

In Clearly Purposeful and Ironic Sovereignty, God Brings David to Minister to Saul

1 Samuel 16:13-23

- Irony in literature - Something the reader knows that a character may not that makes a situation or words not what they seem or more than they seem. It can happen in real life too.
 - Saul has heard twice that God has chosen someone else. In the next chapters he tries to kill David several times, and several times proclaims that David will be king if he doesn't stop things. He is trying to stop it, but God's plans won't be thwarted. And one irony is that this happens partly through the means of God bringing David to Saul here.
 - **God' purposeful and ironic sovereignty is demonstrated as he takes his Spirit away from Saul and sends a tormenting spirit, so that the very one he has chosen and put his Spirit upon, David, is the one who is called to minister to him, and whom Saul values. This is essential in the story of David ultimately becoming king, emphasizes the magnitude of God's enabling, and is the very purposeful sovereignty we can trust in everything.**
 - The ultimate focus of God's sovereign purposes is that his redemptive plan for history will be accomplished through Jesus. According to Paul, everything happens "according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will" (Ep. 1:11). We can't **always** see God's sovereign hand guiding our own lives, but we do see him at work in the lives of great figures in the Bible like David, which speaks to us about his purposes for us, and of Jesus.
 - This is purposeful and ironic sovereignty: The rejected king unknowingly seeks to obtain relief from the newly anointed king. The anointed one whom God has chosen, who is after his heart and the Spirit is upon, beginning here, will serve Saul, have Saul turn against him, and then avoid being killed by Saul for probably ten years.
- I. Vs. 13-15 - We see God's purposeful and ironic sovereignty in his Spirit coming upon David and leaving Saul, and the harmful spirit being sent to torment Saul.
- **Vs. 13 - Samuel anointed David in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward.** God's Spirit was providing him with supernatural equipping for the calling that God had given him. We don't know what immediately happened (Youth in 17:33), or how long it was before the events in vs. 14-23. 30 years old as king.
 - **Vs. 14a - Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul...** Kingdom continues, but, God will have last word. Presence or absence of Spirit is immeasurably significant. Lk. 11:13 - If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! Jn. 1 and 3. Ro. 8. Jn. 14. Also true in church. Nothing, like Saul, or everything, like David.
 - **Vs. 14b - And a harmful spirit from the Lord tormented him.** Problem of God sending an evil (NIV), or harmful (ESV) spirit. If it is a demon, God is sovereign. Job. 2 Co. 12. It could be an angel. Whatever it is, it was sent by the Lord as an act of judgment on Saul's sin. Symptoms in 18:1-11. Once impressive. Now gloomy and unstable. It's noticed. **Vs. 15 - And Saul's servants said to him, "Behold now, a harmful spirit from God is tormenting you.** They're probably suffering.
- II. Vs. 16-17 - We see God's purposeful and ironic sovereignty in Saul's servants' suggestion for someone to soothe him by playing the lyre.
- **Vs. 16 - 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."** They recognized that the source of Saul's problem was God being against him. Yet their remedy was superficial. The playing of the lyre was widely held in the ancient world to combat evil spirits, and even today we know the soothing power of soft music. Yet Saul's true problem was his sin against the Lord. Spiritually sound advice would urge Saul to turn to the Lord in repentance. Ze. 1:3 - Return to me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you. Still recognize psychological issues.
 - Saul agrees. **Vs. 17 - "Provide for me a man who can play well and bring him to me."** The chapter opens with the Lord saying "I have provided for myself a king," and now Saul unwittingly gives the order to "provide for me" someone who plays the lyre, who turns out to be the very person whom the Lord had provided for himself to replace Saul as king.
- III. Vs. 18 - We see God's purposeful and ironic sovereignty in the comprehensive description of David in playing the lyre and other skills, and particularly in the presence and enabling of God upon David.
- **Vs. 18 - 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."** "It just so happens..." Some of these things **did** describe Saul, but there is comprehensive contrast. David has natural gifts (from God). However, God's empowering Spirit had already mobilized his God-given talents (17:34-37), and would further in the task to which he was now called. Each statement is translatable to our lives, even young people. This pictures a courageous, wise, trusting, and treasuring young man, which is exactly what a living faith in the Lord should produce. Had Samuel mentored him after

his anointing (19:18)? A godly legacy extended down through David's family. His great-grandmother was Ruth, and the kind of loyalty she showed her mother-in-law, Naomi, is evidenced in the life of David. His great-grandfather was Boaz, the redeemer-kinsman who took Ruth as his wife. The last statement is the most important, contextually and for us.

- IV. Vs. 19-22 - We see God's purposeful and ironic sovereignty in Saul agreeing to bring David to serve him, and Saul valuing him, promoting him, and keeping him.
- **Vs. 19** - Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, "Send me David your son, who is with the sheep." **Vs. 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. **Vs. 21** - And David came to Saul and entered his service. And Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer. **Vs. 22** - And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor in my sight." Doesn't say, but surely David excelled, for, again, God was with him. Saul is promoting and valuing the one who will replace him. In Saul's presence, David would learn things related to being king. If the Psalms are any reflection, the experience deepened David's faith, exposed him to the wide varieties of human experience, and even contributed to his life serving and then escaping Saul.
- V. Vs. 23 - We see God's purposeful and ironic sovereignty in his use of David's lyre playing to calm Saul from the harmful spirit God sent, which sets the stage for the immediate and far narrative.
- **Vs. 23** - 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. Saul could be truly restored only through repentance, but in the meantime, David helped bring a measure of calm to the king and to those who needed to interact with him. God sent a spirit to torment Saul so that the one God chose could, in the situation God put him in, calm the spirit God sent. Seeing firsthand the effects of Saul's hardened heart toward the Lord must have made an impression on David. Perhaps it was the warning received in these early days that made David so willing in later years to humble himself before the Lord and repent of his sins. David was a servant of God's restraining grace in Saul's life. Because of David's presence, Saul's mind was not immediately and wholly disabled, and Israel's affairs were not completely thrown into confusion."
- VI. This purposeful sovereignty is extremely relevant for us to recognize and rest in.
- A. As we continue to notice, it is essential in the story, setting the scene for all that will transpire between David and Saul from this point forward, leading to David, finally, after many years, becoming king when Saul dies.
- B. It particularly emphasizes God's enabling as he is sovereignly working.
- "The LORD is with him" in verse 18 is the definitive statement describing David. It is because of David's God-given faith that he serves as such a good role model for Christians. He enables us by his Spirit.
- C. It takes us to Christ.
- Situation: Bad king. Better king of God's choosing there. And his time is coming. Ac. 4:27-28. Ga. 4:4-6.
 - More significantly than David's example, he typifies for us the character and ministry of Jesus. Jesus, too, was able to live his perfect life, teach, and perform miracles because the Lord was with him. Lk. 4:18 - "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor."
 - God was with David because he had determined to provide a king for himself. Likewise, God was with Jesus, since the Father was providing his Son to be the Savior of the world. Jesus is greater than David, for he indeed did come to be King, in God's purposeful sovereignty, becoming flesh and serving. David came into a court. Jesus left heaven, and faithfully and patiently lived righteously and served, to bring sinners into the kingdom by his life, death, and resurrection. David's playing was able to soothe Saul in his misery for a while. Jesus came to deliver us from our sinful misery (Mt. 1:21). It is only by believing on David's greater Son that we can have what truly torments us taken care of.
 - In Jesus we receive the true healing that our souls require: to be forgiven of our sins, to be renewed by the Holy Spirit, to be embraced by God as dearly beloved children, and to receive from God the free gift of new and eternal life. Not only does Jesus, like David, possess God's Spirit, but he gives God's Spirit in abundance to those who receive him in faith.
- D. God does this for us.
- As David entered into Saul's service, he may not have understood how or why this was happening. But he could be sure that God had a reason, since his gracious purposes always guide the events of his people's lives. This is part of the larger story taking us to Jesus, but also continues into our stories to give us hope, for the ways that God is so clearly purposeful in his sovereignty are where we can place our confidence also. Ep. 1:11 - In him we have obtained an inheritance...