

Title: Rise of David, Fall of Saul

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:14-23

Series: God, the True King!

1. Introduction:

- a. When we last studied the book of Samuel, we saw that God had rejected King Saul from reigning in Israel. Many times, King Saul had refused to follow God's commands and submit to God's authority.
- b. Saul's last refusal to submit to God had earned him the following words recorded for us in **1 Samuel 15:23B**Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king.”
- c. Chapter 16 opened with God choosing another king. No longer would God's people be led by a man who was outwardly beautiful yet inwardly sinful but now they would have a king after God's own heart.
- d. Although David is anointed to be king someday, Saul was still the reigning king. Our passage today allows us to see the beginning of both the rise of David and the fall of Saul.

2. Verses 14 and 15: The Danger of Religiosity: Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the LORD tormented him. (15) And Saul's servants said to him, “Behold now, a harmful spirit from God is tormenting you.

- a. As we begin our study today, we encounter one of the most tragic verses in all scripture.

- b. Between vs. 13 and 14, we cross a great divide.
 - i. Consider verse 13. **The Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward.**
 - ii. And now consider verse 14. **The Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the LORD tormented him.**
- c. We ask ourselves, “What does it mean that **the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul.**” We understand it to mean that God withdrew from Saul all those special graces in connection with his anointing to the royal office of king. Also, and even more tragically, God took away from Saul the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit.
 - i. Without God’s Spirit, a man becomes, in the saddest and most terrible sense, “abandoned.”
 - 1. **Romans 1:28** And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.
 - a. Humanity, like King Saul, wants to live life on its own terms. It does not want to acknowledge God.
 - i. There is a terrible danger in this type of living! Living as if there is no God is living a hell-bound life.
 - b. We remember Saul was a very religious man but not an obedient man. He thought that by coming to church and offering sacrifices, he would somehow be acceptable to God, even as he lived disobediently. His heart was far from

loving God and surrendering to His Word.

- c. God had often called Saul to a right relationship, yet Saul refused until his heart became so hardened that **God gave him up to a debased mind.**
 - i. One of God's last attempts is recorded for us in **1 Samuel 15:1** And Samuel said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you king over his people Israel; now, therefore, listen to the words of the LORD.
- d. Saul did not see his need for God. God was an afterthought. So, therefore, Saul would not listen.
 - i. There are many people in our churches like this today—people who have lived their whole lives without submission to the great God of the universe. God has been gracious to them. He has often brought them the word of Salvation through Jesus Christ, yet they have repeatedly rejected His gracious love offer. These types of people are in grave danger of being sovereignly abandoned.

d. We know that man must be governed either by the Spirit from above, or by the spirit from beneath; there is no other middle ground.

- i. So Saul's estate is tragic. It is the only time in the Old Testament that God's spirit is said specifically to have left someone, and we see that Saul understood the importance of this.
 1. Saul immediately understands that there is something gravely wrong and missing. Saul immediately experiences the dark effects of God's presence being lifted from him and an evil spirit now being allowed to torment him.
 2. By being religious and not surrendering to God, Saul had forfeited the presence of God himself.
- ii. Look at the horror of such a judgment. We cannot imagine a heavier judgment from Almighty God than allowing a man to live for his own passions without the restraining influence of God the Holy Spirit. The consequence to that person would be a descent into utter spiritual depravity and hardness. From this point forward, Saul would go on to try to murder David, Johnathan, and others. He would use his daughter and cause her to become an adulteress. He would murder almost the entire priestly class. He would become paranoid and unreasonable. He would start consulting mediums and witches. Even in death, there would be no honor for Saul.
 1. Beloved, this is what happens to the abandoned soul that has no restraints when it comes to sin.

2. **Hebrews 6:4-6** For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, (5) and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, (6) and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.
3. Today, if you have been blessed with an understanding of the truth, come to Jesus Christ. Do not delay! Do not continuously harden your heart. To do so opens you up to a great and terrible judgment. God can, and has before, taken His Spirit away and allowed the soul to be given over unto evil.
- e. According to our passage, the terrorist tactics of the evil spirit were ongoing but occasional. We should not be surprised that the evil spirit is from God. Where else would it come from but from him who is Sovereign over all things?
 - i. Remember, God created all Spirits good, and some defected from Him in Satan's rebellion. It would seem that one of those spirits was asking for permission to terrorize Saul. Because of Saul's constant hardness, God granted said permission.
 - ii. Where the Spirit of God leaves, the vacuum is filled by the enemy of our Souls.

1. This is why the Psalmist prays in **Psalms 51:11** Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

- f. **A note of clarification is important here.** This is not saying that the believer can be abandoned by God. Far from it. God promises the believer that His presence will always guide the flock of God. This verse is speaking of someone that approaches the way, truth, and life and yet purposefully decides never to come into the family of God. Knowing that they should repent and trust in Jesus, they repeatedly choose not to.
3. Verses 16 and 17: **The comfort of Worship:** 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 harmful spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will be well.” (17) So Saul said to his servants, “Provide for me a man who can play well and bring him to me.”
- a. At this point, Saul could hardly have been a good man, yet there were still some around him who felt sorry for him and who wanted to alleviate his suffering. This is a grace of God.
- i. These counselors recommend to Saul the power of music that is centered around the Lord as a temporary cure. Undoubtedly, when David played his instrument, he sang the glories of God as recorded in the book of Psalms. This focus on

God's Word through music would bring a temporary healing benefit to the mind and spirit of Saul.

ii. **Side Note:** Be careful what music you listen to. We learn from our passage that music is deeply spiritual.

b. Although Saul's servants offer a temporary solution, I wonder what would have happened if they said, "Saul, you know that this evil comes from the Almighty, whom you have offended. There can be no hope for you but in sincere repentance. Turn to God and beg Him for mercy." If they had acted in this way, they would have been wise counselors, divine physicians.

i. Beloved, only the right cure can destroy a disease. The wrong cure only conceals the symptoms.

ii. The only cure at our disposal is the Gospel. We should point all sinners to repentance. They must come to Jesus, or they will never be healed. Beloved, be careful with prescribing any other spiritual or worldly medicine.

4. Verses 18-22: The Choosing of David: 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." (19) Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, "Send me David your son, who is with the sheep." (20) 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. (21) And David came to Saul and entered his service. And Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer. (22) And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, “Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor in my sight.”

- a. Do you see the irony in these verses? Not only has God chosen David, but Saul now does so as well.
- b. When David was first anointed, he must have wondered how he would be king over Israel? Here we see the beginning of that answer. By placing David in the company of Saul, God is granting David the necessary experience for him to fulfill his calling. God's sovereignty often works in unexpected and yet wonderful ways.

5. Verse 23: The world's need for God's People: And whenever the harmful 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 harmful spirit departed from him.

- a. It is the newly chosen King that keeps Saul from falling apart. The newly chosen king is not a threat but a means of Grace to Saul.
 - i. Even when God disciplines because of a lack of obedience, He leaves some grace within reach of the offender to modify the punishment. This is His way throughout the Scripture.
 1. Israel in the book of judges
 - a. **Judges 3:9A** But when the people of Israel cried out to the LORD, the

LORD raised up a deliverer for the people of Israel, who saved them....

2. Israel was sent into captivity, yet Jeremiah promises the restoration before they go.

a. **Jeremiah 32:14-15** ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware vessel, that they may last for a long time. (15) For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.’

3. The Pharisees' hardness of heart and yet Jesus continuously spoke to them.

a. **John 5:39-40** You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, (40) yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.

4. God is a God of mercy.

b. Once again, the life of David not only mirrors the life of Jesus Christ but it teaches us as Christians how to live. We know that it will not be long before Saul hates David and tries to kill him. As Saul is rejected by God yet sustained by David's service, the world hates Christ's people, yet our service to them benefits this world.

- i. **John 15:18-21** “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. (19) If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (20) Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. (21) But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.
- ii. However, our command is quite clear. We read in **Matthew 5:43-45** “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ (44) But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, (45) so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

6. Benediction:

- a. **2 Corinthians 6:2** For he says, “In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Public Reading of Scripture:

Romans 1:18-21