effort. God bless you for doing so. But on Sundays, get here on time! Third service people. (Laughing) And know this, man. The LORD could deliver you from all kinds of evil. Just come and worship! Raise your hands. Close your eyes. Open your heart. Who knows what's goin' on, man. The LORD is there with a brush and a cleaner, and He'll ward off evil spirits by the Holy Spirit He'll pour out upon your lives. So, I think there's something to be said for the cleaning, delivering, singing of the saints to the LORD.

Well, keep an eye out in the weeks that come as we continue through these chapters, on how God raises up David to serve as king; the step-by-step processes that David learns in every circumstance to trust the LORD. Because this'll help you to, if you're praying, "God, where are You gonna put me? What're You gonna do?" start watching how God prepares you, where He sends you, what He does with you. As a result, God filled David with the Holy Spirit, opened doors for him to serve, gave him favor in the eyes of the king, led him forward to that place of being the

king in Israel. But he just let God open doors. He took it slowly. Right? He was faithful in the little, and God gave him much.

If you look at King David and King Saul, they have a lot in common. They're both sinful. They're both called. And they're both anointed. They were both given the same opportunities. They both had the same potential. The only difference between them was the matter of the heart. Saul never gave it over to the LORD. David started surrendering - a young guy that came around when he was young. Saul wanted to make a name for himself. He was rebellious and stubborn and unwilling to serve. David was only concerned with God and God's glory. You find that literally throughout his life, even in the places of tremendous failure. He's the one who wrote (Psalm 24:3-5), "Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? Who shall stand in the holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, he who has not lifted up his soul to idols, or sworn deceitfully. He's going to find blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation." Those are David's words, led by the Spirit. So David and Saul - they part when it comes to the heart. And unfortunately that's really what it comes down to for us. It's a matter of your heart. God can use you greatly if your heart is right. If not, it's gonna be a long life and a difficult one for you. It certainly was for Saul.

Next week, we're gonna jump ahead a couple of years as David will come out and meet Goliath. Would you read ahead? It is fifty-eight verses long. We have an hour to do them. If you haven't read ahead, and we have to wait for you to read, it's gonna be a long night. All right? So, chapter 17 next Wednesday night.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
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