

**Lord of All**  
1Samuel 16:14-23

According to the accounts of Jesus' earthly ministry we have in the gospels, it was fairly common for people to come to Him seeking a miracle.

People living under the weight of injury and sickness heard about His ability to make people well and they would come from all over in great numbers hoping to be healed.

Lepers calling out to be cleansed, blind men yelling out His name in order to see, a paralyzed man being lowered down through a hole in a roof hoping to walk again.

Because Jesus really did heal people in circumstances like these word spread about Him.

That is likely how a Roman Centurion who lived in a town called Capernaum heard about what Jesus could do and like so many others when he found himself in need with no other options he turned to Jesus.

Matthew tells us about him in chapter eight of his gospel and Luke speaks about him in chapter seven of his account of Jesus' life and ministry.

Luke tells us that a servant who was 'highly valued' by the centurion had become ill and the soldier asked some of the Jewish elders to go and ask Jesus for help.

The elders make the case with Jesus by telling him about the man's love for the Jewish people and his instrumental role in having the local synagogue built.

Jesus, like he most often does, agrees to go and heal the servant.

It was all pretty standard stuff for Jesus, that is, until the centurion sent messengers on his behalf saying, **Luke 7:6-8**

Luke says Jesus, "...was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel."

That is a pretty powerful statement about this man.

What was the basis of his faith? It was his belief in the authority of Jesus.

Something convinced him that Jesus could give commands to whatever he willed and those commands had to be obeyed.

He was right to think that because Jesus, being fully divine, is LORD over all.

[As believers should all agree that God is Lord of all, but what does that mean exactly? What are the implications of that statement being true? There are many and they come up regularly in the Bible and our text this morning in **1Samuel 16:14-23** is an example of that. In these verses we again meet up with King Saul who finds himself in an unfortunate circumstance. We find

that he is there because of God, because God in charge of everything, and his experience has some important things to teach us about the rule of God. Number one is this...]

**Point #1 – God rules over evil. (Verses 14-16)**

The LORD of all creation has the power to command everything that exists; therefore, no evil can exist or act apart from His sovereign will.

Verse 14 opens with the phrase, “Now the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul.”

As we consider this verse we need to keep in mind that the presence/empowering of the Holy Spirit is not always related to salvation.

When the bible talks about the Holy Spirit indwelling His people it is certainly related to being born again, being made right with God through faith, and belonging to Him forever.

The bible also speaks about the work of the Holy Spirit empowering people for particular tasks in order to bring about the plans and purposes of the LORD and that work is not always connected to salvation.

That, I believe is the case here. The Spirit’s departure from Saul here is not intended to tell us about the state of his soul, although it is surely not a good sign, it is meant to tell us that the power and ability the Spirit was giving him to serve as king has been withdrawn.

While this is certainly unhappy news for Saul, it presents us with no theological difficulty.

It is easy for us to accept the fact that God gives and takes the Spirit as it pleases Him.

We have no struggle with God’s command of what is good.

Verses **14-16** go on, however, to say something that requires our careful consideration.

Three times in these verses, once from the narrator and twice from Saul’s servants, we read the phrase, “an evil spirit from the LORD.”

Wait a minute! That sounds like God gives commands to demons to do evil. How can that be?

We get when God gives commands to angels to do His good will, but how can He command a demon to do evil and not be guilty of evil Himself?

In order to understand that we have to understand that there are two ways a command can be given.

One way is to give a command in a positive sense. “Go here and do this.”

That is how God gives commands to the angels.

Another way to give a command is in a negative sense. “You will not go here and/or you will not do this.”

That is how God gives commands to the devil, demons, and everything evil in the whole of creation.

What does that mean here in the life of Saul?

When the “Spirit of the LORD” leaves the king, he loses the spiritual protection that was being afforded to him by God.

In other words the LORD simply releases the restraints upon this evil spirit who is waiting to “torment” the earthly king of God’s people.

He is not telling/commanding the demon to do evil to the king, He simply stops preventing it and so the demon immediately proceeds to do what he has wanted to do all along.

Since evil cannot act apart from God’s knowledge because He knows everything and can only act with His permission since His power is greater than all evil combined, it is right to say that evil is under His command.

This is the great objection of many skeptics. They say, “How can God be Who the Bible says He is and there be so much evil, pain, and suffering in the world?”

The underlying premise of that question completely ignores our contribution to evil.

It does not ask what would be necessary to eliminate evil entirely.

It presumes that humanity deserves only good things from God and that somehow God is bad for allowing the world to experience the consequences of rejecting Him.

In addition to whatever else we may say along those lines it is also important to point out that the existence of evil in the universe is not an argument against God’s rule over it, it is merely stating displeasure for the way things are.

On account of this distaste for the clear teaching of the Bible on this subject, many have sought other answers to try and get God off the hook for evil in the world.

Some try to limit God’s power saying He doesn’t really want all the problems in the universe it is just that He can’t stop it.

Others try to limit His knowledge saying He is simply not aware of what is happening.

Those answers simply will not do and we accomplish nothing good by departing from what the Bible teaches to try and satisfy the objections of godless people.

[Almost immediately after the fall of Adam and Eve into sin, God told the devil that he would be crushed. No matter how terrible the odds, God delivers His people time and again in the Old

Testament. Many times in the gospels Jesus commands demons and even the devil and they all have to give way to His authority. When Jesus goes to the cross, He is in control the whole time. God does not force the religious leaders or Pilate to do the evil against Christ, but He surely permitted it to bring about all that He desired.]

Should we think it is any different for our lives today?

Not at all! The devil and his forces love to assault people especially the people of God and the LORD in His wisdom allows it as He wills.

He does this, according to Romans 8, for our highest good that we might be conformed to the image of Jesus, that we might make the LORD our highest treasure, and that we might enjoy eternity with Him.

[We are never defenceless against evil and neither are we ever hopeless. Why? Because God rules over evil! Here is another important lesson from this text...]

### **Point #2 – God rules over everyday life. (Verses 17-20)**

Time and again the Scriptures teach us that the details of the world are governed by the hand of the LORD rather than chance or chaos.

Seeing the ‘torment’ of the king, which likely means demonic oppression rather than possession, the servants suggest finding someone who can play music on a stringed instrument.

By this time in history music had been around for a long time and people had observed that it can have a soothing effect upon people.

So here, the LORD permits this evil spirit to work against Saul in a way that brings up the idea of getting someone to play music.

Saul clearly longing for relief thinks this is a good idea (**Verse 17**).

The search does not take very long (**Verse 18-19**).

How the servant knows David is left unsaid here, but notice that his testimony is that of an eye witness.

That is important, because at this point as far as we can tell David is far from famous in the nation of Israel.

That means that this servant would have had to spend a bit of time in the town of Bethlehem.

Could be he was at Jesse’s house for a meal and David played the harp for the guests.

Maybe it was a community event where he saw the musical skill of the young man, or maybe it was just the two of them.

Whatever the case this is first hand eye witness knowledge.

He has also seen evidence that David is a “brave man” and a “warrior”.

Commentator Carl Keil points out that this is probably a reference to David’s work as a shepherd rather than in a combat situation.

That idea is supported by verse 19 where Saul knows that David is “with the sheep”. He likely knows that from the servant’s description of the man’s bravery.

We know from the next chapter that David was good with a sling shot, he also likely used a shepherd’s staff, and he may have had a knife or sword with him in the fields as well.

Show of hands how many people would have the courage to take on a lion or a bear with those weapons?

This servant has likely seen David do that and so he knows him to be a man courage and skill.

Everything that this servant says about the son of Jesse is the result of David simply living his everyday life.

He went out into the fields to watch the sheep because that was his job.

There is no way he would have been thinking that God was using his everyday life to prepare him for service to the king and eventually to sit on the throne himself.

We have no idea how or why David learned to play music, but he definitely did not have playing in the court of King Saul on his mind.

These are just everyday events.

Add to that the circumstances of this servant who tells the king about the young man.

Saul finds himself in a difficult spot, someone just happens to suggest music, Saul happens to think it’s a good idea, and then someone who just happens to be in the room knows about a certain young man who just happens to fit the bill.

According to verse 20 all of this leads to David being sent to Saul.

When we read the text and we think about all the events that occur to lead to this result we should be asking a question.

How is it that these things worked out the way they did? It seems to me that we are only left with two choices.

This is either the result of random chance or this happens because a personal God is directing the events that are taking place in His creation.

If we believe the Bible brothers and sisters the idea of random chance is not on the table.

The writer is making a clear connection between the anointing of David to be the next king in the first part of chapter 16 and David coming into the service of Saul here in the second part of the chapter.

It's so much bigger than this chapter it is page after page in the Bible.

From cover to cover we see the LORD at work in everyday life to bring about His plans and purposes.

[Has anyone ever setup a series of dominos in a line before? The idea of a doing that is to setup all the dominos and when you are finish you push over the first one and it knocks over the second and so on until all of them fall. Have you ever seen that where the person starts out with regular sized dominos and it ends up knocking over huge ones? That first tiny domino would never be able to knock over the giant one, but since it started a chain of events that knocked over gradually increasing dominos the giant one at the end falls.]

That is a very imperfect picture of God's rule over everyday events.

Things that happen from day to day are caused and allowed by the LORD to set into motion things that set other things into motion and every event along the way is serving His ultimate plans for the whole history of the world.

We might be tempted to say that for events like what happens here with David but not to every part of life.

If we do that we are failing to think biblically about the world.

The bible teaches us about the LORD who rules over everything everyday whether great or small.

[That reality leaves us with a choice. We can either despise the rule of the LORD or we can love and trust His rule over everyday life. We can ignore the LORD, we can despise Him, or we can love Him but we cannot escape His rule. That brings us to a third important lesson from our text this morning. If we can see and believe this lesson it greatly helps us to accept and find hope in the first two lessons. God rules over evil, over everyday life, and thirdly we see here that...]

### **Point #3 – God rules with grace. (Verses 21-23)**

Despite our rebellion and sin the LORD gives us good things, which we do not deserve, every single day.

### *We can see the LORD's graciousness to Saul in his reception of David in verses 21-22.*

In order to fully appreciate what is said here we have to look back at verse 18 and see something important that Saul's servant had said about David.

Along with being able to play the harp, being brave, and good looking it says, "...the LORD is with him."

Commentator Ronald Youngblood says that phrase often has the meaning of success in the Old Testament.

In other words when David set his hand to a task he succeeded in it and his success is rightly credited to God.

That trend seems to carry over from the pastures and fields into the service of the king.

One of the reasons Saul is pleased with David is because the young man's service is improving his life and government.

Given that David is enlisted here as an armor bearer we are likely talking about relatively small blessings, but there are blessings nonetheless.

I believe we can also drill down a bit deeper here as well.

You see just because God has rejected Saul as king does not automatically mean he has absolutely no share in being part of the people of God.

While his affection for David will not last, this is a gracious opportunity for Saul to realize and enjoy the fact that God has a plan for his people and embrace it.

We see more of the LORD's grace in **verse 23**.

I have no doubt there are many benefits to listening to music.

I have no doubt that listening to music can help ease stress and anxiety, but this is not that.

This is an evil spirit, we are told, tormenting Saul.

If we read this text and think that the music is the decisive factor causing the 'evil spirit' to leave, then we have misread this text.

There is nothing that I am aware of in the whole of the Bible that gives that kind of power to music.

As good as a gift as it is, it does not have the power to command evil.

Why then is the music effective? Because when David plays, God rebukes/restrains the evil spirit and Saul gains relief.

Now I have been saying that these things are because of God's grace.

In order to see that we need to ask some questions.

Does Saul deserve the benefit of the good services of David?

Does Saul deserve relief from the spirit that is tormenting him?

No! Remember on at least two major occasions he has clearly rejected the word of the LORD. He has grown in pride and selfishness bringing harm to those around him.

He deserves God's judgment without any mercy at all and yet we find him here receiving good gifts that he does not deserve.

That is grace.

When I think about God's rule over evil and everyday events I am quickly amazed by the grace He shows, it is far beyond what I can even imagine.

If we were to know the exact number of people who hate God in the world today it would be a massive number.

Yet He still gives them life, another day to cry out to Christ for salvation.

Do we ever stop to think about all the things the LORD is doing in the universe to provide another day for billions of people who don't deserve it?

*Even as Christians we have to admit that while we love God today there was a time when we were His enemies.*

It was God exercising His unrivaled power against the forces of evil that brought Jesus to the cross.

It is that same power by which He breathed life into our LORD's dead body on the third day.

It is because of His power that we know His final victory is secured.

Evil will not win and because of the conquering power of the cross and empty tomb of Christ we can be saved from our own rebellion by acknowledging our evil and trusting Jesus for forgiveness.

We don't deserve that at all, not even the slightest bit.

It is all possible because God rules this universe in grace.

*That is really the key to accepting and loving God as the "Lord of All".*

When we realize that we deserve nothing good, then it sheds a whole new light on the problem of evil in the world.

When we understand that we deserve nothing good, it makes the list of things we should be immensely grateful for grow beyond what we can know.

When we understand that we deserve nothing good, it makes Christ giving His life for us to make us right with God an incomprehensible act of eternal love which we get to enjoy.

When we understand those things we can clearly see that God rules with grace.

This is the rule of God brothers and sisters.

We ought to take this to heart. We can find great rest and peace in this truth.

It is the truth taught in our memory verse for this month.

It says, "The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters." (Psalm 24:1-2) Simply put, The Lord is Lord of All.