

PREFACE

It may be that we do not fully appreciate the work of the Holy Spirit in a life—or the presence and attention of God in general, beyond the indwelling Spirit. While it is true that we cannot always draw direct comparisons between Biblical characters and our lives today, they can nevertheless supply detailed illustrations pertinent to our walk with God in Christ. In the lives of Saul and David we can catch a glimmer of what a difference the presence of God in a life can make.

For the last two sessions of this study of *Unexpected Lives* I would like to focus on David's reliance on and devotion to God, how this was manifested in his life, and what it can mean in our own.

SAUL

I was recently reading the prophet Jeremiah, where the message the Lord gave him, repeatedly, for the people of Judah was to bow to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, to submit to him and leave Judah for exile in Babylon. If they would do this they would live; if they stayed, they would die. The land was filled with *false* prophets offering false hope to the people, that if they remained in Jerusalem things would work out just fine. But that was a lie.

Jeremiah repeatedly told Zedekiah king of Judah to go to Babylon and live.

Read Jeremiah 38:17-20.

In painful detail Jeremiah told him what would happen not just to him but his family and all the court if he refused to cooperate with Nebuchadnezzar. But Zedekiah believed the lies rather than the truth. So here is what happened to him and his family.

Read Jeremiah 52:1-11, 13-14.

Long before this tragic moment in the life of Israel, there were two other kings, the first two kings of Israel. Remember: It was never God's intention for there to be *any* human kings for Israel; *He* would be their king (1 Samuel 8:7-9). Since the people insisted, God, in giving them what they asked, used the many kings of Judah and Israel as object lessons to illustrate the benefits of obedience, and the penalties of disobedience.

The Lord's choice of Saul to be the first king of Israel was an object lesson for the consequences of rejecting the Lord God in favor of a weak-minded but physically attractive human king—as if God were saying, *So you reject Me as your king? All right, see how you like this guy!*

As with us today, the presence of the Holy Spirit in a life does not guarantee that one will always do the right thing, that one will always make the correct decision. Saul reigned (probably) about forty years (Acts 13:21), and from the printed record available to us, he was not a very good king. It wasn't long before God through Samuel declared that Saul would have no dynasty, that it would end with him, and that he was certainly unworthy of the eternal kingdom that would be given David (1 Samuel 13:14).

Even *while* the Spirit of the Lord was in Saul, he

- lost patience and usurped the role of priest;
- issued a foolish order to his troops that almost cost him the life of his son Jonathan; and
- disobeyed a direct order from the Lord, and then tried to weasel his way out of responsibility for his disobedience.

This was the last straw, and the Lord sent Samuel to anoint a new king: David. The presence of the Holy Spirit in Saul's life did not ensure obedience and righteous living. But what is fascinating to observe in his life is how, when the Lord removed His Spirit from Saul ([1 Samuel 16:14](#)) and replaced Him with an evil spirit, how his life and rule went utterly off the rails. Without the Holy Spirit in him, Saul became downright *schizophrenic*. One moment loving David, the next trying to pin him to the wall with his spear. One moment arrogantly rationalizing his disobedience to the Lord's command to Samuel, the next pleading for the prophet to go with him to worship the Lord ([1 Samuel 15:24-25](#)).

David had his own moments of disobedience, but the Lord never removed His Spirit from him. As a result, he never lost his mind, as did Saul. We find one of the sadder verses in God's word in Chapter Twenty-eight of 1 Samuel. The Philistines were again organizing for battle with Israel, and when Saul saw the extent of the enemy's forces he was very afraid. So he sought help from the Lord.

Read 1 Samuel 28:6.

No longer connected to Yahweh, he sought help from a medium—a witch. How sad. The Lord had removed Himself utterly from the life of Saul, and we see him thrashing about for help. But without the Lord, there will be no help.

DAVID

David, who received the Holy Spirit presumably the same day (or at least the same verse) that the Spirit was taken from Saul, made plenty of mistakes himself. But the Lord never removed His Spirit from him. It is hard to say which came first: Did David remain faithful to the Lord because he had His Holy Spirit? Or did the Spirit remain because of David's faithfulness?

Whichever came first, we clearly see a pattern to David's life: When he had a decision to make, he didn't turn to a medium; he turned to the Lord. And because the Lord was "with" him, the Lord answered.

[Please turn to 1 Samuel 23.](#)

Within a span of just twelve verses, when the Philistines were attacking Keilah ([keh-ee-law'](#)) and then Saul came after David and his men there, David consults the Lord four times.

Read 1 Samuel 23:1-4.

Consequently David won a great victory over the Philistines in Keilah, but then he learns that Saul is on his way to get him, so he consults the Lord again.

Read 1 Samuel 23:9-12. ([Abiathar = eb-yaw-thawr'](#))

The Ephod

It is now time to discuss the “ephod” (ay-fode’), and the role it played in these consultations with Yahweh. There are several types of ephods, beginning with a simple priestly loin-cloth. Then there was a simple linen tunic, but this was distinguished from the more costly, embroidered ephod worn by the high priest. So initially the ephod was a garment, typically linen. But there was also an ephod used for oracles.

Read Exodus 28:28-30.

In David’s time, after the original tabernacle but before there was a Jerusalem temple, the ephod with the Urim (oo-reem’) and Thummim (toom-meem’) were hung up on the wall, then taken down and used for the purpose of discerning the Lord’s will. In 1 Samuel 23, David tells the priest to bring him the “ephod,” almost certainly a reference to the general package of priestly linen that included the “lots” for casting to know the Lord’s will.

We do not know what they looked like, nor do we know precisely how they were used, but by casting the Urim and Thummim and observing the combination, the individual would receive a “yes” or “no” to his inquiry. And this was how the Lord “spoke” to David in these situations.

Sidebar: Note the contrast between the sentences and paragraphs the Lord spoke to a prophet such as Samuel, and the succinct responses by means of the Urim and Thummim.

Turn please to 2 Samuel 5.

I want to look at one more example of David’s devotion to the Lord and His counsel—and His obedience to it. This passage seems to indicate that the Lord’s counsel to David could consist of something more than just a simple “yes” or “no” by the casting of lots, for the Lord’s answer is lengthy and detailed.

Read 2 Samuel 5:18-19.

Now, the direct answer here could have been a simple “yes” with ancient scribes or translators inserting a *gloss* to help explain the fullness of the answer. But I don’t think we can interpret the answer to his next inquiry—after the promised victory for David’s forces—the same way.

Read 2 Samuel 5:22-25.

That is a lot more than a simple “yes” or “no.” When I read that I have to ask, By what means did that answer from the Lord come to David? It couldn’t have been by simply rolling the dice. But, sadly, I could find no commentators willing to discuss this. Perhaps it came through an unnamed prophet; perhaps the Lord spoke directly to David (who was, at least in his writings, a prophet as well). We can’t say.

But we *can* learn something from this.

And once again we gain insight from the commentary by David Guzik.

Guzik: After the first victory over the Philistines, David was wise enough to wait on the LORD before the second battle. It is easy for many in the same situation to say, “I’ve fought this battle before. I know how to win. This will be easy.” David always triumphed when he sought and obeyed God.

I have likened a healthy believer’s prayer life as something not confined to the prayer closet, but more like a spiritual *vibration* that accompanies him or her throughout every day. We develop the habit—and it is a habit that *must* be consciously developed and nurtured, for it does not come naturally—of sometimes audibly, sometimes silently conversing with the Lord throughout the day, over things small and things large. To the point that it becomes an automatic, reflexive impulse to ask, like David, “Lord, what do you want me to do?”

Then Guzik shares this quotation from Adam Clarke’s commentary—a good point of reflection and application with which to close.

Clarke: How is it that such supernatural directions and assistances are not communicated now? Because they are not asked for; and they are not asked for because they are not expected; and they are not expected because men have not faith; and they have not faith because they are under a refined spirit of atheism, and have no spiritual intercourse with their Maker.

What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? (James 4:1-4a)