

Cardiac Arrest

1 Samuel 16

By [Dr. Derek Thomas](#)

Turn with me if you would to 1 Samuel chapter 16. 1 Samuel chapter 16. We come tonight to a point of transition in the book of 1 Samuel. We move largely away from the narrative of Saul. We'll hear some more about Saul again to be sure, but it is here in chapter 16 that we are introduced to David, to King David. And of course the lines of King David to the Lord Jesus are easier to draw than the lines from Saul to the Lord Jesus. Jesus is great David's greater son and over the next few weeks and months we're going to look together at a biography of this extraordinary figure in the Old Testament.

Alec Motyer, who is one of my favorite Old Testament theologians living, an Englishman, he says about David that David is “one of the most complex characters in Scripture and the most colorful and lovable and exasperating. He excites such devotion and just as easily we feel disenchanted. But whatever his qualities as a person, as a king, he proved a failure. He failed to govern his kingdom and was unable to govern his family because, because he did not govern himself.

The historian — and that's you and me — the historian asks David the same question he'll ask his descendants for four hundred years — ‘Is he the king whom we need?’ — and the answer is ‘No. No he is not.’ Only, he's better than Saul, but only Jesus will do.” Let's bear that in mind as we begin now this road trip over the next few months in the life of King David.

Before we read this chapter together, let's look to God in prayer.

Father, we are humbled as we gather together tonight that You've given to us such a treasure in a Bible. The Bible that contains all that we need to know to make us wise unto salvation. We thank You tonight for this particular book and these particular narratives because they speak to us, because we see in them so much of a reflection of ourselves. We thank You for the way that they prepare for the coming of the Lord Jesus. Jesse, Ruth and Boaz's grandson, David, their great grandson, and all the way down through that holy lineage to One born in Bethlehem in a stable, the Incarnate Son made flesh and dwelling among His people. Father, tonight as we read Your Word we ask for the blessing of Your Spirit. Come, help us to see that wisdom which the world cannot see or perceive. Grant, Holy Spirit, as spiritual beings ourselves because we're indwelt by You the

Holy Spirit, help us to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest and all for Jesus' sake. Amen.

This is God's Word:

The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons." And Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me." And the Lord said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.' And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do. And you shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you." Samuel did what the Lord commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, "Do you come peaceably?" And he said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice." And he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him." But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." And Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." And Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen these." Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here." And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." And he sent and brought him in. (Verse 13) 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. 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." 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. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor in my sight." 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.

Amen. May the Lord add His blessing to that reading of His holy Word.

As I was saying, this is a transition to the life of David, and what we find in this chapter is an example of God's extraordinary providence. "God moves in mysterious ways His wonders to perform; plants His footsteps on the sea and rides upon the storm." What you see in this chapter are several demonstrations of God's sovereignty in choosing David, in sending this harmful spirit upon Saul — these are acts of God, acts of His sovereignty. These are His doing. What you see in this chapter is a demonstration of a provision of God. God is setting the stage. He's ordering history in order that one day, in the same town, the same city as David, Bethlehem, there would be born great David's greater son. There are two things I want us to focus on tonight — God's choice of David, that's largely the first thirteen verses of the chapter — God's choice of David. And secondly — God's rejection of Saul, largely the second half of the chapter.

I. God chooses David.

Let's look at the first part, God's choice of David. It begins with Samuel and he's grieving, grieving over Saul. Samuel had anointed him; Samuel had loved him; Samuel had been his counselor. He truly grieved at what had happened to Saul and perhaps more than that. And the text may well be indicating that Samuel isn't just grieving about Saul but grieving about God's rejection of Saul.

I remember a book that came into my hands; oh, it must be twenty years ago. It was a little booklet — twenty, twenty five, thirty pages or so — *Christians Grieve Too*, is what it's called. It was published by Banner of Truth. It was one of the most helpful things I read that Christians grieve and they can grieve without sin, but they can grieve with sin too. There comes a point in which grief turns to something else. It turns to anger, it turns into bitterness. The sorrow becomes over sorrow and there's more than a hint here that God is gently rebuking Samuel — "What are you doing grieving?"

He is to go. He is to go to Bethlehem, ten miles away from Saul's home base in

Gibeah. Bethlehem is not on Samuel's prophetic circuit. Samuel is a relatively old man at this stage. He would have gone round from city to city as a prophet, encouraging perhaps schools of prophets, which is where he'll end up his days, teaching other prophets. But Bethlehem wasn't particularly on that circuit, so when Samuel comes they are alarmed. Now before he comes, Samuel himself is alarmed, questions God's command. "If I go," he says, "Saul will kill me." Already you see some evidence of some of the dysfunctionality that's beginning to operate in Saul's mind - we'll have more to say about that in a minute. When he comes into Bethlehem the elders of the city are alarmed — "Do you come in peace?" they say. Because the entrance of Samuel into the city could mean something else, that he was coming in judgment. And he's come as the Lord has directed him to come to offer a sacrifice. That's the pretense at least. It was genuine, but there was more to Samuel's visit than that, but more could not be said otherwise Saul might hear of it. He's come to anoint one of Jesse's sons as God's choice, not as the people's choice but as God's choice of a king.

And so Jesse and his seven sons have gathered together for the sacrificial meal. They're invited to this sacrifice. This heifer that Samuel has brought has to be killed and prepared and cooked. And perhaps while all of that was being done Samuel goes to Jesse's house and there he sees Eliab — six foot two, two hundred twenty five pounds, a cool guy, one of the beautiful people. "Surely," Samuel says. Isn't it interesting? With all of the wisdom that Samuel possesses, Samuel says, "Surely this is God's choice."

I was listening to a report on the radio in the car sometime this week of an internet site called "Beautiful People." They had just evicted from their membership five thousand people because these five thousand people over Christmas had got chubby. (laughter) And they were removed from this internet site. I listened on. I was fascinated. They interviewed the president of this internet site called "Beautiful People," an Englishman — vanity incarnate. It was breathtaking the vanity and the self justification for it.

And here is Eliab. He looked the part. And God rebukes Samuel. "Samuel," verse 7, "you are judging by outward appearance and God judges according to what He can see in the heart. Man looks at the outward appearance but God looks at the heart."

Paul, those of you in my Sunday school class I told you there would be a quiz, Paul in 2 Corinthians 5, you remember, he confesses he did that too. He says, "I once judged Jesus according to the flesh, but I judge Him according to the flesh no more." As a Pharisee he had viewed Jesus as a fool who deserved no respect. He judged Him by outward appearance.

What is it my friends that really matters? How do you judge what really matters? How do you judge value? How do you judge character? Young people, how do you pick a wife or a husband? If you pick a looker, and you know what I mean, if

you simply pick a looker and that's all that they are, ten years from now they're not going to be lookers. I'm sorry, I speak for myself. (laughter)

Now this isn't the Bible saying it has no place for beauty. It describes David as handsome. That's not the point. But if that's all that you do, if that's all that you seek for - What does Peter say in 1 Peter chapter 3 to women?

“Let not your adornment be the braiding of hair and the wearing of gold and the wearing of certain kinds of clothing, but let it be the hidden person of the heart, the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit which is precious in God's sight.”

You see a man called Tiger Woods who's at the top of his game, undoubtedly without a shadow of a doubt, all of you golfers out there, without a shadow of a doubt he's at the top of his game. The first billionaire in golf with a model wife and two beautiful children and everything going for him and yet he's living a double life - on the outside, and then there's something on the inside.

What constitutes beauty? What constitutes worth? What constitutes character?

When you're choosing an intern, when the youth department is choosing an intern, when you're choosing someone to work in the youth department, when you're choosing a future soul mate — how do you measure beauty? How do you measure worth? How do you measure value? Girls, you ask yourself these questions — Does he open the car door for you? If he doesn't, that's strike one. Is he generous? Does he always speak well of you? Does he have a work ethic? Does he love Jesus more than you?

You can't judge a book by its cover, they say. I have a dear friend who wrote a book last year. It's a great book with the worst cover I've ever seen. It was a terrible cover but it was a great book. We are obsessed with the external. The American Association of Plastic Surgeons have just issued their statistics for last year. Twelve million surgeries in the United States - I'm simply declaring a fact of our obsession with the external.

Here's how you choose a leader according to one person named Jeffrey Fox — “Does he dress for a dance? The concept doesn't have to be perfect, but the execution does. Say things that make people feel good.” Man looks at the outside. Man looks at the external, but God looks at the heart.

David wasn't there. David wasn't even at this meal that hasn't even begun yet. As these seven sons come trooping by Samuel, the Lord rejects all of them and calls for this other little lad. Now was he seventeen according to one commentator, ten according to one, twenty-five according to another — he was young with red hair and red cheeks and beautiful eyes and handsome. But he was a sheep farmer, that's all he was. You couldn't write this stuff. You couldn't make this stuff up.

This young boy comes running in, stinking of sheep. You've not been around sheep — they can smell. And this is the one that God is choosing, the most unlikely, the one who according to the standards of the world — and it takes your breath away — even according to Samuel's standards, wasn't even worth thinking about. He wasn't even in the reckoning. And God says, "This one. This is the one. This is the king that I choose. This is the one who will write the Twenty-third Psalm that you and I sing with such emotion at a funeral service. — 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.'" God had prepared him as a young boy to work among sheep, stubborn recalcitrant sheep, who had a heart for animals, so that he could be a king whose heart was that of a shepherd. He didn't go to the right school, he didn't go to the right college, he didn't have all of the credentials that we think as so important. He had none of them. He was a nobody. Even his family didn't have much regard for him. Even his father scoffs and says, "But he's out with the sheep, which is where he belongs." From obscurity God raises him up and says, "I'm going to make you king." God moves in mysterious ways. He calls the things that are nothing and naught and sets them on a pedestal. Do you know in many ways that's true of every single one of us as sinners? He sets us on a pedestal and says, "You're a child of a King and you have royal blood coursing through your veins."

II. God rejects Saul.

But then in the second place there's the rejection of Saul. And we read in verse 14 that "the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul and a harmful spirit from the Lord tormented him." Now if you have the ESV the first edition, it's not enough to ask which version do I read, you have to ask which edition of that version am I reading because the first edition of the ESV had "an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him." Some of you may have that. And it's been softened a little in later editions. And the one I have before me, which I think is the same as the pew edition, it says "a harmful spirit." I'm not sure that softens it a great deal to be honest because it is still coming from God and that's the problem. Because the question that you and I must now ask ourselves is — Is it right that this harmful spirit comes and torments the mind and psyche of Saul, and that this is from God? God does this.

Saul experiences a kind of personality disorder. You see elements of paranoia. You see elements of mistrust. You see elements of anxiety. Samuel was afraid of him even at this stage, that Saul would kill him if he were to hear that he had anointed David as king. This increasingly pathological disorder that Saul has in this instance, in this instance, has a spiritual dimension to it. There was a harmful spirit sent by God.

It's no more problematic than the first chapter of Job. There came a day when Satan presents himself in the presence of God and God says to him, "Have you considered My servant, Job?" With friends like that, you say — I mean, Satan

perhaps hadn't even thought about Job until God brought him to Satan's attention.

Does God do that? You say, "I thought God was good?" Yes, He is good, but He's also just. He is good but He's also just. He hands Saul over to evil. Isn't that what Paul says in the first chapter of Romans, that He hands sinners over to a reprobate mind? He gives them over to a reprobate mind.

My friends, there's a solemn lesson here, that disobedience has dire consequences. God may hand you over. For my part, I don't think Saul was ever converted. When the spirit departs from him, it's not the Spirit of regeneration, it's the gifting spirit, it's the enabling spirit — the spirit that now rushes upon David.

It's fascinating to me how music plays a part in quelling that harmful spirit. Extraordinary in the providence of God that it's this David who can play the lyre — a small kind of harp that you would carry around — play it so skillfully that he can be brought into the king's palace to play this soothing music. For me it would be Bach's *Goldberg Variations* and maybe something else. Black Eyed Peas or something for you, but for me, it's Bach — has that effect every single time; calms the spirit from the discord and mayhem of the world. It's extraordinary, it's breathtaking that the future king is playing the harp in the current king's presence and Saul has no idea.

But I want to go back to verse 7 — "Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart." What does God see in your heart tonight? As God looks beyond the external, beyond the nips and tucks to what's right at the very heart of your being, the real you, the you that you hide from the world, what does God see? Does He see a heart that finds its satisfaction in Jesus as we were thinking this morning? It took my breath away this morning at the close of the service as we were singing *The Power of the Cross*. I just caught a glimpse of a half a dozen people wiping a tear away from their eyes. It was a poignant moment how deeply, deeply felt the power of Jesus was in the hearts of these people.

What does He find in your heart tonight because that's what really matters? This body is decaying. This body is going to die. This body is going to be laying in a grave unless Jesus comes again. It's what's in the heart that really, really matters.

What is it that constitutes spiritual attractiveness, not physical attractiveness, but what constitutes spiritual attractiveness? And the answer to that question every single time, every single time, the answer to that question is going to be — Jesus likeness - that which is attractive is that which is like Jesus, who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, and He makes Himself of no reputation. That's spiritual attractiveness - self-denial, thinking others better than ourselves. My friends, as God looks into your heart tonight, what does He see? A heart that says again and again and again, "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply

to Thy cross I cling.” That's beauty. That's a beautiful thing in the sight of God — the helplessness of the sinner that says, “Save me or I die. You are my everything, my all in all.” Man looks on the outside, on that which can be seen, and God looks into the heart.

Father we thank You for Your Word. We pray now tonight that in our hearts there might lie something of the beauty of Jesus because our hearts have been transformed, our hearts have been made new, our hearts have been indwelt by Your Spirit, our hearts are in union with the heart of Jesus. Father watch over us, bless us on this Lord's Day Evening, and help us to see that principle that this world is passing away and that we might live our lives with an eye to that world which is to come, knowing that already we are a new creation in Christ and that we are those upon whom the end of the ages has already dawned. Now bless us we pray and hear us, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Please stand. Receive the Lord's benediction. Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

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