

What Can Stop God From Advancing His Kingdom?

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Date: 28 September 2025

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- [0 : 00] And as I read our sermon passage today, I do it trusting that it's God's inspired, inerrant, infallible, clear, sufficient word for you and me, his people, and that as God through his spirit ministers his word, he works with power.
- If you receive it that way and ask that of him, please say thanks be to God at the end. First Samuel chapter 16. Now the Lord said to Samuel, How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing that I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go.
- I am sending you to Jesse, the Bethlehemite, for I have provided myself a king among his sons. And Samuel said, How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.
- But the Lord said, Take a heifer with you. Children, that's a young female cow. And say, I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do.
- You shall anoint for me the one I named to you. So Samuel did what the Lord said and went to Bethlehem. And the elders of the town trembled at his coming and said, Do you come peaceably?
- [1 : 19] And he said, Peaceably. I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice. Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.
- So it was when they came that he looked at Eliab. And he said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before him. But the Lord said to Samuel, Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him.
- The Lord does not see as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. So Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel.
- And he said, Neither has the Lord chosen this one. Then Jesse made Shammah pass by, and he said, Neither has the Lord chosen this one.
- Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass by before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, The Lord has not chosen these. And Samuel said to Jesse, Are all the young men here?
- [2 : 29] And he said, There remains yet the youngest, and there he is keeping the sheep. And Samuel said to Jesse, Send me him, bring him here, for we will not sit down till he comes here.
- So he went and brought him in, and he was ruddy with bright eyes and good looking. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him, for this is the one.
- Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah.
- Verse 14. But the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him. And Saul's servants said to him, Surely a distressing spirit from God is troubling you.

Let your master now command your servants who are before you to seek out a man who is skillful, playing the harp. And it shall be that he will play it with his hand when the distressing spirit from God is upon you, and you shall be well.

[3 : 38] So the Lord said to his servants, Provide me now a man who can play well and bring him to me. Then one of the servants answered and said, Look, I have seen a son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite, who is skillful and playing, a mighty man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a handsome person.

And the Lord is with him. Therefore, Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, Send me your son David, who is with the sheep. And Jesse took a donkey loaded with bread and a skin of wine and a young goat and sent them by his son David to Saul.

So David came to Saul and stood before him, and he loved him greatly, and he became his armor bearer. Then Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Please let David stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight.

And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him.

The word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. Let's pray.

[5 : 01] Lord, we thank you that as our creator, you have not been silent. You have acted in the broken history of man. You have acted with power, with faithfulness, and everything you've done, you've revealed through your word.

We thank you for how your word shows us not only your actions, but it instructs us on who you are. We pray, Lord, that your Holy Spirit now will minister every truth that you put into your word, that you want to press home in our minds and our hearts so that we can behold you more rightly today.

I ask for your help, Lord. I ask that you will help us as a congregation to put ourselves under Christ, and that we will behold Christ in every chapter of the Bible.

We ask this for your glory. Amen. Amen. I learned this week about a town named Columbia in the state of South Carolina.

And it's a town about the same size as Fort Collins here in Colorado. It's the town where Dale Ralph Davis, a wonderful Bible commentator, ministered for many years.

[6 : 15] And in the year 1865, you remember what was going on in American history that year? That's exactly 160 years ago. At the end of the Civil War, the city of Columbia, South Carolina, was burned to the ground.

There were these corn bins that were set on fire, and very quickly the fire grew and spread and destroyed all the wooden structures so that over 2,000 acres in the town of Columbia were charred.

A town that people lived in with churches like this one, charred, burnt down to the ground.

What do we do? One of the most stirring lines in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, If, is this. If you can watch the things you gave your life to broken and stoop and build them up with worn out tools.

It's stirring because it acknowledges the pain of great loss that hope has died. And through long suffering, we need to start all over again, humbly at the beginning.

[7 : 34] So the question we come to now in 1 Samuel 16 is, how low will God stoop to start building again?

In 1 Samuel 8, verses 7-9, God tells Samuel, it's not you they have rejected, prophet. My people have rejected me.

Our last chapter ended with God rejecting Saul as king. And we have that scene now of these two men, Saul and Samuel. Samuel, the one who anointed King Saul, never speaking again in a nation without hope.

We have to ask the question as we begin chapter 16. Did God reject his people? Has the great sin of their king Saul?

Remember, we left with him building a monument for himself to take glory away from God's great victory. Has this great sin and the fact that the people were in on it worth him?

[8 : 37] This idolatry. Does that mean that now God's plans are burnt down to the ground? Could it be that their sin was so bad that God would simply give up and walk away from his people?

As we walk through the passage for today, I hope to answer this one question. What can stop God from advancing his kingdom?

What is it that can stop God from advancing his kingdom? And I see four tests of that question, so to speak, with one great truth that illustrates the way God does it.

So here's the first one. The idolatry of God's people does not stop God from advancing his kingdom. The idolatry of God's people does not get in the way of him advancing his kingdom.

Look at verse one. Now the Lord said to Samuel, how long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning as king over Israel?

[9 : 53] It's a theme of rejection. The people rejected God. The people rejected Samuel, the prophet of God. Samuel gave the people the word, destroy everything.

The people rejected the word of God. And now God has rejected Saul as king over Israel. There is much to grieve. Rejection hurts. I'm sure you've felt that at some point in your life.

Rejection hurts because it means the relationship no longer exists. What each party envisioned for the future doesn't fit. One loss often stirs up pain from previous losses.

Now notice it's not wrong to mourn this loss or this rejection. But it is wrong for us to mourn our losses and even the painful rejection we feel without an end to our mourning.

And God teaches his people patiently, tenderly, with fatherly love. The time has come to forget those things which are behind and reach forward to those things which are ahead.

[11 : 05] As he says in Philippians 3.13. And so that's the word of God now to Samuel. Samuel, fill your horn with oil. It's most likely a ram's horn.

We got those big horn sheep here in Colorado. We can see and picture what that would be like. And when it's hollowed out, it's a perfect vessel. You can put olive oil in there and carry it to carry out this job.

Now this command, this verb to anoint. It's one of the most familiar Hebrew words. You knew Hebrew without even knowing you knew some Hebrew. And the word is Messiah.

That means anointed. So that's what he's doing with this olive oil and this ram's horn. He's going. The oil in scripture represents the presence of God.

Ministered. Think of that. The presence of the holy creator God. Ministered. Poured out. Flowing down. Isn't it wonderful how God always brings his people a new supply.

[12 : 09] Fill the horn with oil. There's always more of the Holy Spirit. God always supplies his people with a fresh refilling.

And this signals a new anointing. A new Messiah is coming. Second Corinthians 1 20 says for all the promises of God in Jesus Christ are yes.

And in him. Amen to the glory of God. Through Christ. Through Christ to us. Now he who established us with you in Christ has anointed us.

In God. Who also has sealed us and given us the spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. See the language of the New Testament is identifying the anointing of Christ as Messiah.

Now spilling over from Christ onto his people by the Holy Spirit. It's the same Holy Spirit of God that anoints every true believer. And God never takes his Holy Spirit away from those who are united to him in Jesus Christ.

[13 : 20] So to answer our first test. The idolatry of God's people does not stop God from advancing his kingdom.

The hearts of God's people had gone after Saul as a handsome talking like all the other nations. There goes his monument to himself. They ignored the word of God. They love the idol more than the giver of life himself.

And this does not stop God from bringing a new Messiah. From advancing his kingdom. Here's the second test.

What about the messiness of the past? The messiness of the past does not stop God from advancing his kingdom. Look at verse 1 again.

Where is it that God sends Samuel? He says, I am sending you to Jesse. The Bethlehemite. Bethlehem is the smallest town maybe in the whole nation.

[14 : 23] And it's in the tribe of Judah. What else do we know about Bethlehem? Well, we have gone through this wonderful little book of Ruth. Remember the story of Boaz and Ruth?

One of the most beautiful pictures of a marriage and love. We're told in the genealogy of our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew chapter 1 verses 5 and 6.

Boaz, who was this wealthy landowner in the city of Bethlehem. Boaz, who was born of a woman named Rahab.

And Rahab was a prostitute in the city of Jericho. You see the messiness of the past? From a prostitute in the city of Jericho comes this man Boaz.

Through Boaz now comes this man Jesse. And through Jesse comes David, the one that God is anointing. In Joshua chapter 6 verse 2, God says, I have given into your hand the mighty men.

[15 : 26] Remember the great walls of Jericho? And the people trembling to come into the promised land? This word for mighty men. Describing the people of Jericho, the people of Rahab.

These are big, tall, scary warriors. These are men who magnify themselves, who behave proudly. It's also used to describe a tyrant.

Someone who is audacious. And in Joshua, these people are also described mighty men of valor. The word valor is literally strong, mighty, powerful, wealthy.

That's the line of Rahab. These are the enemies of God. It's through the enemies of God that God will bring this beautiful picture. Of Boaz now marrying another foreigner.

And from this line, David. The past of Bethlehem and the past of David's family was very messy. Boaz then begot a son named Obed.

[16 : 29] And his wife Ruth was the Moabitess. Remember the Moabites were descendants not of Isaac, the seed of the promise, but of Lot. And although Hebrews calls Lot righteous.

He was a picture for us of someone who was very close to the world. And his wife and his family were compromising. It's messy.

Then Obed begot Jesse and Jesse begot David, the king. And this is what God, who knows all, looks at in Bethlehem.

And God says in verse one, I have provided myself a king among his sons.

Yes, from this messy family of Jesse. I've provided myself a son who will be king. When God says in verse one, I've provided myself.

[17 : 32] God literally says, I myself have seen. I myself have seen a king there. And where was it that David was in Bethlehem when God looked and saw a king?

David was with the sheep, wasn't he? Out of the pasture, as Jonathan put it, not even invited to the dinner. God saw him. God provided for himself a humble man to be his obedient servant who was with the sheep, who would know how to shepherd God's people.

The messiness of our past does not stop God from advancing his kingdom. You have a messy past too, don't you? I know I do.

We can sometimes think that my sin, my messiness, my family, how messed up everything has been. It's going to stop right here from going any better.

And God sees you. Small, humble, broken, messy. And he says, I have seen another way, another life, another soul. And in that realm, my kingdom will advance.

[18 : 51] I love that hymn we sing, maybe the most comforting to me. Come ye weary, heaven laden, lost and ruined by the fall.

If you tarry till you're better, you will never come at all. Let not conscience make you linger, nor of fitness fondly dream. All the fitness he requireth is to feel your need of him.

Has your past or your life been messy? Is it messy right now? Well, that means you are qualified to come to the Savior. That's all he needs to save you.

Come as you are. The messiness of the past does not stop God from advancing his kingdom. The third test is weakness. What about the weakness of God's servants?

Can the weakness of God's servants stop God from advancing his kingdom? Well, the servant in this part of the story is Samuel. Look at verse 2.

[19 : 56] As Samuel traveled, he's leaving the mountain city where he lives, Ramah. And from there, he would go on circuits and minister all around the nation. But Ramah was identified as Samuel's home.

Guess what was directly between Ramah and Bethlehem? Between Ramah of Samuel and Bethlehem of Jesse and Judah was Gibeah, the city of Saul and the tribe of Benjamin.

And in verse 2, Samuel. Samuel, remember from chapter 14. He's the one who saw the wicked King Ahag and King Saul failed to kill this man as God commanded.

And so even the old prophet Samuel now hacks wicked King Ahag to death. That's what he just did as an instrument of God, as a picture of God's coming judgment.

But look at what Samuel says in verse 2. How can I go? How can I go through Benjamin? Because if Saul hears it, he will kill me. The great king commissioner, the mouthpiece of the voice of the Lord of hosts, the man before whom King Saul had thrown himself begging for forgiveness, is now gripped by fear.

[21 : 17] He's not powerful or scary. He's weak. He's fearing man more than God once again. It's the same sin that Saul had just confessed to Samuel.

He's weak. You and I aren't any stronger than Samuel. We fear men against all reason too, don't we? Saul had just made a monument for himself.

He begged not to lose his throne. And now Saul is apparently so consumed and enslaved by his idolatry. His self-worship has now bound all of Saul's thoughts and obsessions about holding on to this thing he loves more than God or anything else.

How wicked has King Saul now become? Because if he's willing to do this to the prophet of God who anointed him king, what would such a man be capable of doing to anyone else?

And now the Lord says, take a heifer with you and say, I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. God's not telling Samuel to lie.

[22 : 33] God's telling Samuel to go and minister to this family of Jesse. He's giving him a legitimate reason to travel and do this. It's God using his own providence and his own commands to protect his ultimate purpose of anointing David once he gets there.

God directs Samuel to take the sacrifice along to the head of the household because it's such a small town. And he's from this family just two generations back.

Boaz who owned vast land. And most likely Jesse was a very powerful, influential man in the city of Bethlehem. So now Jesse is coming to minister to them.

We also read earlier in this book that it was the ministry of Samuel to travel around judging the people to serve as the court of justice before God. So it's either to minister sacrifice, gather them to praise God and speak truth to them or to judge them and call them to account.

It could be either one. In verse three, then invite Jesse to the sacrifice and I will show you what you shall do. You shall anoint for me the one I name to you.

[23 : 42] God will show his servant what to do. God will name the king of his people. God will have the king over his people be Messiah marked, be anointed for himself.

He will be an obedient servant. In verse four, we read, so Samuel did what the Lord said and went to Bethlehem. Yes, Samuel was weak.

You are weak. I am weak. Everyone God has ever ministered through has been an earthen vessel, a weak instrument. And the weakness of God's servants, you and me and Samuel, does not stop God from advancing his kingdom.

The fourth test is this smallness in the eyes of the world. Does smallness in the eyes of the world stop God from advancing his kingdom? Let's continue on in verse four.

The elders of the town. This is Bethlehem. Trembled at Samuel's coming and said, do you come peaceably? Do you come to judge or to minister peace?

[24 : 52] In verse five, Samuel says peaceably, for I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. This is not a lie. That's the very next thing they do. The sacrifice is a picture that we are sinners.

Our sin deserves death. God is merciful and gracious and he'll accept a substitute. He'll accept a blood sacrifice. And by the ministry of grace, he'll apply the blood sacrifice of an animal now to cover the sin of his people.

It's a picture of the work of Jesus Christ. The sacrifice God himself provided to pay for our sin. In verse five, Samuel calls Jesse and his family to consecrate themselves.

When was the last time that word consecrate was used? God told King Saul to consecrate the enemies to the Lord by devoting them to destruction.

You see how God's redemption, God's peace, God's grace is ministered through judgment. They consecrate themselves by seeing something happen to this heifer, this young female cow that they deserved.

[26 : 06] And now God considers them devoted to himself. We don't practice blood sacrifices. But we approach the Lord with reverence.

And we don't presume the peace of God by our own merits. We confess our sin to God. We confess he is holy. We are sinners. We are unworthy.

We stand in Christ's perfect sacrifice. And we assure one another from his word we are pardoned in Jesus. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.

Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. In verse 6, so it was when they came that Samuel looked at Eliab.

And Samuel said, picture this, Samuel saying this out loud. He said this, surely the Lord's anointed is before him. Now verse 7, the Lord said to Samuel, not an audible voice for all to hear.

[27 : 12] But while Samuel is speaking what he thinks is right, God speaks quietly to him. Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature because I have refused.

Literally, I have rejected him. The same word used of King Saul. God does not judge according to the looks of a man. God judge.

God judges according to what God sees in the inner man. Verse 7, we have this wonderful promise. The Lord does not see as man sees.

Why is that a wonderful promise? We go throughout the whole week with the world screaming lies. The world sees what the world can see in darkness.

And screams that as if it's truth. And if we're in Christ, we begin our week. The eighth day, the first day of the new week.

[28 : 17] We begin by resting in what God says he sees. And he sees saved sinners made righteous in Christ. The Lord does not see as man sees.

Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. Verse 7, man looks literally on the eyes.

God looks on the heart, the thoughts, the intentions, the judgments. First Peter 3, verses 3 and 4, we have this similar encouragement.

Do not let your adorning be external, but let your adorning be in the hidden person of the heart. With the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.

And so then Jesse called each of the other brothers one by one. Did you catch in verse 10 how many brothers there are before David?

[29 : 23] Verse 10 says it, right? How many is it? Seven. But how many names are we given? The first name is given in verse 6. Eliab. Eliab means my God is father.

The next name is given in verse 8. Abinadab, which means my father is noble and God is my father. And the third name that's given, not all seven are given, but it's in verse 9.

Shama, which means he hears. So this seems to be a significant decision in the way God breathed this out and was set, even as a literary narrative.

Seven sons, but only three are given. And what does this convey to us? Conveys God is excited to bring forth a son from this line of Jesse.

And hints about what this will mean, what we should look for. My God is my father. This is what this seed from Jesse's line is to be that you look for.

[30 : 34] My God is my father. My father is noble and he hears. My father is the one who heard the prayer of Samuel's mom. He hears the prayers of his people.

You see the whispers preparing us to look for this son that's coming. I wonder, too, why this process?

Remember, this chapter begins, the section begins with Samuel weak, mourning, grieving. God is ministering the truth of his kingdom to Samuel.

The promise is for Samuel and for all the people. If Samuel needed to learn this about God, how much more you and me?

We find ourselves fearing man, fearing something unexpected in the future, fearing a painful loss or another hard change.

- [31 : 32] Matthew Henry commented, the best men are not perfect in their faith, nor will fear be completely cast out anywhere on this side of heaven. And look at what God ministers to strengthen our faith in his promise.
- Jesse says, yes, there remains yet the youngest. Do you see this in verse 11? How is yours translated? The word youngest.
- In the Hebrew, it literally would read yet there remains the small one. The small one. If someone in my family called someone else the small one, they'd be in trouble because we don't call names.
- The small one. This is David. This is what he was called in his family. And there he is keeping the sheep. Samuel said, send and bring him for we will not sit down.
- Literally, we will not gather around or reconvene to proceed with my purpose in coming to your home until he, the small one, comes here. Verse 12.
- [32 : 38] So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy with bright eyes. Literally of lovely of eyes.
- In the ancient Near East, a rare eye color was considered exotic or or lovely or different. And ruddy means red.
- Good looking. The word good looking in connection to ruddy. Again, this this rareness. It most likely is describing simply the physical appearance of David being different.
- Some have read more into this. I don't think we can. I am reminded, though, of what the Bible has said of David, that he will be called a man of blood. So even at the beginning, he's small and he's red.
- But foreshadowing how God will use this man, a small. Anointed shepherd. To be a king.
- [33 : 46] A king covered in blood. Proverbs 23, 31 reminds us, do not look at the wine when it is red. And that's the same word used described to describe David.
- Who else was described as red? Think of Genesis 25, 25. The two sons that are born, the twins. But the first one that came out was red. And it was Esau.
- Not only is his past messy. Prostitutes. Moabites. The enemies of God. It's Esau. It's the line of Lot. You see what's foreshadowed?
- He will become the enemies of God all along. He who knew no sin will make himself to be sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.
- Isaiah 1, 18 says, through your, no, though your sins, God's people, were red like crimson, the same word.
- [34 : 48] They shall be white as snow through this anointed one, Jesus Christ. And now God speaks to Samuel. The Lord said to him, arise, anoint him, Messiah him.
- For this is the one. You remember there were seven sons. Verse 10. Seven sons of Jesse before David. David. So that means David is what number in the line?
- He's the eighth. When we hear the number seven, we think completion. Fullness. So when we hear the number eight, it's the beginning of something new.
- The eighth day of creation. It's pointing forward to that first day. The inauguration of the age to come. The eighth son.
- Promised long ago. Who can say, my God is my father. So these four tests from our passage.
- [35 : 55] Show that nothing can stop. God from advancing his kingdom. This last section is super hard. I don't have all the answers.

So listen with low expectations the next couple of moments. But we can simply recognize what we read next this way. Nothing stops God from advancing his kingdom by the unexplainable power of his spirit.

God advances his kingdom by the unexplainable power of his spirit. Let's pick up in verse 13. Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him, David, in the midst of his brothers.

And the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel arose and went to Ramah. In Deuteronomy chapter 18, verse 18.

God had promised to Moses this. I will raise up from them, these former slaves, these Israelites, a prophet like you from among their brethren.

[37 : 05] And I will put my words in his mouth and he shall speak to them all that I command him. The spirit of God is blowing and is doing that thing God promised long ago, raising up one from among his brothers, anointing him in their presence.

Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3, starting at verse 5, Unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I say to you, you must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from or where it goes.

So it is with everyone who is born of the spirit. The spirit of God advances his kingdom by blowing like the wind in an unexplainable but undeniably powerful way.

This is how God loves to advance his kingdom. We read then the contrast, the unexplainable work of the spirit of God.

[38 : 14] In verse 14, the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul. Here's where it gets tricky. And a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him.

I looked this up in several English translations. Then I went back to the Hebrew and read a bunch of commentaries. And I came to this conclusion. When we read in verse 14 that a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled Saul.

It means in the Hebrew that a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled Saul. That's exactly what it means. Now notice that it's not that it's the spirit of an evil demon necessarily.

But the effect of the spirit upon Saul causes distress. The same word used in the Bible can have a broader meaning as well.

It can certainly mean an evil spirit, but it can also mean a few other things. And this is where we let the Holy Spirit and his word help us to the extent that we can. And we trust some things he's kept veiled.

[39 : 24] What are some of the other meanings of this word distressed or evil? That same word is also used in the Bible to describe grief. A grief spirit.

Sadness. Trouble. Adversity. Or ill favor. A spirit from the Lord caused ill favor upon Saul. Saul. He was troubled.

It's like the spirit of the Lord carrying out. Judgment in the Exodus upon the Egyptian slave masters. And that's all I had prepared. And in God's providence this morning, I was listening through my reading plan.

The McShane reading plan. Keep a finger here because we'll come right back. But turn and look with me at 2 Samuel. So look forward a few pages. 2 Samuel chapter 24.

You'll want to see this with your own eyes in your own copy of God's word. 2 Samuel chapter 24.

[40 : 32] And as you get there, I'll remind you. Here's what I see in common. God is judging Saul, no doubt. Saul made a monument for himself. Saul wanted the praise and the affections of God's people instead of that going to God.

Saul made himself the idol of the nation. And God is jealous for the hearts of his people. That's what he's after all along. In 2 Samuel chapter 24, David counts the army.

And then his heart tells him, you have acted in a way that is displeasing to God. You're acting as though this is your army. You're becoming a new Saul. Look at 2 Samuel chapter 24 verses 15 and 16.

So the Lord sent a flag upon Israel from the morning till the appointed time from Dan to Beersheba, the whole nation. 70,000 men and people died.

So the Lord did this. How did he do it in verse 16? When the angel stretched out his hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented from the destruction and said to the angel who was destroying the people, It is enough.

[41 : 45] Now restrain your hand. And the angel of the Lord was by the threshing floor of Raunah the Jebusite.

Now verse 17, then David spoke to the Lord when he saw the angel who was striking the people. Angels are spirits.

And this, in the same book, 2 Samuel, it's a spirit from the Lord sent to bring judgment on a king who will take glory away from the true king of his people.

Because God is a jealous God. So to me, that's the best answer. God sent this distressing spirit or angel to carry out his judgment because he so loves his people and he's jealous for his people.

Now when, without the help of the spirit in this world, we read passages like this and we can see God's hand at work. But we can't rightly see the character of God unless he gives us faith to understand.

[42 : 52] Let's turn back to our sermon passage and look at verse 16. The servant now starts to speak. Not important other than it's not one of the main characters.

It's another observation by these men. In verse 16 of our sermon passage, Verse 17.

So Saul said to his servants, provide me now. Literally, look now for me, a man who can play well and bring him to me. Verse 18. Then one of the servants answered and said, look, I have seen this.

These servants are around Saul. They're watching what's happening to him. They know God's behind this, but it's a mystery to them. And then in God's providence, it reminds me of when Joseph is in the dungeon, but there's the baker and these the cupbearers that now have this opportunity to speak on his behalf and God to raise him up out of nothing and put him in the court.

One servant says, I've seen a man that would be pleasing to you. What verse are we on? Can you help me?

[44 : 12] Oh, yes. Thank you. 18. He is skillful in playing a mighty man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech and a handsome person. And the Lord is with him.

Verse 19. Therefore, Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, send me your son, David, who is with the sheep. The future king, anointed by God, filled with the spirit.

And what is he known for? He's with the sheep. He's a minister of peace to troubled souls. The spirit of God is with him and causing him to grow and finding favor in God's eyes and in the eyes of men like this servant.

In verse 20, Jesse took a donkey, loaded it with bread, the skin of a wine and a young goat. This would be customary to send gifts to someone to show them honor. I know you're an important person.

I want to be generous and show that we enter into your court. Grateful for this opportunity you've given the little one in our family. And he takes it to him.

[45 : 16] And we read in verse 21 that David came to Saul and stood before him. Saul loved him greatly and he became his armor bearer. And then Saul sent to Jesse saying, please let David stand before me for he has found favor in my sight.

So it was whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well and the distressing spirit would depart from him.

This is also in some ways unexplainable, but yet no less powerful. Saul had all the resources of the kingdom available to him. I'm sure he had tried everything else.

What is it that ministered to him? It's the presence of God through a servant, through the one God has prepared and anointed. Perhaps someone pointed out David's first step of obedience was so simple.

Go and play the harp. It's a ministry of presence. Be with them. A simple step of obedience. Why would God make that his first action as the anointed forthcoming king?

[46 : 28] Maybe to show that the advancement of God's kingdom begins when his servants are faithful, even with little. And our Lord Jesus was faithful in every aspect of obeying his father from the smallest to the greatest assignment.

Perhaps the new kingdom, someone pointed out, begins here because it teaches that as long as the enemy of God has a dominion, the ministry of the anointed one will be to preserve this decaying world, to keep it from being even more evil faster than it would otherwise be without the presence of God's obedient servants left in this world.

Though they are not of this world, just as the kingdom of Christ is not of this world. And that's our job is salt and light. We delay the decay of the sinful world around us.

We are not of the world, but we're stuck into it. We are God's preserving agents. And where his people go, we carry a peace that passes understanding, especially in our weakness, especially in our smallness.

Romans 8.28 says, What can stop God from advancing his kingdom?

[48 : 22] Nothing. Nothing can stop God. And he does this by the power of his spirit poured out through Jesus Christ, the Messiah. I mentioned that fire that spread through that city called Columbia, South Carolina.

Pastor Dale Ralph Davis went back into the old records of their church. And the elders had kept a log of all of their decisions and discussions of all the items that made it on an agenda for that church congregation.

He said, After the fire, the very first action, the very first decision that this church made together was to consider the profession of faith that this man had given them and admit that man to become a member of their church.

After the entire city is destroyed and burned down with fire. Nothing can stop God from advancing his kingdom. One soul at a time.

And one more was added to their numbers that day. Jesus Christ said, I will build my church.

[49 : 29] I will advance my kingdom. Amen. Neither fire nor our failures can stop him. Amen. Thanks be to God.

Let's pray. Lord, we praise you. You are mighty. You display your mightiness in a way that brings you all the glory.

We thank you for your word that's alive and active by the ministry of your spirit. We pray, Lord, that you will apply your truth to our lives, to our hearts for your glory. Amen.

Amen.