

I only went to kid's camp once. I was 10 or 11. On the one hand, I loved the chapel and playing games with kids from all over Illinois. On the other hand, I hated it so much I never went back. It was so hot the pea gravel and tar roads melted and stuck to my shoes and feet. Between my allergies and the heat, I could hardly breathe, and the only relief was the air-conditioning inside.



One day, during a lesson in which the camp speaker drew a picture using chalk, God called me into ministry. I said yes to the Lord. The altar time that day was not as emotional as the time in the dorm room that night when the counselor asked three questions:

- Did any of you ask Jesus into your heart for the first time today?
- Did any of you recommit your life to Jesus today?
- Was anyone called into ministry today?

After each question he prayed with each boy who raised his hand. I had no idea of the importance of saying 'yes' to God until that man prayed for me.

That next Sunday, in Sunday School, I answered a question posed to us by the teacher. He looked at me and didn't close his mouth, he was dumbstruck. He said, 'I've been a Christian a long time and just learned that. God must have a special calling on you Pastor Ackland.' He was the first one to call me pastor.

Eventually, 17 or 18 years later, I was ordained while kneeling in the exact location that I was chosen by God.

- In the same way, God has chosen you. Your heart is more important than your talents.
- Jesus said, 'You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last (Jn 15:16 NIV).'

As **Pastor Justin** said last Sunday, we are going to look at David's life. The **last series** of various OT character studies helped us to grow by example.

- I feel **led to dive deeper** into David's life.

- Today, we start at the **beginning of David's** journey.

There are two themes that run through today's message:

- **We are chosen** by God.
- **Our heart** is more important than our talents.

**Today's story** is about the decline of Saul and the rise of David. More **importantly**, we learn the cause of the decline and rise.

## David Chosen



First, a little background.

### 1. Background.

Samuel the prophet who led Israel was aging and he appointed his sons as judges over Israel. Unfortunately, 'But they were not like their father, for they were greedy for money. They accepted bribes and perverted justice (1Sa 8:3 NLT).'

Character is important for God's people; this is especially so for leaders. Character is more important than talent.

**Samuel's children** were like Eli's, lacking the character and heart of their fathers. **The leaders** came to Samuel and requested a change from Spirit-led prophets and judges to a *monarchy*. 'Give us a king to judge us like all the other nations have (1Sa 8:5 NLT).'

God had **Samuel warn them**. 'You will beg for relief from this king you are demanding, but then the Lord will not help you (1Sa 8:18 NLT).'

- A king **will draft your sons** into war, and you will have to **work in support** of military equipment and food.
- A king will **take a portion** of your livelihood, and you will not like it.

Samuel meets the people's choice.

### 2. The People's Choice.

Saul was 'The most handsome man in Israel—head and shoulders taller than anyone else in the land (1Sa 9:2 NLT).'

- It is interesting that **Saul's physical features** stood out to Samuel and the people.
- God tells Samuel that **Saul will lead** the people and deliver them from the oppressive Philistines (9:15).
- **Samuel anoints** Saul as ruler over Israel the next day (1Sa 10:1).

One of the **roles of the Holy Spirit** is to validate leadership. There were supernatural signs from God regarding Saul. The story goes, 'As Saul turned and started to leave, God gave him a new heart, and all Samuel's signs were fulfilled that day. <sup>10</sup>When Saul and his servant arrived at Gibeah, they saw a group of prophets coming toward them. Then the Spirit of God came powerfully upon Saul, and he, too, began to prophesy. <sup>11</sup>When those who knew Saul heard about it, they exclaimed, "What? Is even Saul a prophet? How did the son of Kish become a prophet (1Sa 10:9-11 NLT)?"' Saul is off to a good start, God approves. But character is revealed over time.

**Pastor Justin** did a great job of retelling Saul's insecurities a month ago. Saul **started out with humility**, but soon he became 'thin-skinned, hot-tempered, and given to seasons of depression.'<sup>1</sup>

There were **three incidents** that led to Saul's decline over the course of his forty-two years as king. **His character** led to his decline.

Three revealing incidents ...

1. Disrespected Samuel's role, 1Sa 13. Israel was at **war with the Philistines**, and it was not going well. So bad, in fact, that some **Israelites were deserting** and hiding in caves and among the rocks (1Sa 13:6).

- To **seek God's favor** and **rally the troops**, he offered sacrifices like a priest would do. Even though he was king, there was to be a separate prophetic role for spiritual matters.
- Thanks to **Saul's son, Jonathan**, the tide turned. Almost singlehandedly, Jonathan and his armor bearer **attack the Philistines**. There was **an earthquake** at the same time, 'It was a panic sent by God (1Sa 14:15 NIV).'
- Finally, Saul and the rest of the **Israelites join in the battle** and Saul makes his second major error: Any **man who eats before** the battle is over will be put to *death*.

2. Made a foolish vow, 1Sa 14. **Jonathan**, the hero of the moment, is slated to die because he ate some honey for strength.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles R. Swindoll, *David: A Story of Passion & Destiny* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing, 1997), p. 3

- The **men were so exhausted** that they began to butcher some animals right on the ground and even ate it with blood in it they were so hungry. Saul then gives permission to butcher, cook, and eat the meat properly.
- Saul was going to **put Jonathan to death** to keep his vow (14:44), but the men came to Jonathan's support and convinced Saul to not fulfill his vow.

### 3. Overtly disobeyed God, 1Sa 15.

This part of the story **offends our modern sensibilities**. God told Saul to kill all the Amalekites.

- It was like a jar full of bubonic plague. You must completely destroy it, or it will destroy you.
- Saul **disobeys by sparing the 'the best'** of the Amalekites including their king (15:8-9). It would be like me saying, 'Here God, I destroyed most of the plague, but I kept this really potent one to give to you.'
- It was **direct rebellion against** God's command.

**When Samuel saw** that Saul had spared the best of the worst, God prompted him to say: 'Listen! Obedience is better than sacrifice, and submission is better than offering the fat of rams. <sup>23</sup> ... So because you have rejected the command of the Lord, he has rejected you as king (1Sa 15:22-23 NLT).'

**Pleasing God** means obedience and submission. These three episodes revealed the character of Saul's heart.

- Saul admits, 'I was afraid of the people and did what they demanded (1Sa 15:24 NLT).'
- It also reveals God's heart: 'I am sorry that I ever made Saul king (1Sa 15:10 NLT).'

**Samuel kills** the Amalekite king personally and then returns home, promising to never see Saul again. **Samuel** lived in Ramah and **Saul** lived in Gibeah, *less than 10 miles from each other*, but they never spoke again.

**The tipping point** has occurred, and Saul's trajectory begins its descent. A quick review:

- God chooses Saul, 1Sa 10:24.
- God rejects Saul *because* he rejected God, 1Sa 15:23.

A heart after God is most important. A proverb says, 'Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it (Pro 4:23 NIV).' God has chosen you. Your heart is more important than your talents.

Samuel is instructed to anoint the next king in Bethlehem.

### 3. God's Choice.

Samuel grabs a cow to sacrifice, and he walks to Bethlehem.

- The city **elders are terrified** of Samuel, thinking something bad is going to happen (1Sa 16:2-4).
- He is told to **find Jesse**, Ruth and Boaz' grandson.<sup>2</sup>
- Jesse shows Samuel his **firstborn son, Eliab**: 'Samuel took one look at Eliab and thought, "Surely this is the Lord's anointed!"<sup>7</sup> But the Lord said to Samuel, "Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart (1Sa 16:6-7 NLT)."'

**Character** is deep down in our hearts; it is what will define us. Character is like a sponge. It is what fills the empty spaces that no one sees? When pressure is applied, what comes out of the sponge.<sup>3</sup> 'A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart (Lk 6:45 NIV).'

All **seven of Jesse's sons** pass by Samuel, but none of them are chosen. Samuel asks, 'are these all your sons?'

Listen to Jesse's response: "'There is still the youngest,'" Jesse replied. "But he's out in the fields watching the sheep and goats (1Sa 16:11 NLT)."'

- Like, 'Oh yeah, I **almost forgot about him**.'
- He's **so overlooked** he is not even called into meet with Samuel.
- It is almost like **Jesse did not favor** him.
- **David is faithfully** tending to the sheep.

The quality of someone's character is revealed to others over time.

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<sup>2</sup> David Toshio Tsumura, *NICOT The First Book of Samuel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), p. 415

<sup>3</sup> Craig Brian Larson, *750 Engaging Illustrations for Pastors, Teachers, & Writers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1993), 55.

When David arrives, in front of his brothers, Samuel hobbles over and pours oil on his head. Perhaps he then leans over and **whispers into David's ear**, 'you will be the next king.'<sup>4</sup> 'And the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David from that day on (1Sa 16:13 NLT).' *We have seen that before, right?* But this **time is different** – the choosing is the same, the Spirit is the same, the character is different. David returns to tend the sheep.

David was anointed king **three times**.

- Here in **Bethlehem** by Samuel (16:13).
- By the **men of Judah** to be king over Judah (2Sa 2:4)
- By the **elders of Israel** to be king over all Israel (2Sa 5:3). It was a **long process** of respecting God and Saul. The **rest of 1 Samuel** is about the decline of Saul and the rise of David.

The NT says, 'But God removed Saul and replaced him with David, a man about whom God said, "I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart. He will do everything I want him to do (Acts 13:22 NLT)."'

'A man after God's own heart' means:

1. Spiritually - a heart fully devoted to Him. I pray you have a heart after God, that you daily seek Him. That you have regular conversations with Him.
2. Humility – a faithful servant. A servant does not care who gets the glory.
3. Integrity – simplicity and wholeness. 'Integrity is what you are when nobody's looking.'<sup>5</sup>

Far too often, we want **God's full plan right now**. We are **discontent** to let God's Holy Spirit build character over time.

- Some of the **things in our heart** are selfish and *need to be mastered* (Ge 4:7).
- **Other desires** are put in our heart as part of God's plan. Those things need to be *grown* over time.
- Again, Jesus said, 'You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last (Jn 15:16 NIV).' Lasting fruit means a **legacy like David**.

You are chosen by God; you would not be here listening to David's story unless God had something for you to hear today.

- **You are chosen!**

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<sup>4</sup> Swindoll, *David*, p. 21, attributed to *Josephus*.

<sup>5</sup> Swindoll, *David*, p. 8.

- Not everyone is going to be a pastor, but you are called by God to **fulfill His unique and special plan** for you.
- Like David you will have to **live your life growing in grace** (2Pe 3:18) and **godly character** (Ja 1:4).

God prepared David through ...

1. Solitude. David spent many nights **alone under the stars** watching sheep.
  - To be mature, each one of us needs to **learn how to be alone**.
  - Our **ever-present tech** is at odds with solitude and learning to hear God's voice.
2. Obscurity.
  - The **greatest men of God** grew up unknown, unseen, unappreciated, and *far from the spotlight*.
  - Charles **Swindoll** wrote, 'Those who accept the silence of obscurity are best qualified to handle the applause of popularity.'<sup>6</sup>
3. Drudgery.
  - There is **monotony** in doing insignificant and routine tasks, but God uses that to test us.
  - 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things (Mt 25:21 & 23 NIV).'
  - There is a training process that God uses to prepare us. If you were to see **where God is leading** you, you might be crushed under the weight of the responsibility or try to do it in your strength.
4. Trials.
  - We will look at this **next week**, but **David killed lions and bears alone** long before he faced Goliath.
  - It is written that 'suffering produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup>perseverance, character; and character, hope (Ro 5:3-4 NIV).'

God **looks on the heart**, he knows its potential one way or the other. Both **Saul and David were chosen** by God, but what separated their life trajectories was *their heart*.

It is interesting that David's journey to the throne begins with Saul choosing David.

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<sup>6</sup> Swindoll, *David*, p. 10.

## 5. Saul's Choice.

'Now the Spirit of the Lord had left Saul, and the Lord sent a tormenting spirit that filled him with depression and fear. <sup>15</sup> Some of Saul's servants said to him, "A tormenting spirit from God is troubling you. <sup>16</sup> Let us find a good musician to play the harp whenever the tormenting spirit troubles you. He will play soothing music, and you will soon be well again." <sup>17</sup> "All right," Saul said. "Find me someone who plays well, and bring him here." <sup>18</sup> One of the servants said to Saul, "One of Jesse's sons from Bethlehem is a talented harp player. Not only that—he is a brave warrior, a man of war, and has good judgment. He is also a fine-looking young man, and the Lord is with him (1Sa 16:14-18 NLT).'"

- Out of the blue **David's music ability causes** him to be selected. This was **not a search parameter** for leaders.
- **Out of all the musicians** in Israel, Saul's servant has heard of David. And Saul himself calls David to the palace.

'So Saul sent messengers to Jesse to say, "Send me your son David, the shepherd." <sup>20</sup> Jesse responded by sending David to Saul, along with a young goat, a donkey loaded with bread, and a wineskin full of wine. <sup>21</sup> So David went to Saul and began serving him. Saul loved David very much, and David became his armor bearer. <sup>22</sup> Then Saul sent word to Jesse asking, "Please let David remain in my service, for I am very pleased with him." <sup>23</sup> And whenever the tormenting spirit from God troubled Saul, David would play the harp. Then Saul would feel better, and the tormenting spirit would go away (1Sa 16:19-23 NLT).'

- **Saul's unsettledness** begins with God removing His spirit of grace from Saul and creating a vacuum. I will explain the tormenting spirit in another message, but it is not what you think.
- David's rise to power **begins with Saul's choice**.
- If you were to **read the Psalms**, over 70 of them were written by David. We see that he had a heart after God.
- God has chosen you. Your heart is more important than your talents.

## Conclusion.

I began today with the story of my vocational call. But that was not the first time I heard God's voice. There is a **more important call**, the call to God's family.

Paul writes, 'In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, <sup>12</sup> in order that we ...might be for the praise of his glory ...

<sup>13</sup> When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit (Ep 1:11, 13 NIV).'

- He has chosen you today. He knows your name, your background, and your failings. And He still loves you!



- God does not want anyone to slip away into eternity without knowing Him.
- When you repent and believe, you will receive God's spirit and be able to hear his voice more clearly.
- Do you have a heart after God's heart?

Pray.