

Assignment With the Harp

1Sam 16:13-23

Introduction:

1. After David was anointed by Samuel to be the next king a number of years passed (some say 15 yrs) before David actually became king
2. Those years were not wasted or idle years
3. Many events happened that helped train David and prepare him for the throne
4. In this lesson we look at the first event that occurred in the period between David's anointing and ascension to the throne of Israel
5. David was assigned to the court of King Saul to play his harp and soothe the troubled mind and emotions of Saul
6. During this time David also became a servant of Saul and was made Saul's armor-bearer

I. THE CURSE ON SAUL - VS 13-14

13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah. **14** But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.

- We begin to see the rising of David and the decline of Saul
- David was blessed by God and Saul was cursed by God
- We see this in vs 13 “the Spirit of the Lord came upon David” and in vs 14 “but the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul”

A. *The Character of the Curse*

- The curse on Saul affected Saul in a pronounced way
1. Seen in the Meaning of the Word “Troubled”
 - a) *“Troubled” here is the Hebrew word that means “to be greatly terrified and perplexed in mind by sudden fear” (Wilson)*

- b) *Gesenius describes it as that which would come upon Saul suddenly and unexpectedly*
 - c) *Keil says that the horror of the curse was “not merely an inward feeling of depression at the rejection announced to him which grew into melancholy and occasionally broke out in passing fits of insanity – but an evil power which took possession of him and not only deprived him of peace of mind but stirred up feelings, ideas, imaginations and thoughts of soul that drove him to madness.”*
 - d) *Being troubled by God was truly a great curse upon Saul*
2. **Seen in the Madness of Saul’s Ways**
 - a) *Later chapters record some examples of the mad behavior of Saul because of the curse upon him from the mad behavior of Saul*
 - b) *The most evident and well known demonstrations of this violent madness were Saul’s repeated assaults on David with a javelin*
 - c) *At least 3x Saul threw a javelin at David to kill David while David was playing his harp trying to soothe Saul*
 - d) *Had he lived in our day, Saul would have been locked up in an institution*

B. The Cause of the Curse

1. Scripture left no doubt as to what caused the curse on Saul
2. God caused it and He did it because Saul rejected God
3. When people reject God, God will reject them
4. If God and his grace rule us then Satan and sin will not be able to possess us
5. Remember that disobeying God can bring many problems sooner or later

The Curse on Saul.....

II. THE COUNSEL FOR SAUL – VS 15-17

- Saul’s behavior was so erratic that his servants provided some counsel

- It is easy to see why the servants would want to do something about Saul's behavior for they would be adversely affected by these attacks

A. Secularity of the Remedy

15 And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. **16** Let our lord now command thy servants, *which are* before thee, to seek out a man, *who is* a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.

1. This counsel sounded promising when the servants realized that the evil spirit was from God
2. But after that the counsel went down hill for it was purely secular and ignored the spiritual
3. This is typical of the world for they never see the solution to any problem as being spiritual and moral
4. Govt officials today are like these servants for they are always trying to treat moral and spiritual problems with secular remedies
 - a) *When they deal with crime they talk about tearing down the ghettos and building new housing, about recreation halls and midnight basketball and appropriating more taxpayer money*
 - b) *You never hear Washington talking about spiritual revival, confession of sin, turning back to God to solve any problems*
5. How much better it would have been for Saul's servants to recommend that since the evil spirit was from the Lord that Saul should make peace with God by true repentance and by asking Samuel to intercede for the king

B. Superficiality of the Remedy

1. Since it was a secular remedy, the harp remedy was also a superficial remedy
2. It did not go deep enough
3. It dealt with Saul's emotions but not with his heart
4. It treated the symptoms but not the cause
5. A harp cannot subdue the power of sin

C. Support for the Remedy

17 And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring *him* to me.

1. Saul quickly accepted this remedy recommended by his servants
2. This remedy appealed to Saul's senses – it pampered Saul's flesh
3. The remedy advanced by the servants of Saul was like telling a little boy that his toothache would go away if he ate lots of cookies
 - a) *Of course the little boy would like the remedy*
 - b) *Tell him the true remedy – he needs to go to the dentist to have the cavity filled or the tooth extracted and he will protest*
4. Telling Saul the true remedy – he needs to repent of his sin and cry to God for forgiveness - would not have gone over well with Saul
5. The cults seem to always do well and have many converts while the gospel is largely rejected by the world.
 - a) *Some of this success might be attributed to more zeal by the cults and less zeal among believers*
 - b) *But more of the success of cults is due to the message of the gospel*
 - c) *Give the world a message that appeals to the flesh and you will have many disciples but give them the message of the gospel from God's Word and you have fewer converts*

Mt 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: **14** Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

The Counsel for Saul.....

III. THE COMFORT FOR SAUL – VS 18-23

- David is brought on the scene to bring comfort to Saul
- David brought Saul comfort in more ways than just harp playing
- This comfort was not long lasting for Saul had more serious problems than could be remedied by David's presence

A. Preparation for Service – vs 17

17 And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring *him* to me.

- When King Saul told his servants to find a harp player one spoke up and recommended David
 - The servant spoke highly of David and cites some excellent characteristics of David
 - Jesse supplied David with the things that would be necessary
 - Preparation is the key to good service – poor preparation can lead to poor service
1. Skill of David – vs 18 – “cunning in playing”

18 Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, *that is* cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD *is* with him.

- a) *Since the king wanted someone to play the harp this would be a fitting characteristic to be mentioned first*
- b) *David had obviously practiced much to become such a good harpist*
- c) *He probably practiced during the hours he spent watching the sheep*
- d) *He used his leisure time well*
- e) *One’s opportunities may be affected by how one uses his free time*

2. Strength of David – vs 18b

18b ... a mighty valiant man...

- a) *“Valiant” is translated from a Hebrew word that means “strong”*
- b) *David was not only a man of music, but he was also a man of muscle*
- c) *This is an unusual combination so that David was no effeminate sissy who could play the harp well but had no manliness*
- d) *His muscles evidenced character for those were the muscles from hard work on the farm*
- e) *This strength prepared David for other duties which King Saul*

3. Soldiering of David – vs 18c

18c... and a man of war....

- a) *How could David be a man of war when he had not yet fought with any of the Israelite armies?*
- b) *Renegade bands of Philistines often attacked farms and stole crops and livestock etc.*
- c) *David had evidently been involved in fighting off the Philistines from time to time*
- d) *He, himself, mentioned that he had killed a lion and a bear when they attacked his sheep*
- e) *David was prepared to fight in the army of Saul if need be*
- f) *For this reason Saul would make David his armor bearer*

4. The Speech of David – 18d

18d ... and prudent in matters...

- a) *“Matters” is translated “word” or “words” 700+ times*
- b) *The KJV even puts “speech” in the margin here*
- c) *Discrete speech is a great attribute for someone in the king’s court*
- d) *David could control his tongue*
- e) *God’s people should be people who have controlled tongues*
- f) *Gossiping mouths, lying mouths and foul mouths are not godly mouths*

5. The Stature of David – vs 18e

18e... and a comely person...

- a) *David was given high marks for his physical appearance*
- b) *His stature and physique were exceptional*
- c) *Being a man of muscle “mighty valiant man” would help David’s physical appearance*

6. The Spirituality of David – 18f

18fand the LORD is with him.

- a) *The best characteristic that was mentioned by Saul's servant was the fact that the Lord was with him*
- b) *This statement concerned David's spirituality*
- c) *Saul probably was not very concerned about this quality of David*
- d) *David did not hide his faith and it was generally known that God was with him*

7. The Supplies of David

20 And Jesse took an ass *laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul.*

- a) *In those days when men came into the presence of men of high station (like a king) they came with gifts to show their respect and allegiance to the king*
- b) *Jesse prepared David with suitable gifts to take to King Saul*
- c) *Our heavenly Father prepares his children with gifts so that they can serve Jesus and His church – Rom 12:6-8; 1Cor 1:5-7; 1Pet 4:10*
- d) *Jesse preparing David for serving the king reminds us that parents are to see to it that their children are instructed in the way of God*
- e) *Parents often prepare their children for everything but serving God – the other things may not be bad but the most important thing is serving God*

B. The Placement in Service – vs 19

19 Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which *is with the sheep.*

1. Lowliness and obscurity did not hinder David's placement in the king's court
2. King Saul even knew that David would be with the sheep
3. This illustrates that God can place someone in a place of service even if they currently serve in an obscure location
 - a) *Keeping sheep out in the fields might seem to be a great handicap to advancement*
 - b) *But it was no handicap in David's case*

4. The key to advancement is preparation and we have seen that David was prepared
5. Those prepared for service will be those promoted in service
6. Too often men try to pull strings, connive with influential people to be placed in some coveted position
7. God opened the door to the palace without David even having to knock

C. The Providence of Service

1. For David to work in the palace when young would help him later on when he became king
2. He could learn about all the inner workings of the palace
3. Moses grew up in Pharaoh's palace for 40 yrs and was trained in all the knowledge of Egypt
 - a) *This was valuable later when Moses had to deal with Pharaoh to let the people go*
 - b) *How valuable this was later on when Moses had to lead 2 million people for 40 yrs.*
4. Sometimes God even has the enemy foot the bill for this preparation as He did in Moses' case

D. The Performance in Service

- David's performance in Saul's court was superb
- We see this in five ways

1. Attentiveness of David – vs 21

21 And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armourbearer.

- a) *“Stood before him” means that David waited upon Saul*
- b) *It is the phrase that shows the attentiveness of a servant who stood by ready to do his master's bidding*
- c) *We see this in the life of Joshua – Deut 1:38*

De 1:38 *But Joshua the son of Nun, which standeth before thee, he shall go in thither: encourage him: for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.*

d) *We see this in the tribe of Levi – Deut 10:8*

De 10:8 At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day.

e) *We see this in the life of Elijah – 1Ki 17:1*

1Ki 17:1 And Elijah the Tishbite, *who was* of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

2. Affection for David – vs 21b

21b... and he loved him greatly...

a) *David's good conduct in the presence of Saul attracted Saul to David*

b) *Saul wanted the fruits of righteousness but did not want the lifestyle of righteousness*

c) *Saul's affection for David did not last – it ceased when David's light far outshined Saul's light*

3. Advancement of David – vs 21c

21c ...and he became his armourbearer.

a) *This was a significant promotion for David*

b) *The king's armor-bearer would be a trusted servant of the king*

c) *The armor bearer had to carry the shield and sword of the king*

d) *This promotion emphasizes the truth that if we are faithful in little things then we will be promoted to bigger things*

e) *If you want advancement, then perform well where you are now*

4. Approval of David – vs 22

22 And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight.

a) *This note from King Saul to Jesse was like a report card sent home to parents*

b) *It said that David performed well and that he had found favor with*

Saul

c) *Parents are always pleased when their children excel and our heavenly Father is pleased when we live for him and perform well*

5. Alleviation by David – vs 23

23 And it came to pass, when the *evil* spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

a) *David's harp playing "refreshed" the king*

b) *The harp music did not solve King Saul's problem but it did provide temporary relief*

c) *David played for the king when he was in an ugly, violent and mad mood*

d) *When we serve the Lord we sometimes have to go places where there are problems*

e) *Look for the church that has no problems and you seek in vain*

E. The Period of Service

1. David's service in Saul's court did not continue uninterrupted
2. David eventually went back home to the sheep
3. It takes real humility to step down from an important job to one of lesser importance and David went back to the sheep without complaint
4. Periodic service means that we ready at all times