

March 6, 2016
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Life of David
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from 1 Samuel 16:13-23.

1. Would the rushing of the Spirit of Lord onto David be equivalent to anything we have ever experienced?
2. Why was it important for David to have the Holy Spirit, and how does that principle apply to us?
3. How do we reconcile the good and loving God sending a harmful spirit to trouble Saul?
4. In light of Saul's later attempts to kill David, how do we explain the statement that Saul loved him?
5. Is there any evidence in this text that music effects the soul?

FAITHFUL IN EVERY OPPORTUNITY
1 Samuel 16:13-23

Our lives are a composite of all opportunities, circumstances, possibilities that have crossed our paths and how we decided in each case. Where we are at this moment is due to how we responded in past situations. When we reach the latter years of life, we have been involved in a lot of opportunities, circumstances, and decisions.

For the child of God, the servant of the Lord, life is not a series of coincidences, a series of choices that don't matter. The child of God does not reach the end of life and say, "Oh, I could have had a V-8."

David is a great example of God's work in the life of His chosen servant. It is true that David's life was a bit unique. It is true that He was a special servant of the Lord. God had amazing plans for David that literally have eternal ramifications. God used David to firmly establish the kingdom of His people. That probably is not at all like God's will for my life or your life. God used David as a type of Christ. We know that will never be the case regarding us. God gave David a promise regarding his throne that will have fulfillment forever. Nope. That's not our lives.

At the same time, the ways God worked in David's life and circumstances are very similar to the way God works in our lives. Why are you living where you are living and doing what you are doing? It is very likely that someone somewhere in your life told you about an opportunity either in work or education or provided you with an opportunity in work that led to other opportunities, and now here you are. Almost in utopia!

Or maybe not. Maybe you are still learning lessons about how to trust God. Lessons like that are often difficult, trying, and maybe painful. That does not always mean you are out of God's will. In the story of our text, David looked like he had the Midas touch. All of a sudden out of nowhere King Saul enlisted him, loved him, promoted him, and promised to take care of him. He was sitting mighty pretty. Right! Ask David about the privilege the first time Saul flung his spear at him. Ask David how nice it is to be close to the king when the king was chasing him all over Judea trying to kill him.

God's will is good all the time. When He arranges circumstances by sending people across our paths who present opportunities to us, we need to seriously consider if it is a way for us to serve the Lord who is our real Master.

God's Spirit Arranges Opportunity (vv.13-18).

As we finished our study last week with the first several verses of chapter sixteen, we saw strong evidence of the work of God the Holy Spirit. We begin now with verse thirteen again and see that the Spirit of the LORD was at work (vv.13-14). He rushed upon David. *Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his*

brothers. *And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah (v.13).*

The act of anointing by the prophet and priest symbolized God's choice of the individual for service. Because of this connection, the act of the priest anointing someone with oil actually came to illustrate a person being filled with God's Spirit. That truth becomes very important when it is applied through the promise regarding Jesus the man from Nazareth anointed by God to do His work. Isaiah promised seven hundred years before God the Son came to earth to be Jesus of Nazareth: *"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound" (Isaiah 61:1).*

Therefore, as Samuel anointed David with oil—a symbolic act—the Spirit of God filled David. This was God preparing David for the task in the future. Because God chose David, He equipped David to serve as king. We do not know how or if there was any outward manifestation of David being infused by the Holy Spirit. But we know that this was a permanent condition (*from that day forward*).

This is precisely what happens to us when God forgives our sins and sets us apart for His service. When at the point of salvation our sin is covered by the sacrifice of Christ, the Holy Spirit indwells us. Because the Holy Spirit indwells us, we are equipped to do God's work. Paul taught the Philippian believers that *it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (Philippians 2:13)*. This is why our abilities to serve God are called the gifts of the Spirit (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12). This working of the Holy Spirit continually makes us more like Christ. *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18)*. The work of the Holy Spirit pleases God. As we are led by the Spirit, taught by the Spirit, yielded to the Spirit, we are accomplishing work as important and pleasing to God as being the king of Israel.

But while God the Holy Spirit indwelt David for the rest his life to enable him to serve as God chose, the same Holy Spirit left King Saul. *Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil*

spirit from the LORD tormented him (v.14). The Spirit's leaving was not all that unusual. The Holy Spirit did not always indwell servants permanently in the Old Testament period. David, Moses, Samuel were more of the exception than the rule. More expected was temporary empowering by the Holy Spirit.

Such was the case for Samson the double-minded man God used to judge Israel for about 20 years. Three times we read that the Spirit of God came upon Samson (Judges 14:6, 19; 15:14), which indicates that He was not continually present with the man. Indeed the story plainly reveals that God withdrew the Holy Spirit from Samson. In that setting where Delilah finally won the battle with God's man, Samson was not even aware that he was devoid of the supernatural strength God had given him. *And she said, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson!" And he awoke from his sleep and said, "I will go out as at other times and shake myself free." But he did not know that the LORD had left him (Judges 16:20).*

Now in our text also we read that the Holy Spirit left Saul. The Spirit had rushed upon Saul when Samuel anointed him to be king many years earlier (1 Sam. 10:10). But now the same Holy Spirit departed from Saul. The departure was because of Saul's persistent rebellion against and stubbornness toward God.

Even David feared some years later that his sin would cause the same result. He prayed to God, *Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me (Psalm 51:11)*. Worse is that God sent an evil spirit to plague Saul. The word *evil* does not mean that God caused Saul to sin. God is incapable of doing that. James assured us, *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one (James 1:13)*. Rather the idea is that God sent a troublesome spirit as judgment against Saul for his rebellion. Something like this might be diagnosed as emotional instability or even a form of mental illness today.

But God wouldn't do that, would He? Maybe we should draw our conclusion based on a couple of statements credited to God Himself. He said, *"I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things" (Isaiah 45:6-7)*. Through the prophet Amos, God asked, *"Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the*

people are not afraid? Does disaster come to a city, unless the LORD has done it?" (Amos 3:6). So, too, Job concluded that in God's will we may experience both good and evil. When his wife criticized Job's faith in God, he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips (Job 2:10).

In this case, God's specific judgment against the man Saul was a troubled soul. That does not require that God give the same kind of troubling spirit to all stubborn sinners. Lest we are tempted to remove the responsibility for this deeply troubling spirit from God, we need to remember that this is but a small sliver of an illustration of what hell will be like—which God also created as eternal judgment against sin.

In a very human-like response to the problem, the servants of man looked for solutions to God's work (vv.15-18). They seemed to know that music soothes the troubled soul. Or in the words of William Congreve, a 17th century playwright from England, "Music hath charms to soothe a savage breast." The statement is often misattributed to Shakespeare because it sounds like something he would have written.

Saul's cabinet members identified the problem. *And Saul's servants said to him, "Behold now, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you" (v.15).* It was obvious to everyone that Saul had entered a new phase in life. It would seem that in a short amount of time God sent Samuel to announce that He was removing Saul from being king (15:23), God removed the Holy Spirit from Saul (16:14), and God sent a troubling spirit into Saul (16:15).

Saul's advisors understood somehow that this was all consequences sent from God. Probably most of us have observed a similar kind of a troubling, upsetting kind of emotional instability in a person. What a contrast that is to the expected norm for God's children. The great joy for us is that *the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).* Troubled hearts are not all that uncommon. How to deal with the troubled soul can be frustrating and that would especially be the case if the troubled person was the king or president or some kind of leader.

The king's cabinet members recommended a solution. *Let our lord now command your servants who are before you to seek out a man who is skillful in playing the lyre, and when the evil spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will be well (v.16).* It appears that the ailment was sporadic. King Saul's advisors concluded that a skillful musician playing soothing music on a harp-type instrument would calm the king's unsettled soul. Too bad those ancient people were so foolish that they didn't realize that music is amoral. The facts are clear according to modern Contemporary Christian musicians that a particular sound of music does not affect a person's spirit one way or another. Then again, several modern musicologists disagree with their conclusions. Common sense and experience disagree with their conclusions. Here God's inspired Word indicates that music affects the soul.

It all sounded good to Saul and he accepted the recommendation. *So Saul said to his servants, "Provide for me a man who can play well and bring him to me" (v.17).* Notice the emphasis on "me." But of course. Saul's problem is the problem that needs attention. Coincidentally, God's new servant who desired to serve God, not himself, fit the need. *One of the young men answered, "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and the LORD is with him" (v.18).*

A young man among the king's counselors happened to know about David. See how he described David to the king. He said that he was *skillful in playing*. God gave David that ability. Then David capitalized on the gift practicing it and using it to make it a skill. The young man called David *a man of valor*. That means he was brave. In the next chapter, we read that David told Saul he had killed a bear and a lion with his hands. That's quite brave. David was also called *a man of war*. How was that known? Possibly he had some conflicts with Philistines who encroached into the area around Bethlehem. Along this line it is interesting that when he cut off Goliath's head, he took it to Jerusalem and virtually put it on display. At that time Jerusalem belong to the Jebusites.

Furthermore, David was *prudent of speech*. This means that he knew when to speak and when not to speak. He knew what to say when he did speak. How long had David prayed, *"Let the words of*

my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer” (Psalm 19:14). The man called David *a man of good presence*. Possibly this characteristic speaks of outward appearance. More likely it refers to David’s overall deportment. Finally, he said that *the LORD is with David*. He was obviously the object of God’s favor. He was obviously in fellowship with God.

Of course the king was going to hire the guy so described. How neat is this? Consider the sequence. God rejected Saul from being king because of persistent rebellion. God chose David to be king and empowered him with the Holy Spirit so he could do the task. God removed the Holy Spirit from Saul. God sent a troubling spirit upon Saul. Advisors counseled Saul to get a skillful musician to calm his spirit. Who do you suppose the skillful musician will be? Who do you suppose arranged all the circumstances to get the newly anointed future king accustomed to life in the king’s house? What an amazing God!

God’s Servant Buys Up the Opportunity (vv.19-23).

King Saul, a mere man, laid a plan and the man’s plan was obeyed (vv.19-20). Because he was the king and had a phone and a pen, he could issue any command he wanted and expect people to obey it. *Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, “Send me David your son, who is with the sheep” (v.19).*

Imagine getting the message from the king of the land to send your son to him. On one hand, this was a great honor for Jesse’s family. On the other hand, it meant David would leave the house. This was a simple case of the king doing what Samuel warned the people the king would do. *He said, “These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots” (1 Samuel 8:11).*

What did the king want with a boy who watched sheep? We need to stop to see the contrast between the king, his authority, his desire for David, and the reality that this very gifted, wise, kind young man was watching sheep. David gives us a good picture of

humility. Humility is strength under control, which is quite the opposite of Saul. It is what Saul had been in the past. If David had not been humble, he would have rebelled against keeping the sheep. That was such a lowly task. Instead it appears he decided to enjoy the menial task. By the way, his years of watching the sheep prepared him for the time he would spend in the wilderness running from Saul. David teaches us in so many ways how wise it is for us to buy up every opportunity God sets before us because we do not know all that God plans for us in the future.

The king issued the command and David’s father obeyed. *And Jesse took a donkey laden with bread and a skin of wine and a young goat and sent them by David his son to Saul (v.20).* Though it appears later in the “David” story that he returned home to watch the sheep, this was the beginning of Jesse saying “good bye” to his son. We parents who have watched our children move all over the world to work can sympathize with Jesse sending David to Saul. Did he have any idea that he was actually sending his son into the next steps of God’s will? It is a lot easier to say “good bye” to our kids when we believe they are moving on in God’s service. I’m not saying it is easy, but just easier.

Everything about this picture shouts out how God ordained circumstances (vv.21-23). The king loved the boy who would replace him (vv.21-22). What? Sure. When God orchestrates the circumstances, weird things happen. *And David came to Saul and entered his service. And Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer (v.21).* Gibeah, where King Saul lived, was a few miles northwest of Jerusalem making it about eight miles from David’s home in Bethlehem. That trip would take a good half a day by foot if you didn’t stop at too many rest stops or scenic overlooks. So off David went to Gibeah to obey the king.

Key words are that David *entered the king’s service*. This means that he put himself at the king’s disposal. Originally the king hired him to play music. It turns out that playing music was only part of his responsibilities. More surprising is to read that *Saul loved him greatly*. What an amazing statement. Although it is true that in the ancient middle eastern context the words might mean that Saul really liked what he saw in David. Obviously this young man who God gifted and who demonstrated a walk with God really impressed the

king. To a greater or lesser extent, the king's heart went out to his successor, his replacement. That was God's plan, but Saul didn't know it.

After he went to the king's house, David *became Saul's armor bearer*. Whatever this position was, it was an honor. It would allow David to learn important lessons about being king. David was definitely on the inside track. Saul loved it. *And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor in my sight" (v.22)*. Saul requested that his replacement stay in his service. Still it appears that David went back home on occasion until we read in 18:2 where Saul did not let David return home. But the young man was exactly where God wanted him to be, learning what God wanted him to learn at that moment in his life.

The plan worked great . . . for now. *And whenever the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him (v.23)*. The evil spirit (which might have been an angel) came upon Saul sporadically. At those times, David played skillfully. Obviously, David was a skillful musician. He would write many songs (at least 75 of our collection of psalms). He wrote many of those songs while being chased by Saul! Furthermore, in his latter years David organized the entire music ministry for the temple that Solomon would build. He was a very gifted musician. And Saul was refreshed and God withdrew the evil spirit. In all of these things, God was giving David good favor in the king's sight.

Do we all love to identify with David as much as possible? We rejoice that he was a humble shepherd boy who did not presume or have high aspirations for himself. We love the way God intervened in his life and mapped out every step to get him in the king's house to learn about being a king. We like to imagine that God is doing the same thing for us. He often does similar methods of leading His people in every age. But do we conclude that being in the will of God is a lot like a movie that always turns out great for the hero or heroine? It is good to rejoice in God's leading in the early years of David's life.

But what about those times when Saul threw the spear at him? What about the weeks spent in the wilderness running for his life from Saul? What about the conflicts that would come with aggressive

leaders like Joab? What about his own son turning against him and trying to kill him? Was all of that stuff outside of God's control? The lesson for us from this text is that we should zealously buy up all the opportunities God sets before us because in and through those circumstances God is preparing us for future and continued service — no matter how old we are.