

“The Christian in a Godless World”  
1 Samuel 16:12-23  
(Preached at Trinity, June 25, 2017)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we've seen, **Chapter 16** serves as an introduction to David and the decline of Saul. In **Chapter 15** we saw the sad fall of King Saul. Because of his disobedience to the command of God he has forfeited his right to rule and his reign was about to come to a crashing end.  
**1 Samuel 15:23 NAU** - "Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from *being* king."
2. In reality, we've been observing the decline of Saul almost from the beginning of his reign. His heart is the heart of all of fallen humanity. It is a heart void of spiritual life. In our fallen condition we despise God's reign over us and insist on going our own way. Only by God's grace is a man's heart turned to follow after God. Such is the testimony of David's life.  
**1 Samuel 13:13-14 NAU** - "Samuel said to Saul, "You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. <sup>14</sup> "But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."
3. **Verses 13-14** give us the great contrast between David and Saul.  
**1 Samuel 16:13-14 NAU** - "Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel arose and went to Ramah. <sup>14</sup> Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him."
4. As I've pointed out in the past, preaching through the Old Testament narratives demands caution as well as insight. They present particular challenges to the preacher.
  - A. On one hand, we are bound by the principles of hermeneutics. What is the meaning of the text – what was the intent of the original author? We have to remember the cultural background and consider the text grammatically. We want to discover the literal meaning of the text. But this doesn't deny that the author may communicate some important spiritual truths that we can profit from. Bryan Chapell notes in his book on preaching: "Discovering the 'literal meaning' does not mean that we disregard the figurative, poetic, colloquial, metaphorical, or spiritual ways in which the Biblical writers sometimes communicate."<sup>1</sup>
  - B. We also know that each book of the Bible will be faithful to the consistent Biblical theology and that each book rests in the context of God's covenantal redemptive purpose that finds its fulfillment in Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> Chapell, Bryan, *Christ Centered Preaching*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), Page 76.

- C. This means the Gospel runs throughout the Bible from beginning to end. Running throughout the Bible is a consistent display of the fallen condition of humanity and God's redemptive purpose in Christ.  
We can see this demonstrated clearly in the second half of **Chapter 16**.
5. Tonight, I want us to see the contrast between David and Saul as a demonstration of God's people living in a fallen world.
- On one hand, we find Saul, a man swallowed up in sin who would despise David and all that David represents. He is so typical of the way this world looks upon Christianity. Christians are despised by those who despise Christ.  
**Ephesians 4:18 NAU** - "being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;"
  - On the other hand, Saul's life is greatly blessed by the presence of David. He is sustained by David's service. David's music is a soothing balm of grace. David typifies those who stand as the salt of the earth and as the light of the world. Dale Ralph Davis gives good insight on this: "As Saul will hate David, and as he is rejected by God yet sustained by David's service, so the world hates Christ's people yet, in its doomed state, is only benefited by them. They are the ones who are the salt of the earth, that is, who keep society and culture from rotting into complete decay, who keep the world from being worse than it is. They are a divinely-granted restraint upon the earth's putrefaction; they keep the world from drowning in its own vomit, which, strangely enough, it craves."<sup>2</sup>
- I. First, let's look again at Saul
- A. He had no regard for God
1. When we were introduced to Saul in **Chapter 9** there was no indication he knew Samuel, Israel's prophet—and he also seemed unacquainted with God.
  2. He had no respect for God's Word and no heart to obey God  
**1 Samuel 13:13 NAU** - "You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you"  
**1 Samuel 15:10-11 NAU** - "Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, <sup>11</sup> "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands."
- B. He was estranged from both God and the people of God.  
**1 Samuel 18:12 NAU** - "Now Saul was afraid of David, for the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul."  
**1 Samuel 18:28-29 NAU** - "When Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and *that* Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him, <sup>29</sup> then Saul was even more afraid of David. Thus Saul was David's enemy continually.

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<sup>2</sup> Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart*, Focus on the Bible Commentary, (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 176.

1. David was a man upon whom the Holy Spirit had come mightily. For Saul, David represented all that he could never understand. Saul never confessed his sin and never saw God's righteousness in judgment. All he could see was the unique blessing of God upon David—and he despised it.
2. Samuel understood this well.  
**1 Samuel 16:1-2 NAU** - "I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons." <sup>2</sup> But Samuel said, "How can I go? When Saul hears *of it*, he will kill me."
3. Persecution was inevitable. Saul's hatred and animosity towards David would surely grow.  
**1 Samuel 19:1 NAU** - "Now Saul told Jonathan his son and all his servants to put David to death."  
**1 Samuel 18:11 NAU** - "Saul hurled the spear for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall."  
**1 Samuel 19:9-11 NAU** - "Now there was an evil spirit from the LORD on Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand, and David was playing *the harp* with *his* hand. <sup>10</sup> Saul tried to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, so that he stuck the spear into the wall. And David fled and escaped that night. <sup>11</sup> Then Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him, in order to put him to death in the morning."
3. Although David's music soothed his troubled mind it could not solve Saul's ultimate problem—his alienation from God. So while Saul appreciated David's music, he despised God's anointing upon him.

## II. God's people are in a strange multi-faceted role upon the earth

- A. On one hand there is a separation from the people of this world
  1. There is a powerful distinction
    - a. David was mightily filled with the Holy Spirit
    - b. Saul was abandoned by God. He was completely void of spiritual life. His world was controlled by carnal reason.
  2. David was a man after God's own heart. God's law was his delight.  
**Psalms 40:8 KJV** - "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law *is* within my heart."
  3. Saul cared for neither God nor His Word. Of Saul God said,  
**1 Samuel 15:11 NAU** - "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands."
- B. On the other hand, although David was distinct from Saul, he gave himself in service to Saul
  1. David was of a different heart from Saul, but Saul *was* the king and David labored for the good of the king
  2. We are not of this world, and yet we have a positive effect upon this world
    - a. Jesus referred to us a salt. Salt is used as both a seasoning and a preservative. Our righteous lives must have a preserving effect upon the continual decay of this world.

- b. Christianity has the effect of restraining lawlessness by applying God's Word to every facet of life.
  - c. The world should know nothing but good because of us.  
**1 Peter 2:11-12 NAU** - "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. <sup>12</sup> Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe *them*, glorify God in the day of visitation."
3. Although we are not primarily of this world we want to serve faithfully in this world. This world and our condition in this world are not primary. God is primary - God is first, heaven is first. But we want to labor for the good of this world.
  4. We can see this with Daniel. He served faithfully for the good of the Babylonian authorities, but his greatest interest was upon serving Yahweh. We never find him wailing against the Babylonian government. He lived and served faithfully in a pagan world, while maintaining his absolute allegiance to God.
  5. We can also see this with David. He served Saul faithfully, even though Saul was void of the presence of God.
    - a. David was a source of comfort to Saul's troubled soul.  
**1 Samuel 16:23 NAU** - "So it came about whenever the *evil* spirit from God came to Saul, David would take the harp and play *it* with his hand; and Saul would be refreshed and be well, and the evil spirit would depart from him."
    - b. David served Saul faithfully – the text tells us David became Saul's armor bearer.  
**1 Samuel 16:21 NAU** - "Then David came to Saul and attended him; and Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor bearer."
  6. We should note that from the moment David was filled with the Holy Spirit trouble characterized his life. It is difficult living a Spirit filled life in a world that doesn't know God.  
**1 Samuel 16:13 NAU** - "the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. "
- C. As Christians dwell in this world they are a wonderful blessing upon this world
1. It is interesting, the text says Saul loved David greatly. He loved David for the service he performed. The service of David greatly pleased Saul.  
**1 Samuel 16:21 NAU** - "Then David came to Saul and attended him; and Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor bearer." But David was different and Saul hated him because of this.
  2. The people of this world love us for the service we perform. Christians have built hospitals and orphanages. They do wonderful works of benevolence. They are excellent workers, kind neighbors, faithful citizens. Such people are likable. They're the kind of people you want for your neighbors. They're the kind of people you want to hire – as long as they keep their religion a private thing.

- a. But they hate us because of what we represent  
**John 15:20 NAU** - "A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you"
  - b. As soon as we bring our Christian worldview into practice they will hate us. Amazingly, they turn things upside-down and accuse us of hate.
3. Because we reflect Christ we will often find ourselves on a collision course with the mindset of this world. The Holy Spirit has come mightily upon us. This has changed everything!  
**Matthew 10:34-36 NAS** - "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup> "For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; <sup>36</sup> and a man's enemies will be the members of his household."
- a. Because of this there will be many times that our service becomes difficult and even dangerous
  - b. It may come from hostile family members or religious people who hate the truth. Throughout the world there are Christians who are dying for nothing more than their living faith in Christ. We must understand that our life of relative ease is not the norm for Christianity. The norm has always been severe hardship for the Christian.
4. This will be the relationship between Saul and David for the rest of Saul's life. He will hate and despise David even though David never does anything to deserve it. In fact, David will be a wonderful blessing in the life and reign of Saul.  
**1 Samuel 20:1 NAU** - "What have I done? What is my iniquity? And what is my sin before your father, that he is seeking my life?"

#### Conclusion:

- 1. Is your presence in the world considered a positive thing?
- 2. Can people see the reality of God in your life? Does your life reflect more of Saul or David?
  - a. Is your integrity above question? Is your word above reproach?  
**James 5:12** – "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and *your* nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation."
  - b. Are your actions honorable?
  - c. Is your life characterized by service to others?  
Are you a blessing to others?