

Message #6

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Life of David

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THE PREPARATION OF A KING

WITH A HEART FOR GOD

1 SAMUEL 16:13-23

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

Some of you are familiar with the hymn “Jesus, Lover of My Soul.” It was composed in the 1700s by Charles Wesley, the brother of the famous Methodist founder, John Wesley. (HYMN LYRICS 1) The first verse goes like this:

Jesus, lover of my soul,

Let me to thy bosom fly,

While the nearer waters roll,

While the tempest still is high. (HYMN LYRICS 2)

Hide me, O my Savior, hide,

Till the storm of life is past;

Safe into the haven guide:

Oh, receive my soul at last.

According to one account, the hymn was composed while Wesley was on a ship returning to England from Georgia. Charles Wesley had been serving as Governor Oglethorpe’s secretary there in this new colony. The ship got caught in a bad storm. The lives of all on board were threatened. In the midst of the storm a bird flew into the place where Wesley was and dug into the folds of his coat. That supposedly became the inspiration for the hymn.

(PROJECTOR OFF) According to the Christian History Institute, over a century later there was a gathering of Civil War veterans from both the North and the South. As they were recounting stories from the war, a Confederate veteran recalled an incident where he was sent to the front lines to pick off an exposed Union sentry. As he aimed his gun at the sentry, he heard him singing "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." It struck a chord in his own heart, and he decided that he could not shoot. An old Union soldier stood up and asked if this happened in the Atlanta Campaign of 1864. The Southerner said that it did. The Northerner said that he was the sentry. He had been depressed and fearful to man this post, and he sang to keep up his courage. It turned out that the song had also saved his life.

The passage before us this morning likewise involves music, the providential care of God, and a man who does right. In our study of the life of David I have suggested that this Old Testament character has valuable lessons to teach us about leadership and character development. We have seen that the king who preceded David was Saul. He was the king whom the people of Israel wanted. But we saw two weeks ago from Chapters 13-15 of 1 Samuel that he was guilty of unhealthy presumption--- he took on the job of a priest, which was not his role, selfish pridefulness--- he built a monument to himself in the midst of a military conflict, and flagrant disobedience--- he didn't totally wipe out the Amalekites, which he had been commanded to do.

We saw last week from the first part of #16 that the Lord through Samuel picked a ruler to replace Saul who had a heart for God. David was His sovereign choice. He was just a kid, shepherding his family's sheep. He was the youngest son in the family. But we noted that God has this habit of using unlikely people to accomplish His purposes. David had a heart for God, and the Lord used his seemingly mundane experiences to accomplish significant things. He still often works like that today. This morning we shall see how David responds to this divine call upon his life, and we shall see how God works in his life and often in our own.

I.

In vv. 13 & 14 of 1 Samuel #16, which is found on p. 239 of the black Bibles under many of the chairs, we encounter THE DIVINE RESPONSIBILITY: GOD'S SPIRITUAL PREPARATION. (PROJECTOR ON--- I. THE DIVINE RESPONSIBILITY...) According to vv. 13 & 14, **"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. Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the Lord tormented him."**

There is a dramatic contrast here as the divine authority and blessing that had been given to Saul is seemingly passed on to David. The contrast involves one whom we would recognize as the Holy Spirit,

who leaves Saul and comes upon David. When the Holy Spirit leaves Saul, a “harmful spirit” comes upon him.

The Holy Spirit seems to have functioned in a somewhat different way than He does in New Testament times. The Holy Spirit came upon people in those ancient times for particular purposes. In the Book of Judges He empowered Jewish leaders who were raised up to defeat the enemies of Israel. Samson was one of these leaders. (JUDGES 14:19) In Judges #14 v. 19 we are told, **“And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon him [Samson], and he went down to Ashekelon and struck down thirty men of the town and took their spoil and gave the garments to those who had told the riddle.”** This divine empowerment apparently involved physical strength and boldness.

At times in the Old Testament it seemed to involve skill. (EXODUS 31:3). For example, Exodus #31 v. 3 tells us, **“...and I have filled him [a guy named Bezalel] with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship...”** This divine help is provided to assist in the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness.

The Holy Spirit also came upon prophets as they received messages from God. Such it was with the prophet Ezekiel. (EZEKIEL 11:5) In the book of that same name in #11 v. 5 we are told, **“And the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and he said to me, ‘Say, Thus says the Lord:’...”** Now the Holy Spirit has come upon these Old Testament kings.

In the New Testament the work of the Holy Spirit is different. Jesus is speaking in John #14 vv. 16 & 17. (JOHN 14:16-17) He is quoted as saying, **“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”** The death of Jesus Christ was necessary for the Holy Spirit to come to live within Christians. After Jesus ascended into heaven, following His resurrection, the Holy Spirit came upon believers on the Day of Pentecost, described in Acts #2. In 1 Corinthians #12 the Apostle Paul writes that all true Christians are baptized in the Holy Spirit. This happens when we put our trust in Jesus. This requires a recognition that we are sinners and that Jesus was God and man and that He died in our place to pay the penalty for our sins. When we accept His offer of eternal salvation by a trusting faith, the promise is that we are forgiven and have eternal life and now have the Holy Spirit within us. (PROJECTOR OFF)

In our story it is not just that the Spirit of God leaves Saul, but also that a harmful spirit begins to torment him. The basic meaning of the original word for “harmful” is “evil.” I think that “evil” is the

better translation. Even though this is an evil spirit, he is said to be “from the Lord.” This is not just a spirit in the sense of a feeling of depression or a bad attitude. This is a demon, a fallen angelic being.

Some among us wonder how this evil spirit could be said to be from God. The answer must have to do with His sovereignty. If God is truly in charge of all that happens in this universe, then He must have authority over demons. Somehow He works even bad things together to accomplish His purposes. In Isaiah #45 v. 7 (PROJECTOR ON--- ISAIAH 45:7) the prophet quotes the Lord, saying, **“I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity--- this is the same Hebrew word meaning evil--- I am the Lord who does all these things.”**

As we look at the most evil rulers down through history, we may recognize that evil forces were truly at work in them. Consider Adolph Hitler. (PROJECTOR OFF) We know the resentment that resulted among the German people from the conditions imposed after WWI. We know that Hitler took daily injections that included amphetamines and crystal meth. We know that he bought into the theory of evolution and the idea of natural selection. He used that theory to justify the killing of Germans with handicaps and people from other races whom he regarded as inferior. But does this fully explain the enormity of his evil actions and the charismatic power he had over the German people?

Hitler’s childhood friend August Kubizek recalls an incident in their youth after they attended a performance of Wagner’s opera “Rienzi.” He says, **“I was struck by something strange, which I had never noticed before, even when he had talked to me in moments of the greatest excitement. It was as if another being spoke out of his body, and moved him as much as it did me. It wasn’t at all a case of a speaker being carried away by his own words. On the contrary: I rather felt as though he himself listened with astonishment and emotion to what burst forth from him with elementary force. I will not attempt to interpret this phenomenon, but it was a state of complete ecstasy and rapture... Like flood waters breaking their dykes, his words burst forth from him. He conjured up in grandiose, inspiring pictures his own future and that of his people.”** Hitler later remembered the incident and solemnly declared, **“In that hour it began.”** (D. Sklar, *The Nazis and the Occult*, p. 50) To some of us this might sound like demonic possession.

Saul’s demonic oppression produced in him agitation and depression. It caused him to do bad things, to oppose God’s purposes, and eventually to try to kill David. The spiritual blessing on David empowered him to do good things and to be a blessing to others.

Living after the time of Jesus and Pentecost, we have the opportunity to also enjoy spiritual empowerment. The New Testament tells us that if we put our trust in Jesus, we will have the Holy Spirit in us. In 1 Corinthians #12 the Apostle Paul tells us that Christians receive spiritual gifts. These are divine enablements which enable us to have special ability to teach or encourage or have faith or give generously or serve others or to do a number of other things which serve to build up the church and to accomplish God's purposes. Such is the nature of the spiritual preparation that God accomplishes in us.

II.

In vv. 15-19 we learn about THE DIVINE ENABLEMENT: GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL PREPARATION.

(PROJECTOR ON--- II. THE DIVINE ENABLEMENT...) Look at vv. 15-19: **"And Saul's servants said to him, 'Behold now, a harmful spirit from God is tormenting you. 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.' So Saul said to his servants, 'Provide for me a man who can play well and bring him to me. 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.' Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, Send me David your son, who is with the sheep.'"**

Do you see how God's providential care is at work? He uses this situation where Saul is plagued by an evil spirit. This creates a need in him. Psychiatrists and prozac and valium are not yet available. But people have an awareness of the calming effect of music. God has given David musical ability. He causes one of Saul's staff members to become aware of David's ability. Thus David is brought into the palace. He is going to get on-the-job training for being a king--- largely through the negative example of Saul. Such is the providential care of a sovereign and good God

Let's break this down a little more. The servants in v. 15 are actually royal officials. It is interesting that they recognize the spiritual force which is at work. Somehow they also recognize that this evil spirit is from God. Perhaps they heard Samuel's pronouncement of God's judgment upon the king.

These servants, these royal staff members, also have awareness of the value of music therapy. The instrument mentioned is the lyre. Reference is made to this stringed instrument throughout the Ancient Near East. The form that the instrument took varied. (DAVID'S LYRE 2) This sketch was discovered in the ruins of ancient Assyria. It pictures a situation several centuries later when Hebrew captives are being led away into captivity. These three are playing lyres, probably involving songs of mourning.

(DAVID'S LYRE 3) This is a half-shekel in current Israeli currency. A shekel is worth about a quarter. The side pictured on the right is intended to represent David's lyre. The Hebrew word for lyre is "kinnor."

We might wonder how it was that a royal servant knew of David's musical skills. Was he a relative? Did he happen to meet Jesse's family on a trip to Bethlehem? Furthermore, this guy calls David a man of valor and a warrior. (PROJECTOR OFF) Where did he get that idea? Perhaps a couple of years have gone by, and David is older. Perhaps David acquitted himself well in a skirmish with the Philistines in which he and his brothers were involved. Perhaps in a visit to Bethlehem this royal staff member heard stories about David's encounters with lions and bears. However it worked out, we readers are expected to see the providential hand of God at work.

Then in v. 19 Saul grants a formal invitation to David to come to the palace. How about that? The current king is unknowingly inviting his replacement right into his own home. This is the providential preparation of God.

Many of us who are older can look back upon our lives and see how God has providentially arranged circumstances to bring us to the point in life in which we find ourselves. We hopefully can recognize how the Lord has used even seemingly bad things to accomplish useful things in us. These good and bad things have contributed to our usefulness for Him--- to our opportunities for leadership and to the development of our character.

After David was anointed to be king by Samuel, he went back to shepherding sheep. Things may not have made sense to him. Life may not have seemed any different. For a time there may have been no evidence of a changed career path. But God was providentially at work.

III.

Look next at vv. 19-22: THE HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY: DAVID'S PATIENT PREPARATION. (PROJECTOR ON-- - III. THE HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY...) According to v. 19, **"Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, 'Send me David your son, who is with the sheep.'"** There are two profound indicators in this sentence of the heart that David has for God. First, David is still living under his father's authority. Second, he is still watching the family's sheep.

There was a statement in the passage that we looked at last week which could be interpreted to mean that Jesse excluded his son David from the initial meeting which the family had with Samuel. All of the other sons were there. David was not. Now David has been told that he will be king of the entire country. Yet he is still in subjection to his father. He is following his directions and assignments. He will be managing the entire nation some day, but he is still only managing the family flock.

Do you think that David faced a temptation to chuck the whole thing? Why should I listen to my father any more? He wouldn't even invite me to the meeting with Samuel. Have I received any pay raise? Are my working conditions any better? How am I going to be king some day if I stay on this career path? It is time to make a change.

Yet David was patient. He trusted in the promise of God. He understood a theological concept that we are often slow to grasp--- the sovereign providence of God. How often are we wanting to change things because we are a little dissatisfied with our boss, or our job, or our salary, or our teacher, or our house, or our mate, or our church? Do we patiently wait for God to work and accomplish His purposes?

One normal, mundane day in the life of a young shepherd a royal messenger showed up in Bethlehem and announced that David was wanted in the palace. Verses 20 & 21 tell us, **“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. And David came to Saul and entered his service. And Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer.”** Apparently Jesse wanted his family to leave a good impression with the king. For David, all of those guitar lessons have finally paid off.

David thus goes to work for the king he is tasked with replacing. Saul does not know this yet. David does. He knows that the Lord intends for him to be king. In the later history of Israel we find stories of sons who manipulate circumstances to be king and outsiders who try to do in kings in order to become kings themselves. In 2 Kings #8 the prophet Elisha tells one Hazael that he shall be king of Syria some day. Does Hazael wait for God to bring this to pass? No, he goes right to the palace and murders the king himself.

David is not like that. He is not like Saul. He has a heart for God. He is patient. He genuinely serves the guy whom he is supposed to replace. With the evil spirit who plagues Saul, this king was probably often irascible and difficult and demanding and unreasonable. Yet David patiently serves the king. Could we have put up with that? Do we put up with that in the difficult people around us?

Saul, we are told, responds by loving David greatly. The irony of it! It is the providence of God, and the patient trust of David. David is not only God's choice, but, in a sense, King Saul's choice.

David is given the job title of "armor-bearer." To keep this in context we should consider what is mentioned in 2 Samuel #18 v. 15. Joab at this later time is King David's commanding general. (2 SAMUEL 18:15) In this verse we read, **"And ten young men, Joab's armor-bearers, surrounded Absalom and struck him and killed him."** The commanding general had at least ten armor-bearers. A Hebrew king may have had even more. So although David at this time was much appreciated, he may have become just one member of a much larger staff. Perhaps "armor-bearer" was a job on top of his role as musician. Perhaps it was simply a job classification for a member of the royal staff.

The point is that David was patient. He was trusting in God for the right opportunity. He was faithful to his responsibilities in the circumstances in which he found himself. He waited for God to act. He genuinely served and cared for the man whom he would one day replace. For that, he is an example to us.

IV.

In v. 23 we come to THE HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY: DAVID'S USE OF MUSIC. (IV. THE HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY...) This verse reads, **"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."**

We are not told how often it was that the evil spirit came upon Saul. It is possible that David still spent time back home in Bethlehem and was only called in to play for David occasionally. In #17 we will see that David was in Bethlehem when the Goliath incident happened.

So it is that David's musical ability comes into play. Did he also sing for Saul? We don't know. Perhaps he shared psalms that he was writing. He was still perhaps a very young man.

Plato and Aristotle wrote about the healing influence of music. This incident was several centuries earlier. After the First and Second World War, musicians were called in to play and sing at Veterans' Hospitals across the country. The academic pursuit of music therapy developed in this country after

that. My college in Wisconsin offered a music therapy major. There are at least 54 colleges in the country that offer such a degree today.

There was a play produced in London in 2015 and brought to Broadway in 2017 entitled "Farinelli and the King." It is based on the true story of King Philip V of Spain. He ruled in the early 1700s. He suffered from depression, which historians today suspect was related to bipolar disorder. In the throes of his depression he did not take good care of himself. His appearance was bad. The queen tried several tactics to get him better. At one point she contacted an opera singer in England by the name of Farinelli, the stage name of Carlo Broschi. She convinced him to come to Spain. He held a concert in August of 1737 in a large room next to the king's apartment. The king was touched by his music. He called in Farinelli and asked him what he could do for the singer. As a result of the queen's prompting, he asked only that he shave and make himself presentable to his subjects. He supposedly did that, and Farinelli sang every evening for the next week. The king and queen then persuaded Farinelli to stay and become a regular member of the royal staff, which he did. He held regular evening concerts for the royal family and never sang in public again.

This incident has obvious parallels with the events in our passage. Johann Sebastian Bach argued, "**The aim and final reason of all music should be nothing else but the glory of God and the refreshment of the spirit.**" (*The Bach Reader*, rev. edn., New York: Norton, 1972, p. 33) David would be first to point out that the best use of music is worship of the true God. Bible students recognize that David's Psalms were put to music at a very early time, perhaps by David himself. Some of the Psalms are classified as "Praise Psalms."

Consider Psalm 150. (PSALM 150:3-4) Beginning in v. 3 we read, "**Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe!**" The lyre was not the only instrument that was around in the time of David. (PSALM 150:5-6) "**Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!**"

Martin Luther is credited with introducing congregational singing to worship services. (MARTIN LUTHER QUOTE) He once observed, "**...next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world. It controls our thoughts, minds, hearts, and spirits...**" (Forward to Georg Rhau's *Symphoniae*, 1538)

Most importantly, the Book of Revelation provides us with several glimpses of the role that music has in heaven. It has a prominent place in the worship of God. Consider one example of this from Revelation #15 v. 3. (REVELATION 15:3) After making a reference to people who are playing harps, we are told, **“And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, ‘Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!’”** All of this would argue for the importance of music in our worship.

The overall message of our passage, however, is this: As God was sovereignly preparing David for the job that he had for him, so also He is at work in our lives preparing us for missions that He has for us, however big or small they seem to be. Our job is to be faithful in the circumstances in which we find ourselves, trusting Him to use us in the way in which He sees fit.