

“A New King”

Saul failed to obey the Lord, so God replaced him with another king. In this chapter we read of how that happened and of the way Saul quickly degenerated through a black depression that haunted him until his death. Ironically, the cause of his depression (his own disobedience leading to loss of the kingdom) was temporarily relieved by the very man who was secretly appointed by God to be the next king – David!

Verses 1-3

1.

“And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn or Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons.

2.

And Samuel said, How can I go? If Saul hear (it), he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD.

3.

And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will shew thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me (him) whom I name unto thee.”

Have you taken in what God is doing here? He is using subterfuge! God could simply have executed His will by drawing a veil over Saul's eyes, so that the new king could be anointed before his very eyes. But, no. He used subterfuge. We cannot really glean much for our own use from this, because we cannot understand His ways. All we know is that God did not, on this occasion, use a direct approach. Even the spies sent out by Joshua did not attempt to pretend to be someone else – they remained Hebrews. But, God's actions are based on His holy will, and what He does is not always what we should do.

Did He, then, lie? Could His subterfuge be construed as a lie? No, it could not, for God cannot lie. It was, then, a legitimate secret way of dealing with the situation.

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But, before He sent Samuel to contact the new king – who was unaware of his pending kingship at that time – God wanted Samuel to tell Him why he was so distressed by Saul's coming demise. Samuel was mourning Saul, or lamenting over him. God did not think this was appropriate. How often do we, as Believers, lament or mourn over other people, even fellow Believers, after God has cast them aside? It is a human emotional response, particularly if we know the people well and like them. **But, it is out of place!**

God is telling Samuel to 'snap out of it' in one very short and curt sentence. He is saying that those whom God has rejected shall in no wise see His loving face. When God thus casts people aside, it is not our place to mourn after them. God has rejected them, and He does so for His own perfect reasons. Therefore, we have no right or business to mourn after them. We must obey and follow what He has done. In modern days many walk after the Lord only to fail in the end, losing sight of what is real and true. Again, emotions are at the root, not God's word.

Notice that God does not explain Himself, nor does He invite questions! Rather, He quickly gives Samuel a new set of objectives. When we meet with set-backs or trials, God does not expect us to crumble in an emotional heap, or to evade it. He expects us to get on with the rest of our lives. We are not to become morose or anxious, or neurotic and depressed (though we all succumb to these at some time or other). He expects us to accept the situation and then to press with doing His bidding. This might be a completely new thing, or it might be to wait silently until we know what is to be done. Or, we are to complete our course of action whilst keeping our natural fears under strict control.

I remember being very sad when I had to oppose people who led the Toronto Blessing. At times I was also quite fearful of men's reactions. Yet, I knew I had to press on. So it was that even at my lowest ebb and when matters seemed to escalate toward inescapable doom for myself, I continued to do what I was convinced God commanded me to do. Against all odds, my course of action remained on an even keel and nothing got in the way, though many tried to push daggers into my back many times. I am convinced that if I maintained a sympathy for those I had to oppose, my work would have been destroyed. We must not love what God hates. We

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must not sympathise with those whom He has rejected.

God, then, told Samuel He already had a successor to Saul, and Samuel, for the first time (at least for the first recorded time) was afraid of Saul. He felt that Saul would kill him if he knew the reason for his new mission. So, God, mindful of Samuel's human frame, provided a ploy. He told him to fill his horn (used as a container in those days) with olive oil, which he was to use to anoint the new king. The king would be found amongst the sons of Jesse, son of Boaz, of the tribe of Judah. He was to take a young female cow as a sacrifice. As a matter of course, he was to call on Jesse, as a local leader, to attend the ceremony. This would not arouse suspicion. When Jesse attended, with his sons, God would indicate to Samuel which one he was to anoint as the new king.

Verses 4&5

1.

“And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably?”

2.

And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.”

Samuel, then, travelled to Bethlehem, much to the consternation of the inhabitants. Here was the High Priest and Judge of all Israel, outside of his usual itinerary. Was he coming to judge them for some unknown sin or social crime? The elders (rulers of the town) ‘trembled’ at his coming – that is, they were startled and afraid. The term is used of people who ‘walk on eggshells’ afraid to do something that might incur the wrath of someone. They do anything they can not to rouse someone who can do them harm. In this they do not realise they are thus enslaved by the enemy.

Though they were unaware of any wrong in them that was sufficiently serious to bring the revered Samuel to their town suddenly, they nevertheless feared him. Samuel was known for his righteousness and ability to uphold God's law, even to the execution of the death penalty. He was also known for his holy life that attracted God's power and authority in his life.

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“*Comest thou peaceably?*” they queried, probably in nervous quiet tones. They used the word well known to Christians: ***shalown*** (peace). Here, it means, “*Do you come as a contented friend?*”

To their immense relief he affirmed his peaceful presence amongst them. He had come, he said, to sacrifice to God. He told the elders to sanctify themselves because they were to take part in the rite. They had to come with holy mind and heart, consecrating (dedicating) themselves to God.

It seems Jesse was also an elder, for he, too, was sanctified (by Samuel), as were Jesse’s sons. The scene was now set for Samuel’s secret rendezvous with the new king he had not yet met. Samuel did not have the man’s name yet – he would know the man when the Holy Spirit revealed him. This is often the case with genuine believers – they have no plan of their own, but wait for God to reveal His will, which can be slow or swift.

Verses 6-11

1.

“And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD’s anointed (is) before him.

2.

But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for (the LORD seeth) not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

3.

Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. and he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.

4.

Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this.

5.

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Again, Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these.

6.

And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all (thy) children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither.”

It would seem Samuel told Jesse something about the reason for his visit. We cannot tell if he told him he was looking for the future king, but it is obvious from the text that Jesse knew Samuel was choosing one of his sons for something.

Eliab ('my God is father'), David's eldest brother, was the first son Samuel saw. Samuel felt sure he must be the one... but no, he was not. Eliab may have been tall and good looking, so Samuel assumed the new king would be in the same 'mould' as Saul. But, God told Samuel not to be so convinced by looks – God had not chosen him. Samuel chose with his own ideas in mind – God chose for some other reason... the man's heart. Sadly, most Christians are ruled not by God but by their emotional ideas.

Typically, we tend to choose many things in life according to our own human thoughts. We might choose a job because it has more money or 'prospects'. We might choose a wife because she is beautiful. We might choose a car because it is fast. We might choose a church because we like the look of the pastor. But, God chooses for many different reasons, and quite often, these Holy reasons do not match our own! Unfortunately, we tend to choose our own ideas rather than God's will. Hence our many trials and wrong paths, which can have life-long effects.

Choosing according to God's will – how can we do it? There is no easy answer, but I do know that God's will is conveyed to us when we obey and when we listen to His quiet, small voice. There is a symbiotic relationship with the Lord, where the direct will of God can be known, spark by spark, nuance by nuance, touch by touch. Many claim to do His will, but the results of what they do betray their very human actions! Their attitude gives a clue as to their self-centred choices. It is a fact that God would rather choose a repentant, humble man with a sinful past, than a self-styled 'pure' man who pretends to be holy and who tends to dictate to others what they should do.

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The next son seen by Samuel was Abinadab ('my father is noble/willing'), Jesse's second eldest. Jesse, as was the custom, paraded his sons by order of age, starting with the eldest. God showed Samuel that this was not the new king, so Abinadab stood to one side. Next came the third eldest, Shammah ('astonishment'), but he was not the chosen one, either. One by one Jesse brought out each of his sons. Except for the youngest, David. None of them was chosen by God, and this puzzled Samuel... we can be derailed by God not acting according to our ideas!

Samuel asked Jesse if he had any other sons. He actually asked if he had any other 'children', but as God had chosen a king, he knew there had to be another male child. Jesse said he did have another child – the youngest son, who was a shepherd (a fitting role for one who became the shepherd of God's people). Samuel asked Jesse to send for him, because no-one could rest until the matter had been settled.

Verses 12&13

1.

"And he sent, and brought him in. Now he (was) ruddy, (and) withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this (is) he.

2.

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."

Naturally for those days, Jesse thought his eldest son would be chosen. But, God has a habit of turning man's choices on their heads! And His choices are always the best – we see that David was a handsome man, a 'manly' man and 'ruddy' or red (weather beaten?) – 'ruddy' being the meaning of the name of Adam the first man. David happened to be good to look at and Samuel was commanded to anoint him. (No, this is not a criterion for us, when making choices!).

Samuel poured out the olive oil in the horn, onto David's head, as his brothers and father stood nearby. Then, just as the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus in the river, so He came upon David as the oil ran over his head. Once he had completed his task, Samuel returned to Ramah, probably

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warning the family to say nothing. From that time forth, Saul degenerated. It is with godly irony that his last days as king were made bearable by the very one who was to replace him... yet, at the same time, the replacement was to be Saul's nemesis and object of hate.

Verses 14-18

1.

"But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.

2.

And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from the LORD troubleth thee.

3.

Let our LORD now command thy servants, (which are) before thee, to seek out a man, (who is) a cunning player on an harp:

4.

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.

5.

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

6.

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."

Verse 14 contains the most chilling warning that anyone can ever have – the Spirit of the Lord departed! Nothing can be worse than this fate. Without God, there is no hope and no way out.

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Saul had been warned, yet he did not obey. Therefore, God departed from him, removing his active presence. At the same time as this happened, Saul experienced the natural next step – evil took over his very soul.

Readers might be shocked to learn that God sent an evil spirit to trouble Saul. But if you read, say, the account of Job, it was God who 'sent' Satan to bring immense pressure upon Job. Do not make any mistakes – this was a demon. Do not rationalise it and do not be surprised, for even the demons are subject to God, though they can never know His love and presence again. That demon 'troubled' Saul for the remainder of his life – it brought dismay, terror, and darkest gloom. Today, we might refer to Saul's condition as a depression with paranoid overtones. In reality, such conditions are proof of an inner turmoil wrought of one's own sinful nature.

It is interesting that in those ancient days, servants recognised such a gloom was an evil sent by God, and was not a medical condition! Depression is a ploy used by human beings to direct attention from their sin. The person allows it to become a habit, and so it engulfs him or her. Often, such an evil is 'sent' by God in the sense of His allowing the sin to play out its act, sometimes to suicide. Such an act is a sign of God removing His active presence and should not be sympathised with. The only answer is to recognise the condition as sin, to repent, and then to resolve to live a pure and holy life thereafter. In Saul's case, however, God had already plotted the course of his life and – as happens today – God did not give Saul the option to repent or to turn back. Saul refused to live by God's standards, so God removed from him the opportunity to repent. This can happen to any one of us, and it ought to be the rightful fear within us all, when we continually commit the same sin even after being prompted to repent of it.

As was said earlier, it is ironic that the one sent to ease Saul's troubled mind and heart was the very man God had chosen to replace him – David. Of course, this was no coincidence. God created the scenario and David's part in it was planned in eternity. So it was that Saul's servants were used to effect God's plan. They wanted to bring in a harp (lyre) player, one whose playing was 'cunning' or skilled. His job would be to play music to soothe Saul whenever his depression got the better of him.

This is quite feasible, because it is a distraction. Normally, a depression is merely the outworking of one's own refusal to act responsibly and righteously, and so a diversion can often detract from such self-destruction. But, in Saul's case, the depression was instigated by a demon, and the only way such a depression can be lifted properly, is if that demon is cast out. This was not to happen in Saul's life, for God sent the demon in the first place as an earthly punishment. Nevertheless, because it was all part of God's greater plan, He allowed Saul to be soothed by David's harp playing.

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Saul thought it might work, and so he asked his servants to find such a man. One of them said that he knew of such a man, a son of Jesse. The man, David, was not a frail, young boy as so many Christians think from the children's stories! David was a skilled musician, good looking, a 'mighty valiant man... of war'. That is, David was a seasoned soldier of famed warrior ability and fearlessness. When he later attacked Goliath with a sling, he was not using a boy's toy, but a weapon used by soldiers at that time – David was a marksman who normally used his sling to kill enemies in battle and wild animals seeking his flock. Not only was he a good musician and a man Saul would want as one of his select band of soldiers, but he was 'prudent' – he had discernment in all matters. He was a wise man who could think through things properly and intelligently. Saul liked the sound of this man and, and we already know, it was his habit to employ the best men he could find!

Verses 19-23

1.

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

2.

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.

3.

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

4.

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

5.

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."

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So it was that Saul sent someone to get David, whose name and job he knew. This shows us that David and his family were already well-known, supporting the idea that Jesse was an elder/ruler and, probably, rich. He sent gifts to the king – an ass carrying freshly baked bread, a young goat, a bottle of wine – along with his youngest son, David.

It seems David's reputation was well deserved, for Saul 'loved' him greatly from the start. This love meant a human love for a friend, for someone who was inherently loveable. We have all come across people whom we take an instant liking to, usually because they are 'loveable' – charming, lovely people who are nice to be with. They tend to make you feel good. That is what happened when David met Saul. There was an instant rapport. Saul liked the young man so much he made him his armourbearer – one who would be constantly with the king. David was well used to war. He would have been in the last war against the Philistines, using his sling to good effect and killing many.

Saul sent word to Jesse, asking him to release David to his royal service, and he stayed at the palace from that time, until he could no longer stay – when Saul eventually tried to kill him. But, until that time, David played the harp whenever Saul became depressed, making him 'refreshed' (to breathe easily or be relieved). At these times Saul was 'well' (pleasant, happy) because the 'evil spirit departed from him' (for a short while).

This is what happens when a depressed person is distracted. He is temporarily relieved of his gloom. However, when the distraction is not present, the gloom returns. This is because self intervenes and the old habit of looking inward and losing control, again asserts itself. Thus, the old symptoms also return.

It is an odd thing, but true, that a depressed person actually prefers his depression and misery to being sound and happy. This I have discovered time and again in those who claim to be 'ill' with depression. They are selfishly guarding their misery, because they have a 'hidden agenda' that fuels their habit of being depressed. They are hiding their true feelings and reasons. By eliciting sympathy for their 'illness' of depression, they divert attention from the truth – that it is they, and not their circumstances, that produce the symptoms. Hardly any of this is openly determined by the one depressed; it comes about by habitually ignoring the true cause of their emotions. And, any one of us can fall foul of its symptoms.

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When this occurs in a Christian, there is an instant anomaly, for no Christian ought to resort to depression! Depression (other than rare depressions caused by chemical imbalances or injury, etc.) are signs of sin, of turning to self and to self-pity, of deliberately casting aside one's responsibility, of refusing to face facts and to act properly, of refusing to repent and to obey God. A person who is depressed will become very angry if told this, because he or she knows very well they are not ill! But, it is convenient for others to think they are, because it gives them an excuse to be unbearable!

In many ways, Saul was trying to punish others for his condition, brought on by his own sin. Just as Satan constantly attempts to thwart God's plans as revenge, so Saul and depressives hold bitter regard for those around them, and try to make their lives miserable, too. It is his or her way of 'punishing' those he thinks ought to suffer for his own errors and sins; he accuses them of all kinds of deficiencies, whilst, all along, the deficiency is within himself.

As we study this book, we will see Saul doing this all the time, until his internal anger finally spills over into murderous intent, forcing David to escape and hide in the barren deserts of Israel. All of human life is in the Books of Samuel... it is not just dusty history. Read and learn!

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