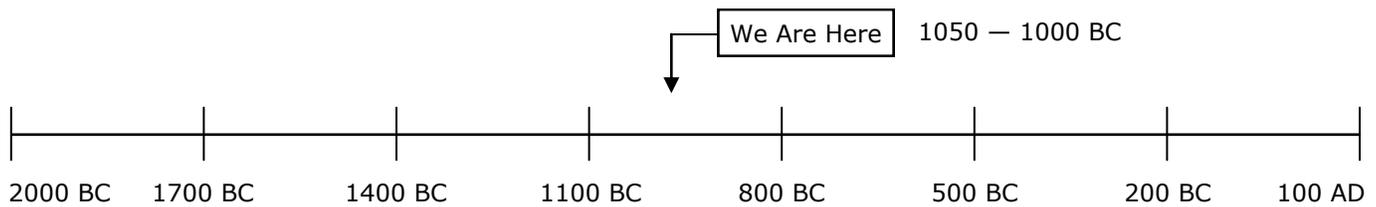


A Heart for God

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Week 16: April 16-22 — 1 Sam. 22-2 Sam 6; Various Psalms

30.6% Complete — 253 Days to Go



Helpful Resources

Family of David (p.69), Overview of Bible History (p.37)

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

Israel's period of judges has given way to the kingdom under Saul. While Saul was physically qualified, he was not spiritually qualified, nor did he possess the character needed for the job. As a result, Saul neglected God's leadership and made several selfish decisions; consequently, God was angered and sought his replacement, who was David. He desired someone who would listen and obey His voice; David did both. Thus, we read of the transition between these two men and the resulting righteousness that swept through the land of Israel.

The literal meaning of Saul's name is "asked for," which, of course, fit the situation at the end of the period of judges, as the people of Israel asked for (or demanded) a king to be chosen to rule over them. However, Saul proved not to be what the people needed after all. The lesson here is to be careful what you ask for, for we know least what we need most; rather we should trust the Lord to provide for our needs in His way (i.e. with King David).

It is hard not to compare Saul and David. Why had Saul failed as Israel's leader and why did David experience success at every turn? Why did Saul cause God to grieve and grow angry, while David pleased the Lord with every move? Through this process, one major difference became obvious — it all boiled down to being a matter of the heart. The bottom line was that while David sought the Lord with his whole heart, Saul didn't have a heart for the Lord at all.

King Saul — No Heart: The basis of Saul's selection was for external reasons. He was what the people envisioned a king would look like; his family was rich and influential, and he was tall and handsome. He wasn't chosen based on his character or spiritual zeal. God sought him out; Saul did not seek God. Thus, his heart was not set on the Lord; as a result, he did not obey God. His trust was not in the Lord but in himself; he even sought out mediums for guidance. Saul constantly repaid evil for good; he was cruel and unforgiving, and when he was confronted in his sin, he lied, repenting by word only.

King David — Whole Heart: The basis for his selection was his passion for God. He delighted in the Lord. He was always quick to seek His will and certainly careful to obey it. His conscience was active and guided him to righteous decisions. He trusted the Lord and had confidence in Him. While Saul repaid David evil for his good service, David repaid Saul's evil with good. He was a man of his word, a man of prayer, and a man of faith. Though he would trip and fall many times, David was always eager to repent and be reconciled to God.

- Prophetic Passages
 1. **Abigail's Prophecy** (*1 Samuel 25:28-31*) predicted the house of David to endure forever as Kings over God's people, which foreshadowed David's rule through the Messiah.
 2. **Curse of Joab** (*2 Samuel 3:28,29*): Because of the needless murder of Abner, David cursed the family and descendants of Joab with diseases and disabilities.

- Personal Application
 1. **Have a Heart:** King Saul could talk the talk of the godly, but he couldn't (or didn't) walk the walk. What good is it to be like him, all words and motions and no sincerity of heart, no genuine love or meaningful action? We would be an empty shell, a clanging symbol that is nothing but noise in the ears of God. Don't be one of those Israelites whose lips were God's but whose heart was far from Him. Have a heart for the Lord and love Him with every fiber of your being (*Mark 12:30, 31; Colossians 3:17, 23*).
 2. **Obedience Matters:** We can learn from King Saul's mistakes here (*1 Sam. 15:1-38*). *Partial obedience is disobedience.* Remember, 99% obedience is still 100% disobedience! Saul destroyed almost everything of the Amalekites, but not all, as was instructed. In God's eyes, he disobeyed. *Delayed obedience is disobedience.* Saul was going to kill the Amalekite sheep, yes, but only after Samuel arrived, and it's very unlikely that Saul would have done that anyway; it was spoil. *Argued obedience is disobedience.* In place of obedience, Saul argued with God that he was saving the sheep for a sacrifice to Him. Likely excuse, doubtful argument.
 3. **Who Are You Chasing?** Just as noticeable as Saul and David having very different hearts when it came to their relationships with God, so it is obvious that both men were chasing two different things. Saul was chasing David in more ways than one. He was chasing the likeness of David and the approval in others' eyes that David possessed. He was also chasing the security or significance that comes with that. Saul always had to be better than he was, impress more people than he already did, or do more than he could, and every time he tried to fit himself into someone else's mold, he never allowed himself to be molded by God. On the other hand, David was not chasing after the image of anyone, save the Lord's; he was most interested in being in the likeness of Him. As he did not compare himself to other mortals, he did not fall prey to the jealous game that befell King Saul. No, David chased intimacy with God with great zeal and passion; and a result, he found his security, significance, and contentment in Him.

The Bottom Line

Keep your focus on *chasing God* and resist the urge to *chase others*.

Questions to Consider

1. Share a time when you received what you asked for and it turned out to be a disaster.
2. How do you decipher between your needs and wants? When do desires become God's?
3. Does your heart resemble Saul's or David's? How is it that we remain there?
4. Of the three aspects of disobedience, which do you struggle with the most and why?
5. What's the key to obedience anyway? Why is it so hard for us?
6. Who is it that you are chasing? If you are unsure, how can you figure it out?
7. What does it mean to chase after the Lord anyway?