

# 1 Samuel 16

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[ 0 : 00 ] Turn with me to the chapter that we read, 1 Samuel 16.

I'm going to look at the whole of this passage that we read together, but I suppose the verse that jumps at us, the verse that forms the theme of everything that takes place is verse 7.

But the Lord said to Samuel, Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him, for the Lord sees not as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

Those of you who have been following closely the study we've been doing into the life of Saul, and I said from the very beginning that we would continue on to the life of David, you'll notice that there's now going to be a change of atmosphere altogether. We haven't heard the last of Saul.

God has rejected him. He's taken the kingdom from him. He's no longer, in God's eyes, going to be the king, although he is going to remain that way technically and formally. But God has his sights set on Saul's replacement, and that's what this chapter is all about. But that doesn't mean that there's not going to be trouble and tension and strife. Over the course of the next few chapters, we'll see the kind of jealousy which Saul harbored against David when he discovered that David was God's replacement for him. And we'll see that his jealousy is quite unreasonable, completely unreasonable, to the point where he tried to kill David on a number of occasions. But I want us to not jump ahead too much this evening. I just want us to ask ourselves, as we always do, what lessons and what principles and what the Lord is revealing to us in this chapter. I want us to see several things from this chapter, very briefly, and from this passage where God says to Samuel,

[ 2 : 30 ] How long will you grieve over Saul? Remember how, of course, Saul on two occasions had deliberately rejected God's Word and had done exactly what he knew God had forbidden. He disobeyed God on at least two major occasions, to the point where God had now decided that this was not, that he wasn't going to be king anymore over Israel. And this was a source of massive grief to Samuel. And when you think about it, it's not surprising why. And so, the first thing I want us to look at this evening is how, in this chapter, it's an encouragement to us in terms of God overcoming our failure.

And there's two senses in which I believe that this is brought to our attention. God overcoming our failure. First of all, there is the failure of Samuel, or I should say the perceived failure of Samuel. I think I mentioned last time that if you look at his life and look at the hardship that Samuel had to face throughout his ministry, you would have thought that a person who is so faithful and so willing to undergo difficulty for the sake of God's kingdom and who was filled with so much love for the Lord, you would imagine him to end his days on a positive note. But now, having gone through so much and having set his sights on Saul as being the first king of Israel, Saul was such an miserable failure that I wonder if Samuel took the whole thing personally. I think I would have if I had been him, because he was so integrally involved with the work of the Lord. He did everything God asked him to do. But more than that, he must have wondered why the Lord was allowing this to happen.

After all, Saul was God's choice. It wasn't as if there was an election of a king. It wasn't as if the whole of Israel got together and put their hands up to choose who was nominated to be king.

Saul was God's choice. But way back at the beginning, I'm sure you noticed that Saul was chosen on the basis of his outward appearance, of his abilities, of his height and his strength and his leadership.

Saul should have made a great king. There was no reason why he shouldn't have been a great king. That's the scary bit, that all the stage was set, and God gave him this great privilege. And I believe that Saul knew the privilege that was his. He knew that the abilities that God had given him, and yet, and yet despite God had given him all these things, Saul miserably failed because he failed to obey God's command. And so, no wonder the whole thing got to Samuel. He must have wondered what the Lord was doing, and he must have wondered what the future was for God's kingdom if this was the very first king of Israel. What were the next kings going to be like? But God encouraged Samuel, and he said to him, how long will you grieve over Saul since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? He's basically saying to Samuel, let's go. Let's go and into the next chapter of the history of my people, in which he was going to establish a man after his own heart. And that's why the atmosphere changes, because whatever Saul was on the outside, it's clear that he wasn't that on the inside. His heart was wrong because he failed, or rather he refused to give God his place and to obey him in every respect. And that's where all of us, that's where the beginning lies. What are we in our hearts?

[ 6 : 52 ] Are we men and women after God's own heart? And if we don't know, then the question is, what is our response when God speaks to us? Is our response one of obedience? And same as David said when he said, I will hear what God the Lord will speak. Well, that's the response of faith.

And whatever faults there were in David's life, and we will discover that there are many faults in David's life. Yet at root, he was a man of faith who put God first and who loved God with all his heart.

But the second respect in which there was failure was Israel themselves. They had asked for a king and their motives, their desires were sinful. But now God was overcoming their sinful request, and he was going to fulfill his own plan amongst his own people. I am so thankful tonight that God's purpose does not depend on the state of my heart, that God's purpose is he is going to fulfill his own plan, irrespective, with me or without me. But I would rather it was with me. I would rather be part of God's plan for this world. I would rather be obedient to the Lord. I would rather be faithful to him than unfaithful. And I guess that every child of God in here tonight would say exactly the same thing, that we would rather have Jesus than silver or gold and that riches untold. And so, this is the story of how the Lord leads Samuel into the place where he's going to show him the next king of Israel. And he does so in a very detailed manner, at least we're given this in a very detailed manner. The first obstacle that Samuel had to overcome was the danger which he knew he was going to be in, because God had made known to Saul that now he was going to take the kingdom away from him. And that meant, by rights, another king was going to be chosen. If Saul heard that Samuel was being led by the Lord to anoint another king, then this was a threat to Samuel. And we'll see later on how David was a threat to Samuel, but it would also have been a threat to Samuel as well as David. But we don't need to worry about that, because where God leads, he will protect. And that's always true. When you set out to follow Jesus, you set out on a lifetime of faith in which your life is not certain, and in which you may have to face things which are even dangerous and awkward and troublesome. The life of faith, when you set out, when you say yes to God and accept him as your Lord, then who knows what your future is going to be. But one thing is for sure, it is a secure future, because you know that whatever happens, that you are accompanied and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

And this chapter reinforces that great truth that who God saves, he accompanies and he protects. That does not mean that nobody ever dies as a Christian. They do. The disciples all died, but they did not die until the time that was appointed for them to leave this world. And that's the assurance that we have in Jesus Christ, that we will not die a moment before God says it. And we will, the day that we die, and the day we're taken out of this world, will be the day that God appoints, that moment that God appoints for us. And Samuel knew that. He was at the end of his life. He had lived a life for the Lord, and yet he was still conscious of the danger which he faced. God said to him, do not worry about that.

That's in my hands. And he says the same thing to all of his people. Third thing that strikes me about this passage is the importance of worship for determining the will of God, the plan of God.

[ 11 : 21 ] When God leads Samuel into the home of Jesse, it is through worship. What does it say? How can I go? When Saul hears it, he will kill me. The Lord said, take a heifer with you and say, I have come to sacrifice to the Lord and invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do. Now, compare what God is saying in this chapter with what he said in the previous chapter when Saul offered up the wrong kind of sacrifices. As far as Saul was concerned, sacrifice was just a matter of course. His heart wasn't in it. But he nevertheless thought that because he was going through the motions of sacrifice, then God was pleased with him. That's the wrong kind of sacrifice. Now, here's the right kind where God is leading his people and leading Samuel to fulfilling his own purpose and his plan as they unfold right before their very eyes. He does that through sacrifice. So, he's no longer saying, has the Lord great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices and obeying the voice of the Lord, because Samuel is obeying him. And therefore, as a result of that, he's worshipping.

But it's through worship, it's in an act of worship that God leads. And I want us to see how important worship is. It's always been that way, all the way through the Bible, from the very moment, from the time of Abel onwards, to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. They're building altars all the time to the Lord.

And God is appearing to them and leading them and guiding them as they are worshipping. And the same is true with the Old Testament. Look at the individuals whose lives were changed and who were led and guided by the Lord as they worshiped. Remember Hannah in 1 Samuel chapter 1, when God was bringing his plan to pass, it was through her prayer as she went to worship.

It was as Peter and John, we were thinking about that this morning in the Gaelic, it was as Peter and John were going to the temple to pray, that they met and they healed the crippled man. It was as Peter as he was praying on the rooftop. He was worshipping. What happened?

God intervened. And there and then he answered his prayer. He revealed himself to him. The course of his life was changed. What that means is that worship is not only important and crucial in the life of a Christian, but you don't know what's going to happen. It's a means and a mechanism through which our lives are changed. That's why I say to you once again, invite people to church.

[ 14 : 16 ] Church. I know that there's a sameness about church. Perhaps there's too much of a sameness and perhaps that's my fault as much as anybody else. But yet, it's as we come to worship, we're doing something that is completely unique when we're worshipping. We're actually doing something which is the most natural event in the world. That's what we were created for. If Adam and Eve hadn't sinned, the whole of their life would have been a continuous worship and delight in God. That's what worship is.

When we gather together to express to the Lord what he means to us and he means everything to us. And there ought to be a sense in which as we sing the great words that we sing, praise to God, as if the roof is lifted up and there is a sense of joy and expectation and anticipation because we know that God is in this place and it's only the hardness of our hearts that prevents that.

So, let's ask the Lord to take away the hardness of our hearts that creates such a cloud sometimes. Oh, sometimes the Lord breaks through that.

And yet, worship is crucial. Crucial. Both our own personal, private worship with the Lord.

I'll tell you this. Whatever the devil's strategy is for you this evening, it will begin by distracting you when you give yourself to reading your Bible. I guarantee it.

[ 15 : 48 ] God has a plan. God has promised to lead and to guide your life and your choices and your decision. He does so as we read the Bible, as we come back to the Bible, and as we devour it.

So, what Satan does is he takes away our appetite from it and gives us something else to do. He fills our lives with all kinds of distractions and alternatives. And what happens is we put the Bible to one side and it gets marginalized and we don't go back to it.

All corporate worship. What we call corporate worship. When we gather together on a Sunday, we hear his word. Why do we gather? Because we meet with the living God who's dealing with us personally.

He's speaking to us in his word right now. God is speaking to each one of us. I don't know exactly what he's saying to you. But he is. As we read his word and as we discover it.

Very often, not quite what I say that gets through to you. But something that God says between the lines. And you all of a sudden rediscover something you've forgotten or neglected or put to one side.

[ 17 : 02 ] And it's a change. It changes your life completely. Don't ever, ever neglect that. Coming to God privately.

Coming to God along with other people. Don't ever, ever neglect that. You come as often as you can. As often as you're able to. I know that there are other duties.

But nevertheless, let's make use for our own benefit of what God has provided for us. This is what they were doing here. And this is how God was through this worship time of sacrifice.

Of course, that's what they used to do in the Old Testament. We don't do that anymore because our one great sacrifice has already been made. The person of Jesus Christ when he died on the cross.

That is the sacrifice on which we rest and trust. And the basis on which we come and worship even this evening in his name.

[ 18 : 02 ] And yet we're coming because we're meeting with the God of the unexpected. The God of the surprise. The God who speaks to us in ways that we don't anticipate.

We don't always anticipate. And the God who changes our lives. And this is what God was going to do right now. One man, young one young man. He wasn't even involved in that.

He was away, far away, looking after his father's sheep. And his life was about to change forever. Because God was going to place upon him that mark of his choice to be king over Israel.

And he was going to commission him to lead his people. And the fourth thing that strikes me about this passage is how God's plans override our outward impressions.

Of course, you'll have read this chapter before. You'll have looked at this verse before. And, of course, that's the theme. That's the message throughout the chapter. God said, God said, do not look on his appearance.

[ 19 : 05 ] Why was that? Well, because when he made known the purpose of his visit, Jesse began to take out his sons one by one, beginning with the oldest. And the oldest was Eliab.

And naturally speaking, normally speaking, the oldest one would have the precedence over everyone else. He was the one who was the oldest in the family.

And God said, no. Whatever height, whatever he looks like, whatever leadership qualities, that's what we did the last time. And it didn't work.

We're now going to have somebody after my heart from the inside. Was Samuel wrong in naturally concluding that Eliab and Abinadab and all the sons of Samuel, they were the ones?

No, he wasn't. He was going through what he normally would have gone through at a time like this. And yet he was listening to the Lord at the same time.

[ 20 : 22 ] And to me, that strikes a very, very sensible course of life for all of God's people.

How does God guide his people? It's a big question. It's a question that normally young people ask more than older people.

I'm not quite sure why, because I believe that God guides older people as much as he does younger people. But younger people, of course, have the sense, quite rightly so, of being at the threshold of the rest of their lives.

They've got all these choices to make. Like, what job should I take? Where should I go and live? Should I marry this person that I feel I'm developing a relationship with?

And that kind of thing. How do I know I'm right in doing that? You have to listen to the Lord.

[ 21 : 24 ] You have to learn to listen to the Lord. That's what Samuel was. Samuel was, as someone who had spent his life in the Lord's presence, He knew the voice.

That doesn't mean that there are voices operating within us. The Lord, well, I certainly have never heard a voice within me in all of my years as a Christian.

Because to me, the voice with which God speaks to me is this voice here, the Bible. And it is. It's a real, real guide in the hands of the Holy Spirit.

As he takes you and as he leads you through the Bible, you get to see. And I believe that as we ask God for the right choices to make, the very first question we ask is, what will you have me to do?

And I want to ask you, are you prepared in all your choices to put God first? Because I think that that is the key fundamental question that we ask, by which we determine God's will.

[ 22 : 34 ] Are you prepared to say, here am I, Lord. Send me. I'm putting you first. And I'm going to obey you whatever you say. No matter what it costs.

And you are going to be my motive. You're going to be my driving force. I'm going to put the Lord first. Seeking the Lord. Seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness. And everything else God says will be added to you.

They will all be provided for you at that time. So I want to ask, is the Lord first? I'm going to put Him first and His will and His voice.

And I'm so tempted to go off onto a tangent at this point. Talk about the whole subject of guidance and how we know the Lord is guiding us. How we can be sure. But I'm not going to do that because we're in this passage.

And I want us to stick to it. But despite the fact that naturally His first choice would have been the eldest, God had His own message for Samuel.

[ 23 : 37 ] And He was guided by the Holy Spirit. And we should not want anything that is outside of God's will. And that's the same with Eliab and Abinadab.

I wonder what they thought when they saw their brother, their youngest brother, who by rights would have been the least in the family. The youngest was the least in the family. There wasn't the equality that we have in families today.

The youngest was considered to be the least important. And that's the whole point, of course, of this passage. That God is taking the youngest who's not even with them at the time.

And He's making them care. I wonder what Eliab thought when the whole cultural expectation was turned on its head. And when he had to stand there and watch his younger brother getting the position that by rights he should have had as the oldest.

And it's something similar to when we perhaps look with a measure of jealousy on other people.

[ 24 : 44 ] Perhaps on the way that God is working in their lives. We must never, ever be jealous of what God is doing in someone else's life. God has His plan for each one of us.

And what He wants us to do tonight is to be about the business of obeying Him. And living our own lives. And not looking over our shoulder. And not looking into the next garden.

And not looking to the next person who God is doing something different with. Eliab needs to be content with what he is. That doesn't mean that God doesn't have a plan for Eliab.

It doesn't mean that God has, that his life is going to be meaningless. No, Eliab needs to put his trust in the Lord just like David does. And so do we. But God leads us in different directions.

And if anyone ought to have been troubled by rights, by what was happening in Jesse's house, it should have been Jonathan. Because we've seen all along that not only was Jonathan equipped as a leader in every possible sense, his heart was right with the Lord as well.

[ 25 : 50 ] And the great question, of course, is why did God not take Jonathan and make him king? We don't know. Because God is the Lord.

He does what is right in his own eyes. And it's not for us to try and define the logic with which God does things. It's for us to simply accept in faith what God does.

And then that brings me on to the fifth thing that strikes me about this chapter, which is that the outcome did not depend on being in the right place at the right time.

Do you know what I mean by that? So many success stories. I don't know if you ever read articles or books about people who have been successful in the world, in business and in entertainment or whatever.

I don't read them, but I've read one or two. And every so often, in fact, more often than not, you hear people saying, well, I am what I am today because I happened to meet someone on this occasion.

[ 26 : 57 ] I bumped into that person. And if I hadn't been for that chance encounter, I wouldn't be what I am today. And so I happen to be in the right place at the right time. And that can work in reverse as well.

So that if you feel discontent with your life, you say, well, I wasn't very lucky. I didn't meet the right person at the right time.

I wasn't in a place where I could be successful. Maybe you know somebody and you know that that person's success is only because they happen to be in the right place at the right time.

Now, if that was true, then David would have been right out of it because he wasn't there. He was all on his own looking after his father's sheep.

He was in obscurity. And yet, God made sure that he was to be the king. That's a huge encouragement to me.

[ 28 : 01 ] And it should be an huge encouragement to you as a Christian. There's no... For you, it's always the right place. And it's always the right time.

Because God is there. He's accompanying you. He's dwelling within you. He's leading you and guiding you. That's what we mean when we sing, The Lord's my shepherd. When we sing about him restoring my soul and making me to walk in the paths of righteousness and leading me with his rod and his staff, just like the shepherd in Israel, he would lead his sheep down through the valleys and along the ridges and in through the forests.

That's the same way as God leads and guides his people as well. So don't be looking over your shoulder and saying, Oh, I wish that I had been there at that time and I would have had so much better life.

No, you wouldn't. Because it wasn't God's will. It wasn't God's plan. It wasn't what God had for you. You stick to what the Lord has for you.

And God will determine that you will be in the right place. Be obedient to him. Live the life of faith. Ask yourself, what will God have me to do?

[ 29 : 19 ] You won't go wrong. You continue to live like that, then you won't go wrong. You will always be in the right place at the right time. David wasn't.

And yet God said, we are not going to sit down. Until your youngest son. He knew that there was a... Samuel didn't know there was a youngest son. God did. And it wasn't.

And he wasn't going to rest until the youngest son was taken in and anointed. The last thing. God's plans always involve the most perfect preparation.

You wouldn't... If you were to... If I was to ask you, What kind of preparation do you think a future king would have to have before he came to the throne?

I mean, like, so for example, Prince William right now. I mean, he's gone through a whole lifetime of preparation. He's been told from the time he was three years old that one day he'll be king.

[ 30 : 16 ] And God willing, he will be at some point in time. His whole life has been a training. It's been an induction. And the way that a king speaks.

What's expected of a king. The way he dresses. The kind of places he goes to. The kind of functions. That he's going to be required to attend. And how to go about.

Nighting people. And the opening of parliament. And all of these things. He's prepared for all that. David. His preparation was looking after his father's sheep in obscurity.

And for Israel, that's the best preparation that he could possibly have had. Because it was in the loneliness of that place that he learned.

To what it meant to have a living relationship with God. If we have a living relationship with God. Whatever God asks us to do and leads us into.

[ 31 : 18 ] You can be sure that you are prepared for that. And he will give you everything that is necessary. Just like he gave David everything that was necessary.

For his future. So we don't need to worry about what God has for us. What we need to know right now is that we are in. The place where God wants us to be doing.

Living the life that God wants us to live. Seeking the Lord with all our heart. And leaning not on our own understanding. But putting him first.

Taking his word. And asking him by his grace. To make us obedient to it. And to love the Lord with all our heart. I don't want to leave this place.

This chapter this evening. Without noticing that. This was not the only time that Bethlehem is mentioned in the scriptures. Bethlehem has a very important place.

[ 32 : 19 ] In the pages of the Bible. And you know the importance of that place. Everybody knows at this time of year. The importance of that place. Because a thousand years from David's time.

God was doing something else marvelous. In Bethlehem. This time he was entering into Bethlehem. As a newborn baby himself.

He was not taking. A young lad. And anointing him king. God never saved us. By taking.

Someone. A person who already belonged. To the human race. But actually. By becoming. A human himself. And that's the wonder of Bethlehem.

That God. It wasn't the shepherds. Or the wise men. Or whenever. Wherever. The wise men came. We don't know. But. What God did in Bethlehem.

[ 33 : 17 ] Was for himself. To become. A helpless. Tiny baby. In the arms. Of his mother. And his earthly father. So that by his coming into the world.

By his coming. Becoming. Becoming one of us. He could die. On our behalf. On the cross. At Calvary. God.

The birth of Jesus. Is meaningless. Without the death of Jesus. And isn't it sad. That. The whole world.

It seems. focuses on. The birth of Jesus. Without really knowing. What that birth means. Of course.

Our. Our task is to. As we. Share the gospel. With others. Is to explain to people. What God did. In Bethlehem. But to carry on. Into Jerusalem.

[ 34 : 16 ] 33 years later. To continue. To. The reason. Why Jesus. Came into the world. To lay down his life. On the cross.

And to rise again. On the third day. In fulfillment. To all that David. Prefigured. And what we're going to find out. Of course. In the life of David.

Is how he looked. How his life. In many respects. Not in a perfect sense. But how his life. Prefigured. The great king. That was to come. In the line of David.

And save. His people. From their sins. By giving his life. For them. Let's bow our heads. In prayer. Our father in heaven. We. Thank you.

Once again. For. The message of the gospel. In which. The Lord Jesus. Was made sin for us. And we pray that. That that message. May.

[ 35 : 10 ] May reach our hearts. This evening. And that it may reach the hearts. Of many. Many people. We pray Lord. That you will. Bless your word to us. And give us that assurance.

That if we're in Christ. We are being led by. Your spirit. Make us obedient. Though we pray. And to your spirit. In everything. So give us. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.