

# OpenTheo

## July 27th: 1 Samuel 16 & 2 Corinthians 10

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David anointed by Samuel. Paul challenges the boasting of his opponents.

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>).

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## Transcript

1 Samuel 16. The Lord said to Samuel, How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go, I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons. And Samuel said, How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.

And 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. And you shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you. Samuel did what the Lord commanded, and came to Bethlehem.

The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, Do you come peaceably? And he said, Peaceably, I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice. And he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, Surely the Lord's anointed is before him. 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. Then 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. And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel.

And Samuel said to Jesse, The Lord has not chosen these. Then Samuel said to Jesse, Are all your sons here? And he said, There remains yet the youngest. But behold, he is keeping the sheep.

And Samuel said to Jesse, Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here. And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome.

And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him, for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward.

And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah. Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the Lord tormented him. And Saul's servants said to him, Behold now, a harmful spirit from God is tormenting you.

Let our Lord now command your servants who are before you to seek out a man who is skillful in playing the lyre. And when the harmful spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will be well. So Saul said to his servants, Provide for me a man who can play well and bring him to me.

One of the young men answered, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence. And the Lord is with him. Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, Send me David your son, who is with the sheep.

And Jesse took a donkey laden with bread, and a skin of wine, and a young goat, and sent them by David his son to Saul. And David came to Saul and entered his service. And Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer.

And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor in my sight. And whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him.

1 Samuel chapter 16 begins with the situation after the rejection of Saul. After Saul fails to judge the Amalekites, the kingdom is taken from him and will be given to one who is better than him. Samuel, however, is mourning Saul.

Saul had been like Samuel's adoptive son, the replacement for his unfaithful sons, just as he was the replacement for Hophni and Phinehas. The Lord sends him to anoint a replacement, to Jesse the Bethlehemite. This is the first time that we hear of Bethlehem in the book of 1 Samuel.

We last heard of it in the book of Ruth. Samuel is worried, though, if Saul catches wind of the fact that he is going to Bethlehem, and wonders what he is about, and discovers that he is anointing a successor, he will be in serious trouble. Unsurprisingly, Saul would seek his life if he anointed a replacement, who Saul would perceive as a rival.

The Lord gives Samuel a cover story. He is going to make a peace offering. In Leviticus chapter 3 verse 1, the peace offering can involve a male or a female.

Saul was marked out as the king in part through a sacrifice, in chapter 9, and now his successor will be marked out in a similar manner. Samuel follows the Lord's instructions and goes to Bethlehem. In preparation for the feast, he consecrates Jesse and his sons, and invites them to the sacrifice.

As he is consecrating the sons, he sees the oldest son of Jesse first, Eliab, and judging by his appearance, presumes that he must be the chosen one. Yet the Lord says that he has rejected him. Nor has the Lord chosen Abinadab, or Shammah, or any of the other seven sons that have passed before Samuel.

Previously we saw that Saul was set apart from others by his appearance. He was handsome. He was head and shoulders above everyone else.

Here the Lord makes clear that one cannot judge simply by the outward appearance. The Lord sees the heart. While the outward appearance is by no means unimportant for the king, it is not the be-all and end-all.

And perhaps Israel should have learned some lessons from their experience with Saul. In a way that is perhaps reminiscent of the setting apart of Saul as king. The candidate cannot be found.

Samuel has to inquire of Jesse whether he has another son who has not been presented. And indeed there is one more, the youngest, and he is keeping the sheep. This is perhaps the first of several allusions to the stories of Joseph and Jacob.

Joseph was introduced to us in Genesis chapter 37 verse 2 as the one who kept the sheep with his brothers. Now there is another shepherd on the scene. Like Joseph, David is another very handsome young man.

Unlike Joseph, he naturally rises to authority as the spirit of God comes upon him. David is described as ruddy with beautiful eyes. Only one other character in scripture is described as ruddy, and that is Esau.

David is a character who brings together traits associated with Esau and Jacob. He is primarily associated with Jacob, but he takes on some of the more manly traits of Esau. Although we will see that he resembles Esau in some not so good ways as well.

Appropriately, David will also bring the land of Edom into union with Israel for a period of time. He brings together the twins. Like Saul, David is described as one who is a suitable bridegroom of Israel.

He is physically attractive. David's name means beloved, and as the story proceeds we will see that he gains dominance and influence and power, in large part through the fact that everyone falls in love with him. The first being Saul himself.

As the spirit of the Lord comes upon David, however, the spirit of the Lord leaves Saul, and a harmful spirit from the Lord torments him. Much as when Pharaoh was troubled with dreams, the cupbearer, his servant, told him of a gifted young man who would be able to help him. So here, one of Saul's servants tells him that there is a young man who will be able to help him with his problem.

David, the son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite, is already developing a reputation for himself. He's skillful in playing. He's a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and the Lord is with him.

Saul sends messengers to Jesse to summon David. David is sent by Jesse with a donkey laden with bread, and a skin of wine, and a young goat. We've seen these things before.

These are items associated with the signs of the kingdom given to Saul in chapter 10. There he was told first of all that the donkeys of his father had been found, and then in the second encounter he met men carrying goats, bread, and wine, and they gave him some of the bread. Finally, he met prophets and musicians coming down from the high place, and the spirit of God came upon him and he became a new man.

Now these same signs are being sent to him by the hand of David. David is now the one who has the spirit of God upon him. He will play the musical instrument.

He's the one by whom Saul will be relieved of his harmful spirit. Already David and Saul's identities and destinies are tied up together, and Saul loves David greatly, and David becomes his armor bearer. He requests that David remain with him, that he become one of his household, as one of his full-time servants.

A question to consider, paying attention to the characterization of David within this chapter, what are some ways in which he can already be contrasted with the character

of Saul? I, Paul, myself entreat you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away. I beg of you that when I am present I may not have to show boldness with such confidence as I count on showing against some who suspect us of walking according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience when your obedience is complete. Look at what is before your eyes.

If anyone is confident that he is Christ, let him remind himself that just as he is Christ, so also are we. But even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be ashamed. I do not want to appear to be frightening you with my letters.

For they say, his letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account. Let such a person understand that what we say by letter when absent, we do when present. Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves, but when they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.

But we will not boast beyond limits, but will boast only with regard to the area of influence God assigned to us, to reach even to you. For we are not overextending ourselves, as though we did not reach you. For we were the first to come all the way to you with the gospel of Christ.

We do not boast beyond limit in the labors of others, but our hope is that, as your faith increases, our area of influence among you may be greatly enlarged, so that we may preach the gospel in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in another's area of influence. Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends.

2 Corinthians chapter 10 represents a significant shift in the tone of the letter, to the degree that a number of scholars have argued that it is either part of the earlier painful letter that Paul sent to the Corinthians, or another letter that he sent subsequently. While there has been rebuke at various points in the letter to this point and polemic, the urgency and the polemical tone of much of chapters 10-13 feels a bit jarring after the joy and the relief of chapter 7. Various explanations have been advanced by those arguing for the unity of the letter. Some, such as Ben Witherington, have argued that an understanding of the rhetorical techniques of the day supports the unity of the letter.

Others, such as Murray Harris, observe the literary unity of the letter, but believe that

Paul probably received some further news from the Corinthian church while he was still writing the letter. As Harris observes, it is quite reasonable to presume that Paul's letters would have been composed and written over a period of days or weeks or months, during which time various developments might have occurred. Beyond the fact that they are carefully crafted literary works that would have taken some time to put together, we need to consider that Paul had to wait for a suitable bearer to bring them to the church to which he was sending them.

Some such explanation is far more reasonable than the idea that the ending of the letter from chapters 1-9 was lost, and the beginning of a supposed other letter from chapters 10-13 was also lost without a trace. Chapter 10 begins with another reference to Paul's anticipated visit. He wants to come to them in a spirit of meekness and gentleness, which is the ideal way of restoring people according to Galatians 6. Paul also speaks of meekness and gentleness as characteristic of Christ.

As a minister of Christ, this is the way that Paul wants to approach them. We've already seen Paul draw attention to the apparent contrast between his manner with them in his presence and his manner with them in his absence. There are similar statements in 1 Corinthians 4-9-21.

The Corinthians have the choice which Paul they want to visit. Paul would much prefer it to be the gentle Paul rather than the bold and forceful Paul, and he entreats them to allow him to come to them as a joyful father rather than as one who has the painful task of enforcing discipline. The character of Paul and his companions seems to have been maligned by some in the Corinthian situation, and he needs to vindicate himself against the false accusations of his opponents.

Paul may minister in the world in the current age and in the realm of the body, walking in the flesh, but he does not operate on the terms of these things. Paul and his associates act with powerful force, albeit as people who do so in the weakness of their flesh. Paul describes his activity in military terms here.

He may appear weak, but he has resources that they might not be taking into account. He is a sort of warrior in the gospel, prepared to pacify all resistance, destroying opposition and taking thoughts captive, much as he compared himself to a captive earlier in the letter. At various points in Paul's epistles, we need to engage in what some have called shadow reading.

We don't have first-hand texts or teachings from Paul's opponents, so we need to infer their teachings and positions from Paul's arguments against them. Here the impression we get is that some of his opponents claim to belong to, or to represent Christ in some special way, setting them apart from others. And Paul clearly will not allow such a position to be entertained.

Paul has an authority relative to the Corinthians. It's given for their up-building. Although he's used military language and the language of destruction earlier on, the authority that he's been given has not fundamentally been given for that purpose.

Rather, it's been given for their up-building. Paul's opponents attack his consistency. They seem to claim that there's a discrepancy between the weighty, threatening and intimidating Paul projected by the letters, and the meek and underwhelming Paul that visits in person.

This apostle's bark is much worse than his bite. Yet Paul makes clear that his authority is for the sake of building up, not destroying. His letters are not designed to frighten, but to build up.

If he does give warnings, it's not in order to frighten or threaten, but in order to build up, ultimately. That is the end for which they are given. Paul's ministry, whether physically present and in person, or at a distance by letter, is consistent.

It's driven by the same principles throughout. There are not two different Pauls. Paul's world was a highly status-conscious world, and concerns for status seemed to have been at play in the Corinthians situation also.

Paul had earlier used such dynamics of mutual comparison to encourage the Corinthians to match up to the example of the Macedonians, much as he had used the same dynamics with the Macedonians relative to the Corinthians. Here there seem to be some who are comparing themselves very favourably to Paul, disparaging his ministry and authority and raising up their own. This is something that Paul clearly rules out elsewhere in his letters.

Paul has a careful theological account of boasting, which negates human pride and the constant ways that people attempt to vaunt themselves over others. Challenging such a culture was also, we should remember, a recurring theme in Jesus' teaching. Nevertheless, Paul's account of boasting encourages boasting in the Lord, boasting in the way that the Lord is at work in and through us and in others, boasting in the God-given fruit of our labours.

Now this boast, it is very important to remember, is not based upon anything that sets us apart from within ourselves, rather it's purely on the basis of the grace of God to us and through us. Paul's boast in the Lord includes the scope of the ministry that God has graciously granted to him and the work that God has done through him. This ministry extended to the Corinthians.

He is their apostle. He is the one who brought the gospel to them. They are, as he pointed out earlier in the letter, an epistle of Christ, ministered by Paul and his associates.

If Paul and his associates need letters of commendation, that is where they're to be found, letters written by Christ himself. As their apostle, the one who brought the gospel to them, he has a priority over later interlopers. He is working in the field that the Lord clearly assigned to him.

Paul isn't someone who builds upon another's foundation, as he points out elsewhere. His opponents, by contrast, are. Paul's hope is that as the Corinthians mature and grow in their faith, the scope of his and his associates' ministry and influence among them will be able to grow.

In 1 Corinthians 1, Paul quoted Jeremiah 9, verses 23-24, and he does so again here. Thus says the Lord, Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.

A question to consider. Paul talks a lot about boasting in his letters, in both positive and negative ways. What are some of the positive ways in which Paul speaks about boasting? And how might we learn to follow Paul's example in this?