

Please open your Bible at 1 Samuel 16. We're looking at the early years of the life of David. David was a man after God's own heart, and we are asking the question, "How did that happen?" How was a godly heart shaped in David? And how can a godly heart be shaped in us?

We looked last week at the story of how David was anointed to serve as the king. God called David to rule and to reign, and God prepared Him for that work He called him to do. What happened after David was anointed? The answer is that he was tested. God's purpose was that David would push back the frontiers of evil, and God prepared him for that work by exposing him to evil early in his life.

Anointing is followed by testing. That's the pattern in the story of David and you see the same pattern in the life and ministry of Jesus. Jesus was anointed at His baptism. The Spirit of God descended on Him as a dove and a voice from heaven said,

*"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased (Matthew 3:17).*

What happened next?

*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1).*

Matthew tells us that "*the tempter came*" to Him (Matthew 4:3). Anointing is followed by testing.

We're going to see today that God shapes us by trials we must endure, and through enemies we must overcome. In Saul, David faced a trial he had to endure. In Goliath David faced an enemy he had to overcome.

### **1. A trial to endure**

We ended last week in 1 Samuel 16:13, where we read that

*The Spirit on the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward, (1 Samuel 16:13).*

We begin today at verse 14, where we read that

*The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the LORD tormented him (1 Samuel 16:14).*

*A harmful spirit*

The Bible speaks very clearly about fallen angels; evil spirits who will be cast into the lake of fire at the last judgment. The story here is that Saul had turned away from God. The Spirit of God had departed from him, and this man, who has rebelled against God, found himself in the company of spirits who shared his rebellion.

Matthew Henry says wisely,

*"They that drive the good Spirit away from them... become prey to the evil spirit. If God and His grace do not rule us, sin and Satan will have possession of us."*

Matthew Henry

People may tell you that if you throw off the claims of Christ on your life, you will be free. But that's not what will happen. What we see here is that if God does not rule you, sin and ultimately Satan will. Notice that the harmful spirit was *from the LORD*. What happened to Saul was not a random event. It was a direct consequence of his turning away from God.

God gives us what we choose. And when Saul chose rebellion against God, he found himself in the company of spirits who shared his rebellion. And he was *tormented* (vv. 14, 15) *a harmful spirit from the LORD tormented him* (v. 14). Saul experienced a taste of the hell to which he was headed. Saul became moody, irritable, vindictive. He was a source of misery to himself, and he caused great anxiety to the people around him. His servants saw the decline in their king, and they said to him,

*'Behold now, a harmful spirit from God is tormenting you'* (1 Samuel 16:15).

The servants suggested a therapy:

*"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"* (1 Sam 16:16).

One of the servants knew that David was a skilled musician. He said,

*"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"* (1 Samuel 16:18).

That's a great commendation: David was courageous. He was wise in his speech. He had a "good presence," and the LORD was with him. So Saul sent for David, and in the amazing providence of God David was invited into the royal court without him even knocking on the door!

How could a young shepherd know how to rule a nation? God brought David into the royal court. God allowed him to see what was going wrong so that he would know how to put it right. David suffered greatly under Saul. But when David became king, the dysfunction he had seen in Saul lit a fire in him to pursue something better.

God always had a redemptive purpose in view. If God puts you in place of dysfunction, He may be preparing you to choose a better path when your time comes. David came to Saul, and we read that,

*David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him* (1 Samuel 16:23).

Music is a wonderful gift: It has power to calm and to soothe. It has power to awaken and inspire. Here is an encouragement to all who serve in the ministry of music. David practiced on the harp, and God used the skill he developed to soothe a troubled soul. But I want you to notice something really important in this verse:

***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*** (1 Samuel 16:23).

***Whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul...***

This kept happening. The music only brought a temporary relief. If you read on into chapter 18, you will see that Saul's affliction became worse over time. His antagonism towards the LORD spilled out onto David. David became the focus for Saul's hatred, and the root cause of Saul's hatred towards David was Saul's rebellion against God. Saul's counselors deserve credit for diagnosing his problem correctly.

*'Behold now, a harmful spirit from the Lord is tormenting you,'* (1 Samuel 16:15).

They knew that the root cause of Saul's torment was spiritual. It was a direct result of his own rebellion against God. But here is the extraordinary thing: Having correctly diagnosed the problem, they prescribed a therapy that could only suppress the symptoms.

To quote Matthew Henry, again:

“How much better friends had they been to him if they had advised him, since the evil spirit was from the LORD, to give all diligence to make his peace with God by true repentance, to send for Samuel to pray with him and to intercede with God for him!”

Matthew Henry

They see that the king is in torment. They know that the root cause is his rebellion against God. Why did someone not say to him, “You need to get right with God! You need to humble yourself and ask God to have mercy on you. You need the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in your life.”

There's someone listening to this today... You learned about God in your early years; you grew up surrounded by faith. But like Saul you have turned away from the Lord, and now you have become troubled. You don't have the power or the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life. You haven't been walking in the light, so darkness has overtaken you, and now you are in the grip of powers that torment you. So you find a way to deal with the symptoms. You try to soothe your troubled heart with drink or drugs. You try to dull the pain with music, or sports, or work, or leisure. These things may give you some temporary relief, but when that wears off, your heart becomes more troubled than before.

You need more than therapy that will suppress the symptoms:

- You need to be reconciled to God.
- You need God to save you.
- You need the Holy Spirit to fill you.

The tragedy in this story is that Saul could have found peace with God. He could have turned from his stubborn rebellion. But he remained a tormented man for the rest of his life, and he is a man in torment still today. Don't let that be your story. The Savior stands before you today with arms of love stretched out toward you. Turn to Him in repentance. Submit yourself to His lordship over your life. Ask Him to deliver you from the darkness that has overtaken you, and to bring you into His marvelous light.

Someone will be saying, “The person you have described is my son, my daughter, my friend. They have walked away from God. Now they are deeply troubled, and seeing them in torment brings an agony of soul to me. That's how it was for David. David loved Saul and served him, but Saul chose to walk in darkness, and the darkness in Saul was a trial that David endured for

years.

Anointing is followed by testing. Saul was a trial for David to endure. But Saul was not the only test for David.

## 2. An enemy to overcome

*And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines (1 Samuel 17:2).*

In 1 Samuel 17, we have the story of Goliath, a giant of a man, who defied the living God. God's people were camped on one side of the valley of Elah. Goliath and his army were camped on the other side of the valley. Every day, God's people would line up in formation and let out their battle cry. Then Goliath would call on God's people to choose a man who would fight him.

Nobody moved. And when Goliath moved toward them, the armies of Israel ran back to their tents in panic! The Philistines on the other side of the valley must have been falling over each other laughing. And this went on for 40 days (1 Samuel 17:16).

Saul was the king of Israel, and the Bible says that he was taller than any of his people (1 Samuel 9:2). He was equipped with his own armor. He had led Israel to some great victories. So if anyone was to go out and face Goliath, it should have been Saul. But Saul had turned away from God, and the Spirit of God had departed from him. He could line up the army in the morning, but when Goliath appeared they all scattered. Under Saul, God's people were organized, but powerless. There was no sign of the presence of God among them, and their enemies knew it!

When David arrived at the Valley of Elah, he saw what was happening. He heard Goliath's taunt, and he said to the people around him,

*Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Samuel 17:26).*

David saw that the glory of God was at stake. That's why he couldn't live with defeat. David's love for the LORD moved him to face up to Goliath.

**The LORD** is central to everything David says and does in this story. When Saul tells him he doesn't have a chance against Goliath, David says,

*"The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:37).*

And when David confronts Goliath, he says,

*"You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts..."*

*"This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand... that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel and that this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand."*

(1 Samuel 17:45-47)

The world must know that there is a God who saves. And how can the world know that there is a God who saves if His people are powerless? That's the point of the story. David believed that God would save His people. He put a stone in his sling. The stone hit the head of the giant, and that was the end of Goliath. What happened in the valley of Elah could only be explained by the presence and power of God. Everyone knew that that there is a God who saves. The LORD had delivered Goliath into David's hands (1 Samuel 17:46).

When David felled Goliath,

*And the men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron, (1 Samuel 17:52).*

No more living in defeat! No more shame and retreat! When God's people saw that their anointed king had triumphed, they rose up with new strength and courage.

Here is the question at the heart of this story: 'How can the world know that there is a God who saves if His people are living in defeat?' Someone had to face the enemy, and that is what Jesus has done for us. Jesus came and stood with us. He faced the enemy who mocked us and oppressed us. And He triumphed over our enemy.

*Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross (Colossians 2:15 NIV).*

The triumph of Jesus changes everything. Because He has triumphed, you are no longer a slave. You can rise up against the enemy who has prevailed over you. Maybe you are facing the challenge of a sin that has gained power over you? A sin that mocks you. A sin that seems too strong for you. You have talked about overcoming, but when the giant roars, you retreat. And you have been living in defeat. But your king has triumphed. And because your king has triumphed, you can rise up. You can face this enemy, and in His strength you will prevail. And when you do, others will see that there is a God who saves. God sustained David in his trial. God gave David victory over the enemy. God gave David success.

### **3. Success to savor**

God blessed David with great success. The blessing of God on David could hardly be clearer in this story. We read about David's success no less than four times in chapter 18.

We read in verse 5,

*And David went out and was **successful** wherever Saul sent him, (1 Samuel 18:5).*

Then we read in verse 15,

*And when Saul saw that he [David] had great **success**, he stood in fearful awe of him (1 Samuel 18:15).*

Then we read in verse 30,

*David had more **success** than all the servants of Saul, so that his name was highly esteemed (1 Samuel 18:30).*

You may be saying, that's what I want. That's what I need. Success in the trial I have to endure, and success in facing the enemy I have to overcome. Why was David successful? The answer is

in verse 14,

*And David had success in all his undertakings, for the LORD was with him*  
(1 Samuel 18:14).

*The LORD was with him...*

We are told that the LORD was with David no less than four times: Saul's servants said of David that he was,

*"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"* (1 Samuel 16:18).

Later we read that,

*Saul was afraid of David because the LORD was with him* (1 Samuel 18:12).

And again,

*But when Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him, Saul was even more afraid of David* (1 Samuel 18:28, 29).

David endured the trial, and he overcame the enemy because the LORD was with him. The LORD who triumphed over the enemy is with you. He will sustain you in the trial you endure. He will give you strength to overcome the enemy.

### **Conclusion**

There are three men in this story: Goliath, Saul and David. but the LORD in the central figure.

Goliath defies the LORD, and he is defeated because the LORD is against him.

Saul turns from the LORD, and he is tormented because the LORD has left him.

David submits to the LORD, and he is successful, because the LORD is with him.

In the last moments, I want you to think about the enemy you have to overcome and the trial you have to endure. I want you to hear this word and take it in:

- The LORD is with you.
- The LORD is with **you**.
- **The LORD** is with you.

And because He is with you, you will endure. Because He is with you, you will overcome.

© Colin S. Smith

Permissions: You have permission and are encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format you choose, as long as you do not alter or change the wording in any way and do not charge a fee (beyond the cost of reproducing these materials). For posting on the web, a link to this document on our website ([www.OpentheBible.org](http://www.OpentheBible.org)) is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Open the Bible, 1-877-673-6365.

Please include this statement on every copy distributed:

By Colin S. Smith. © Colin S. Smith. Website: [OpentheBible.org](http://OpentheBible.org)

