

Whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand.

(1 Samuel 16:23)

Lord God, you offer us comfort through those who serve and care for us. By the kindness and love of others we see your love for us shining through. May we care for the people you send us to and bless them in your name, just as we are richly blessed by those you send to help us in times of trial. We pray this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Introduction

King Saul was the first ruler of the united monarchy in Israel. Because of his disobedience to the Lord, Saul was often troubled by a spirit of guilt and frustration. His advisors suggested he bring in a musician to cheer him up. That is how the young man David first came to the court of Saul.

Read: 1 Samuel 16:14-23

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?

The Biblical Context

In the time prior to the Monarchy, God raised up the great prophet Samuel to guide his people in faith, but the people clamored for God to give them a king like the other nations around them (1 Samuel 8). God relented, but warned the people that having a king could easily lead to tyranny.

Such was the case with Israel's first king, Saul. While he did bring some stability to the land, he liked to do things his own way rather than God's way, and because of this, he suffered the consequences.

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel and the books of 1 and 2 Kings tell the story of Israel as a united nation and the subsequent division into north and south kingdoms.

Discussion Questions

1. In what sense was Saul was experiencing more than just a bad mood? What were the underlying spiritual issues that Saul was dealing with at this point in his life?
2. Scripture says that the source of Saul's torment was a "harmful" (ESV) or "evil" (KJV) spirit sent from God. Why do you think God wanted Saul to feel bad? Have negative feelings (guilt, regret, sadness) ever resulted in a positive change in your life?
3. David's music had a genuine effect on Saul. Have you ever been cheered up or calmed down by listening to music? What style or kind of songs do that best for you?
4. Martin Luther said, "Next to the Word of God, the noble art of music is the greatest treasure in the world." Do you agree? Do you think this is only something a musician can appreciate? Why or why not?
5. Spiritually speaking, how do words and music complement one another? With regard to faith and worship, what can music convey better than words alone? What is instrumental music alone not able to convey?
6. Many of the songs we find in the Book of Psalms are attributed to David. Page through the Psalms to find an example. What is that Psalm about? What promise does it convey from God?
7. Read Luke 11:24-28. What is Jesus telling us about spiritual warfare? Is faith a "quick fix"? In our lives of faith, why is it necessary to continually "hear the Word and keep it"?