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1 Samuel 9-10

"Saul is Anointed King"

May 29, 2019

Let's open our Bibles tonight. We'll leave you to say hello to someone after.
Chapter 9 of 1 Samuel.

Tonight we want to look at chapters 9 and 10 and the calling of Saul to be king. We mention to you every week on Wednesday nights that narratives are what the Old Testament historical books are all about; the book of Acts as well. It is basically the story that God wants you to know. So the lessons are in the stories themselves. They aren't doctrinal books, usually, but there're lots of doctrines that you find in them. But your best bet is to stand with the characters and with the people that God sets before us and try to put yourself in their shoes. What would you do? And how would you hear from God? And learn the lessons that way, for sure.

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel, we told you, I think, every week now, only cover 130 years, though it is two fairly long books. From the birth of Samuel around 1100 B.C. to the death of David, roughly 970 or so. The book begins with the birth of Samuel. I think the dates are important, especially as you go through the earlier chapters here because they skip a lot of time. Samuel was born to a mother who had, for years, prayed for a son. In fact, she named him "God has heard me," and she had committed to the LORD that, "If You'll give me a son, I'll give him back to You." And so she did. She weaned him for three or four years, brought him to the tabernacle there in Shiloh to learn how to serve the LORD full time as a young man. She would come to visit him for three weeks a year as the Feast Days came. And Samuel would become, not only the last judge, if you will, in the timeframe, but he would become the first national prophet that Israel had really ever had; and he's kind of the tie between the judges times and the kings. So Samuel learned to walk with God at the tabernacle. He was really a P.K. kid, you know, in many senses.

So, when he was 13 or so, chapter 3, God spoke to him for the first time and gave him a word to deliver. As a prophet, that wouldn't have been easy. He had to speak what God's judgment was going to be against the fellow that had been training him for the better part of nine years, Eli the high priest. And it was a word about his family and not raising his children in the ways of the LORD, not restraining them.

But it was warning, and yet Eli, as we will read as we continue, didn't heed the warning, would eventually lose his place. Chapter 3:20-21 and chapter 4:1 kind of set the tone for the next twenty-five years, where we don't have much to add. Samuel is established by God as a prophet. He travels throughout all of God's nation bringing God's Word to the people. God's Word was again recognized by them. It was a return after the times of judges from really a lot of times away from God. And so Samuel spent twenty-five years; he's now in his late thirties by the time you get to chapter 4. But notice that if you went to look there, it says, "All of Israel heard the word of Samuel." I mean, God's Word got out through Samuel. And yet, after twenty-five years of probably more years than they'd heard the Word of God in a long time, the people still decided they would go fight their enemies, the Philistines, on their own. They didn't take it to heart; they didn't follow along with the things that they had heard from the LORD. They determined they could go it alone. And so, in chapter 4, Samuel kind of disappears from the narrative. He won't really appear again until chapter 7 because Israel wasn't interested in hearing from God, and he was really God's representative.

In between, you have the battle with the Philistines, the deaths of many in Israel because they began to treat the ark like it was an idol. They wanted to emulate the Philistines. They had their ark stolen. They had it come back after it caused havoc amongst the Philistines, who thought they had victory over the God of the Jews.

By the time you get to chapter 7, there is this return to the LORD. And as they begin to cry out to God, they also, again, hear from Samuel who leads them in a prayer of recommitment and devotion in a place called Mizpah. And God, as they gather up on this mountain, they watch and they see in the valley the Philistines gathering forces, and God fights for them. They're not an army at all, but they win the battle, and God delivers them because of faith.

Between chapters 7 and 8, twenty or twenty-five more years pass. You'll read in chapter 6:1 that there're seven months, and then in chapter 7:2 twenty more years. And then, in chapter 8, now Samuel is old, and we can certainly put him into his middle-to-late sixties. Again, God is covering a lot of territory, so we have to kind of keep up and see what we're supposed to be learning. We are told, only in chapter 7 towards the end, that during that time, Samuel had a circuit that he would preach. He would go to certain places. It's almost like church came to you; and the prophet would come, and he'd bring God's Word, and God's Word would be

delivered to the people. And he did that for the better part of three decades. God continued to faithfully protect His people. They were victorious over their enemy, for the most part. Unfortunately, they began to drift away from the LORD, and by the time you get to chapter 8, the nation, seeing Samuel, maybe pushing 70, said, "You're gettin' old, you're gonna die." I think we laughed at the beginning, where it says, "Samuel, you're old." It wasn't that funny to me, but it was kind of funny. "We don't want your sons to rule over us. We want a king like everybody else. We'd like to plan ahead." And then they gave to Samuel reasons why they thought that that would be a better thing than having to deal with his crooked sons, who weren't doing very well. "We could have an army; we don't have one now. We could be protected; we can't be protected now. We could have centralized leadership; we don't have that now. We're all kind of our own little tribes." Samuel took it extremely hard. He figured the fifty years-plus, sixty years that he's put in, have done very little good. The folks were not really walking with God as they should. And so he goes to the LORD angry, and the LORD assures him that it isn't him that they'd been rejecting but the LORD. In fact, the LORD said, "It's been like that ever since I brought them out of Egypt. So give them what they want, but tell them what it's going to cost them." And so Samuel went back, and he warned the people about the taxation that was coming, the corruption that would ensue, the conscription (as far as taking kids and putting them in service), the taking away of your land (if that was something that he was interested in). So, at God's command, he told the people, "Go home, and God will set before you your request." And they wouldn't have to wait long.

So tonight we get to chapter 9. I guess that gets us caught up. And God is going to bring Saul to the throne. God had planned to give Israel a king upon the earth. It was His intention not to give a king like other nations but to give a king to them that would be after His own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). Because of that, this first king that they demanded - because they wanted to be like everyone else - is a better representative of the people without God than it is God's will for His people that want to know the LORD. So this first king is a better representative of the nation as a whole. God, in His mercy - because He knew what would follow - used this time to, I think, bring the people they to a place where maybe they realized they needed a king that was qualified, not because of his stature or good looks, but rather for His heart for the LORD. So God would, over these next forty years, really patiently wait for them and bring them through this time of Saul's leadership.

There's lots to learn in these chapters. I hope that, before you come to church on Wednesdays, you at least sit down at lunch or at dinner and read through them on your own. There're lots of lessons we don't want to miss. You certainly don't want to miss in our chapters tonight how sovereign God is and how He works all things out; that you can learn from Israel that if you get everything that you want, you're not really assured of having God's best even though you might, "I got what I wanted! I prayed, and I got it!" Well.....if you seek God's heart maybe. You can learn from Saul that even though you're given every proof and evidence and advantage and power, that's a poor substitute for willing faith - which Saul didn't have. He would fail miserably to do that. But tonight we're going to look at his calling and his anointing, and I think there're lots of lessons for us on how we can better walk with the LORD. It's an interesting story. All of Saul's life is really covered in just a few chapters: basically two big campaigns - one against the Philistines, one against the Amalekites - that will reveal his heart. Both of them will result in him losing something in relationship to God: first, the descendancy to the throne - his kids will not be following him there; second of all, God's abandonment of Saul on the throne - He told him He had picked someone else. And for seven and a half years after that, Saul would defiantly stay, but he would do so without the LORD's help.

But tonight we go to his calling. So let's begin in chapter 9:1 where we read, "There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. And he had a choice and handsome son whose name was Saul. There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people." So Saul's father Kish was a "mighty man of power." The word "power," here, in Hebrew speaks of wealth or strength or ability. He was the big man on campus. He was from Gibeah. The name "Saul" means "one who has been desired." And we learn of Saul that he was a good-looking guy with great potential; he could have been a first-round draft pick for the basketball team, or he could have been a runway model. He was taller than anyone and more handsome than anyone in Israel. He was perfect qualifications for a crowd that wanted a king like the world. I remember hearing someone say one time during an election cycle, and they were doing interviews, "Who did you vote for?" and then said who it was, and the guy said, "Why?" and he said, "He's really good looking." And I thought, "Well, maybe that hasn't changed much." But here's a guy that's gonna run for king that's "Baywatch" material. Right? He's a tall drink of water, as they used to say.

Well, we read in verse 3, "Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. And Kish said to his son Saul, 'Please take one of the servants with you, and arise, go and look for the donkeys.' So he passed through the mountains of Ephraim and through the land of Shalisha, but they did not find them. Then they passed through the land of Shaalim, and they were not there. Then he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they did not find them. When they had come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him, 'Come, let us return, lest my father cease caring about the donkeys and become worried about us.'" Saul was an obedient young kid. He grew up in a house where his family loved him. He knew his dad would worry about him. He was sent off to find stray donkeys. We read, in verse 20, that he was gone for three days - looking around for where they might have wandered off to. He finally ended up in Zuph, or the place of Ramah. We know it's the same place from the first verse of this book. But that was the place that Samuel lived (the old prophet). Saul suggested, when they got there, "We should go home. We can't find them. Dad'll be thinkin' we're lost as well."

To that, his servant, verse 6, replied, " 'Look, now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honorable man; all that he says surely comes to pass. So let us go there; perhaps he can show us the way that we should go.' Then Saul said to his servant, 'But look, if we go, what shall we bring the man? For the bread in our vessels is all gone, and there is no present to bring to the man of God. What do we have?' And the servant answered Saul again and said, 'Look, I have here at hand one-fourth of a shekel of silver. I will give that to the man of God, to tell us our way.' " And then we read, verse 9, "(Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he spoke thus: 'Come, let us go to the seer;' for he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer.) Then Saul said to his servant, 'Well said; come, let us go.' So they went to the city where the man of God was." A couple of things, I think, to notice. Number one - the servant was more in tune with God's work in the land than Saul. He was the only guy, after sixty years, that wouldn't have known that there was one prophet in town. One! Traveled all over the country. Had his name everywhere. It was Samuel and only Samuel. There was no second prophet. There was no other prophet. He'd been the only voice of God for the past five or six decades. He had led people back to repentance as a nation thirty years earlier; it was the only revival that the nation had seen in decades. And so it gives you some insight into the life of Saul and to his family, that they were unaware of the ministry of Samuel at all. It isn't just a matter of distance; they were just out of touch. Saul was aware that, if you went to see a seer or, as we are explained, a prophet, you shouldn't come without money or a gift for the

prophet. Now that had to have been learned from the issues with the false prophets of that day. You don't find Samuel prophesying for cash or renting himself out, if you will. But this servant with Saul was aware that Samuel was an honest man, that he had a track record of having God's voice and His words in his heart, and that, when he spoke, God honored what he said. And so, "Maybe we could go ask him what to do. Maybe he'll know where the donkeys are" or at least he could ask. Matthew Henry, who wrote a commentary on the book of 1 Samuel, wrote in verse 6 of this book these words, "Most people would rather be told their future than their duty. If it were the business of preachers to preach the recovery of lost donkeys rather than of lost souls, every church would be filled to overflowing." And I thought, okay, sarcastic but it's kind of funny. Saul wanted to go to the prophet, not because he was hungry for God; in fact, he grew up without Him. He was hungry to know what to do about the donkeys. In other words, his relationship with God or someone speaking for God was all about what could he get out of it. Right? It was a physical issue. It drove him only because what he could gain out of the relationship. For him, it was all about gain or donkeys, not a spiritual life at all. So, "All right. Let's go do that. If you've got a little bit of money, we can probably get somethin' out of him."

So we read, in verse 11, "As they went up the hill to the city, they met some young women going out to draw water, and said to them, 'Is the seer here?' " (or the prophet here?) "And they answered them and said, 'Yes, there he is, just ahead of you. Hurry now; for today he came to his city, because there is a sacrifice of the people today at the high place. As soon as you come into the city, you will surely find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. For the people will not eat until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterward those who are invited will eat. Now therefore, go up, for about this time you will find him.' So they went up to the city. As they were coming into the city, there was Samuel, coming out toward them on his way up to the high place." Now if you are an Old Testament book reader, you might read these words and say, "Wait a minute. High place. Not a good place to worship." Okay. That's true.....if you get further along in the Bible. God's revelation is progressive. Up to this point, the high places had been allowed by the LORD to be used as a place of worship. It probably was the place that Samuel built (back in chapter 7) in his own home town. They were acceptable places of worship. They would gradually be outlawed by the LORD because all of the false religions began to build their temples and all on high places so that they could get closer to God. They could kind of elevate themselves nearer

the gods. But for now, that was fine. So, basically, Samuel is at home, and he's having service and worship, and the people gathered with him.

We read, in verse 15, "Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear the day before Saul came, saying, 'Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him commander over My people Israel, that he may save My people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have looked upon My people, because their cry has come to Me.' So when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, 'There he is, the man of whom I spoke to you. This one shall reign over My people.' " Notice God's orchestration and sovereignty and timing throughout this entire story. They come at the right time. They find Samuel. God had prepared Samuel for the arrival. Notice the words "I will send, I will send." Though the donkeys had accidentally wandered off, the LORD had used that to bring this man exactly where He wanted him to be. So the LORD told them, I think, to "get lost."

Notice that God's work (and, again, it's narrative, so we want to learn how God works) most often is accomplished through what we would call ordinary, every-day events. This wasn't like some shining globe in the sky and the spotlight on Saul wherever he went; this was just a way for the LORD to accomplish His will. Nobody's will was violated. Free will is certainly something the Bible teaches, although sin doesn't allow you to be free. But God has a way of controlling things, doesn't He, behind the scenes, and if you have an eye for it, you'll see it. The LORD named Cyrus, for example, 150 years before he was born; and yet mentions him by name, there in Isaiah 44:28. But He did even better. Because the LORD also named Josiah 300 years before he was born (in 1 Kings 13:2); and then, in 2 Kings 22:1, years and years later, Josiah would become a king at the age of 8 years old, and the LORD would speak about him and reference that comment He had made, "His name would be Josiah," 300 years earlier. So God's in charge, right? Learn that always. Even when things look like they're.....poor Saul's lost his donkeys. No. God's got a plan, and God is working that plan out in our eyes, if you will. God is good at being in charge. Although Saul is named "the desired one," it is really a description more of the people's want than of God's want. But notice what He says of them, "My people have been crying out to Me." Now these were not godly people. These were His people that weren't doing very well and would have to learn to do better. But the LORD loves His people. The LORD loves Saul. And I want you to kind of keep track, as we go through these couple of chapters, how God gives every possible reason for Saul to surrender to His will. Takes a young guy that's just.....whatever God can do to bring him along, He's certainly going to seek

to be able to do that for him. And you can mark that out. You know, or you should remember, that back in chapter 49 of *Genesis*, that when the LORD prophesied over the tribes of Israel that He declared that the Savior, the Messiah would not be coming from the tribe of Benjamin; he would be coming from the tribe of Judah (*Genesis* 49:8-10). So this was God meeting the people where they were at to teach them that what they wanted wasn't good for them. This wasn't in line with His ultimate will. He'll get back to that with David. But for now, it is the LORD's dealing with His people, who really have their eyes, maybe, in the wrong place.

Verse 18, "Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, 'Please tell me, where is the seer's' " (or the prophet's) " 'house?' Samuel answered Saul and said, 'I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today; and tomorrow I will let you go and will tell you all that is in your heart. But as for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, do not be anxious about them, for they have been found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on you and on all your father's house?' And Saul answered and said, 'Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak like this to me?' " The announcement of his calling would come as quite a surprise to Saul. And I want you to notice - and it's hard to find good things to say about Saul - here's a good thing: he's a young man who at least was fairly well-balanced in his view of his own life. Right? He saw himself as nothing and no stand-out, if you will. But God had chosen him. That should have been enough. He's humble. God's powerful. "If God wants to use me, who am I to stand in His way?" But that is lost fairly quickly on Saul. But at least for now he's in the right place. By the time that God is done calling Saul, He will give him so many reasons to believe in Him that the only choice would have been to surrender his life. But he didn't do that.

But imagine yourself in Saul's shoes. You're lookin' for donkeys, you're talkin' to a prophet, and everyone seemed to think highly of him. And he starts talkin' about, "You're the hope of the nation," and you're goin', "Man, this guy's not right all the time. He doesn't know me at all!" It blew his mind. Samuel said to him, "Tomorrow I'll tell you everything that's in your heart and what God has planned for you." And I suspect that Saul was just flabbergasted. "Maybe you got me mixed up with someone else." But he knew about the donkeys. And it has been three days. "I'm a little bit confused."

We read, in verse 22, "Now Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the hall, and had them sit in the place of honor among those who were invited; there were about thirty persons. And Samuel said to the cook, 'Bring the portion which I gave you, of which I said to you, "Set it apart."' So the cook took up the thigh with its upper part and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, 'Here it is, what was kept back. It was set apart for you. Eat; for until this time it has been kept for you, since I said I invited the people.' So Saul ate with Samuel that day." We see Samuel tell the cook, "We laid a steak aside for him." By the way, it's the portion that would normally be given to the priest, and the shoulder, really. And so it was given to Saul as a place of honor just to say, "This is something I knew about yesterday, that you were coming, and God has prepared your way." So Samuel is very humble at this point, he's very gracious. Saul eats with him, probably doesn't know what's going on.

And we read, in verse 25, "When they had come down from the high place into the city, Samuel spoke with Saul on the top of the house." After dinner, a private audience with the man of God. I'd have loved to have been at the meeting. Samuel shares his heart with Saul, talks about Israel - her need and her past sins, God's great love. Samuel, remember, he's 70-80 years old. He's really on his way out. This is the guy they're gonna pick. He wants them to see it as clearly as possible. He'd lived his life loving the people. In fact, when you see Saul go south in a little while, Samuel will stay up all night in tears because, not only does he care for Saul, he loves God's people, and it's just not going well. I'm sure that he talked to him about God's mercy and God's plans. And so you get a counsel of a godly man from a man who knew the LORD all of his life. It was almost a Bible study for one. You can just imagine this meeting with Saul, who had never so much as, I don't think, looked in or up, looking in God's Word or looked up to the heavens and thought about God. But here's his opportunity. Right? "You're gonna listen, now, to what He has to say. Look how He picked you. Look how God brought you here. You know yourself you're not qualified, but He can enable you. And the people want a king. God wants to be their king, but Saul, He'll use you to teach them, to lead them, to guide them. Here's God's promises." I suspect that Saul, that night, had very little sleep. He must have just kind of been, "I don't know what's goin' on here!" It's like the first time in church when you think maybe God loves you. And it just blew his mind. So, we aren't told much in verse 25 except they sat for a long time and talked, and Samuel spoke with Saul - gave him, I think, the insight into all that the LORD had been wanting to do.

We read, in verse 26, "They arose early; and it was about the dawning of the day that Samuel called to Saul on the top of the house, saying, 'Get up, that I may send you on your way.' And Saul arose, and both of them went outside, he and Samuel." Chapter 9 ends with the next morning as these two men walk outside their town. One of them had known the LORD literally since his earliest memory - he's the fellow who we first hear saying, "Speak, LORD, Your servant's listening." God's love for him as one of His own. He just loved the people. And then you have Saul - blue skies, bright promises, great beginning, glorious future, called by God, great potential. Just like us. If God wants to work in your life, you have great potential, don't you? What you do with it depends on whether that potential is fulfilled. In the end, it won't nearly be as glorious as Samuel's. Saul will die on the battlefields of Gilboa as an unbeliever, and I really doubt we will ever see him in heaven. There's nothing in the Bible that would convince anyone that Saul died in a position where God would receive him into glory. But look at the beginning. Look at God's calling, God's promises, the words of the prophet of God. "Send your servant along," he will say, "and let's talk together."

And so we read, in verse 27, "As they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul, 'Tell the servant to go on ahead of us.' And he went on. 'But you stand here awhile, that I may announce to you the word of God.' " "Stand still, Saul. Listen to what God has to say." By the way, the LORD's going to - three or four different times in our story in the next few weeks - say to Saul, "Stand right here, and I'll tell you what's going on." And Saul will go, "Yeah, that's about as long as I can wait," and he'll turn around and run off. He won't even wait to hear from God. He's just not that interested and not that convinced that's what he needs.

Well, we read in chapter 10:1, "Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him and said: 'Is it not because the LORD has anointed you commander over His inheritance?' " Now this is the private anointing, as a king, by Samuel. It is the institution, in the Bible, of royalty in Israel. It is the first king, if you will. Oil, a symbol of the Holy Spirit or of consecration in the Old Testament; it is the imparting of God's gifts necessary. It is the help that you need to fulfill God's plans. So here's Saul: he's already called of God; he has now been anointed by God; as we shall read at the end of chapter 10, he will be surrounded by God of men who love God. God will make sure that all of his buddies and counselors and those who have influence in his life will be there close to him to give him the counsel that he needs from the LORD. From this day forward, the office of king will be added by the LORD to the priest and to the sanctuary in

places that God promises to bless the people through them as vessels: the priest, the sanctuary and now the king. All three of them are anointed and separated, if you will, for His purpose. So Samuel pours the oil on his head, tells him what God's plan is. He kisses him, a sign of respect for God's choice. It is the submission that you show to the LORD when the LORD calls. Remember the psalm, Psalm 2:11-12 where it says, "Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little." So, a private anointing. There's coming a public one in a minute, but this is private. This was between Samuel, the prophet, God and the choice, Saul.

We read, in verse 2, he then gives to Saul what amounts to three different signs that will happen that day to confirm that Samuel's not just talkin' out of his ear, but he knows what he's saying. This is God's Word. Here's proof. "When all of these things happen, then you'll know that what I'm telling you is something that the LORD has wanted you to hear." So he says, in verse 2, " 'When you have departed from me today, you will find two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say to you, "The donkeys which you went to look for have been found. And now your father has ceased caring about the donkeys and is worrying about you, saying, 'What shall I do about my son?' " Then you shall go on forward from there and come to the terebinth tree of Tabor. There three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine. And they will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you shall receive from their hands.' " So two very specific kinds of signs. Followed by this one, verse 5, " 'After that you shall come to the hill of God where the Philistine garrison is. And it will happen, when you have come there to the city, that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with a stringed instrument, a tambourine, a flute, and a harp before them; and they will be prophesying. Then the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. And let it be, when these signs come to you, that you do as the occasion demands; for God is with you.' " So the third sign is kind of an interesting one. You're going home, you run into a group of prophets. "The Holy Spirit" (which is upon them and having them prophesying) "will now come upon you, and you'll be overturned" (literal word). "Your life will be overturned into another man, and the empowering of God's Spirit will follow you from the outside, upon you, so that you can be the guy that God is going to use. God is going to change you and work in your life. Saul, it's not up to you to make yourself a king. God will do the work. You just trust in the work of God in your life."

In fact, I love verse 7, and it's a verse I've gone to over the years many times because I think it's one of the best verses for - how do I know to be led of the Spirit? And the answer is this: if God is working in your life, then the natural way to discover God's will is to "do as the occasion demands." Act accordingly. You know the LORD. You know His Word. You know His calling. Then act accordingly. And more often than not, you're going to find yourself right where God wants you to be. I know there're times when we just have to go, "God, show us. We're just not sure." But verse 7 is the natural way to walk in the Spirit. God's Spirit is upon you, your heart is being changed, you're looking at things differently than everyone else, you're being led of the Spirit, you have a guide in God's Word. You have everything you need to make the right call at the right time "as the occasion demands." And so, in Samuel's directions to Saul, we discover this great insight of being led of the Spirit by faith. Excellent counsel. So, these are the things that are supposed to come to pass.

We read, in verse 8, Samuel established himself as a priest to serve Saul. He says, " 'You shall go down before me to Gilgal; and surely I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and make sacrifices of peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, till I come to you and show you what you should do.' " So Samuel said, "I'm no longer gonna be....you're gonna be the guy in charge. But I'll be your intercessor with God. I'll be the priest. I will pray for you. We will seek God when we need direction. Just meet me at Gilgal. Wait a week. I could be anywhere. I'm on this circuit every year, and I'm an old guy, I don't go so fast. But just wait upon me, and I'm coming, and the LORD can then speak to you. You have access to God through the priest." That's pretty good. "You have access to God." So do we - through our Priest, our High Priest.

"So it was," verse 9, "when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, that God gave him another heart; and all those signs came to pass that day." So, God gave to Saul another heart. We need another heart to be saved, don't we? We need to be born again. Ezekiel 36:26, "God will take this stony heart out of your life and replace it with a heart of flesh." Philippians 2:13 says the same thing, right? "God works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure." Saul, unfortunately, will become the type of person who knew full well the will of God, had experienced the work of God, but could never commit himself fully to the ways of God. And so he had the opportunity, but he set it aside. He didn't respond. God will give you life tonight. It's available to you. He can change your life. But you have to respond. And that was something that David would be willing to do and Saul was not.

Notice, in verse 10, that "When they came there to the hill, there was a group of prophets to meet him; then the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them." He tasted and saw the work of God upon his life. In fact, "And it happened, when all who knew him formerly saw that he indeed prophesied among the prophets, that the people said to one another, 'What is this that has come upon the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?' Then a man from there answered and said, 'But who is their father?' Therefore it became a proverb: 'Is Saul also among the prophets?' " Those who knew him were shocked. "Saul a prophet? Are you kidding me?" I remember going to my high school 10-year reunion. "Jack, a Christian? Are you kidding me?!" Maybe you had that as well of you. The reputation of Saul was that he lacked spiritual qualities in every way. And so somebody there, in verse 12, said, "Well, he gets his power from his father. Where is the father? Who is his father?" God can make what no one can do of you because He's the LORD. So, he doesn't deserve or earn his blessings. He doesn't have to do anything. He just has to rely upon the Spirit of God. Man, what a great potential! You read Saul's life, and you go, "Oh, man, he's gonna be an awesome king!" But he isn't. He wastes it, he neglects it. I think you can find a bunch of prophets and hang around with them, catch fire for a while, burn with enthusiasm, and yet, when the newness disappears, so do you. And if you don't think that that's true, just watch Saul tasting and seeing that the LORD is good, feeling His presence, experiencing His hand upon his life, and yet, at every turn, he will refuse God's work, and eventually God will say, "You've run out of time," and God will refuse him. So, here's a guy that was as close to the fire as you could be. You know what I mean? And sometimes you see people in church like that. They've been around. They know. They just know. They know what God can do. They've seen what God.....they've sensed His presence, they were where God was working, and yet somehow it doesn't move them to surrender. And that's Saul. He's always so close, and yet he's always so far away. Don't you be that kind of person. Right? You're in church tonight. You're so close to what God wants to do. Don't back away from Him; let Him work! Let Him have your life. Let Him do the work that He longs to do. God has great plans. But unfortunately Saul isn't going to be able to experience much of them at all.

Well here we read something interesting because we're told, verse 13, "And when he had finished prophesying," (and, by the way, that's the last time we will see that of Saul - if that tells you anything) "he went to the high place. Then Saul's uncle said to him and his servant, 'Where did you go?' So he said, 'To look for the donkeys. When we saw that they were nowhere to be found, we went to Samuel.'

And Saul's uncle said, 'Tell me, please, what Samuel said to you.' " Now, what would you expect to hear? "Oh, man, he said I'm gonna be the king! He anointed me. He saved me a big steak dinner. And I prophesied earlier today. Freaked everyone out. I don't know what's comin' next, but this has been pretty cool!" Nope. Here's what you read, verse 16, "So Saul said to his uncle, 'He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found.' But about the matter of the kingdom, he did not tell him what Samuel had said." So, look at Saul's reluctance already, even with his family, to say, "Look what God is wanting to do." He already fails. God had miraculously revealed Himself to him. In the last twenty-four hours, the prophets had said, "Your donkeys have been found. You're gonna run into these ladies. You're gonna run into these prophets. You're gonna be changed into another man. You're heart's gonna be touched. You're gonna prophesy with the prophets." All of that happened in twenty-four hours! I think I might be saying something to someone. But Saul's just not interested. He's not interested. His heart's just not there at all, and unfortunately, it just goes from bad to worse. It's one thing to be humble. Quite another to refuse the obvious calling of God. He said nothing about.....it says volumes to me. He said nothing! I always feel like that about Christians. When you get saved, nobody should have to tell you to go witness. How can you keep your mouth shut? Look what God did to you. Look at who you used to be, and look at who you are now. Look at what God has promised to you. Look what He's promised to do. Look what He's done! How can you keep that kind of news to yourself?

Well we read, in verse 17, "Then Samuel called the people together to the LORD at Mizpah." Remember he had sent everyone home, back in chapter 8, and said, "Wait for a king to be announced." He now calls them to Mizpah. Mizpah is the word for "tower." If you were with us the last few weeks - just to remind you - it was the very place, years earlier, that the people, back in chapter 7, had come back to the LORD after thirty years and said, "We want to do things right." And it is up on that hill - the tower - that they watched the Philistines gather all around to attack them, and they freaked out, and Samuel said, "Let's just pray." And God had delivered them. So they knew walking with God would help. Well, that's where they're going back to again. It is here that they had put that Ebenezer stone up. You remember that? Where the word "Ebenezer" means "God has brought us this far." So it was a place where they had good history and good memories of God's commemorative work. So here, where Samuel's leadership had proven to be of the LORD when he brought the people back, now the people had gathered to want to be like the world. It's kind of a new era starting, with a foolish desire. But they're going to take their chances, and they're going to look for a good-looking tall guy.

He qualifies for the job. Anyway, the leader, the pastor, the prophet calls them together, and he "said to the children of Israel," in verse 18, " 'Thus says the LORD God of Israel: "I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all kingdoms and from those who oppressed you." But you have today rejected your God, who Himself saved you from all your adversities and your tribulations; and you have said to Him, "No, set a king over us!" Now therefore, present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your clans.' " And so Samuel.....I feel for poor Samuel. I think Samuel's just hurt over this. He knows this is gonna go south. So as good as Saul....there the LORD had brought Saul.....it would be better if they just went back with the LORD. He gives them another chance to reconsider their demands at a place of tremendous spiritual victory. Right? They're standing at a place that they had all experienced God's deliverance. It was almost like he said, "Remember what God did in the past? But now you've showed up to reject Him so that you can have a king like the world. All right. Well, then, gather together if that's what you want, and we'll ask the LORD to pick the man by the casting of lots."

And so we read, in verse 20, the way that you determine God's will (often) in the Old Testament, "And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen. When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was chosen. And Saul the son of Kish was chosen. But when they sought him, he could not be found." The law in the Old Testament was used to determine God's will. In Leviticus 16, when you had to get which of the two scapegoats would die-which one would be released, the lot would decide from the LORD which one should be freed. When, in Joshua 14, they gathered together to divide the land, it was the lot cast before the LORD by the priest through which God would say, "This is your portion." It was used to figure out that culprit at Ai when Achan hid all of the stuff (Joshua 7). It was used to determine who the problem maker was in the days of Jonah, and God pointed out it was Jonah, by lot (Jonah 1). The decision by the lot was final, in the Old Testament. Proverbs 18:18 says, "Casting lots causes contentions to cease, and keeps the mighty apart." It says, in chapter 16:33 of Proverbs, "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD." So it was a method that God honored, that could be counted on. It wasn't like, "Well, three out of five, seven out of eleven." It was a one-time deal, and God spoke, and those who heeded His Word followed it. The last time you find it used in the Bible is in Acts 1, where Peter and others decided they needed to replace Judas. And you might remember that the lot was cast, and one man was chosen, and one man was not; and neither of

them was heard from again because it is certainly Paul that God had chosen. The New Testament was not a place to have a lot cast. That stopped with the new birth, if you will. Because now you have the Holy Spirit living within you to guide you and your steps. So you won't find the lot any further used in the New Testament after that kind of transition point.

So, here's another sign for Saul, the hesitant guy. Now they bring all of Israel, and they cast the lot, and it's always worked. And they pick one tribe out of twelve and one family out of hundreds and one man out of thousands. And they go, "Saul, it's you! Where are you?" And, "Oh, yeah, I don't know where he is." Nobody knows where Saul is.

So we read, in verse 21, "When he had cause the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families," they chose Saul, but they could not find him. "Therefore," verse 22, "they inquired of the LORD further, 'Has the man come here yet?' And the LORD answered, 'There he is, hidden among the equipment.'" (Pastor Jack laughs) Just don't know.

Verse 23, "So they ran and brought him from there; and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward." He was head-and-shoulders above the rest. So why is Saul hiding? Modesty? Hmm. Can't find much of that. Humility? I don't think so. This looks like a spiritual problem, doesn't it? He just doesn't want to be this guy. He's been shown clearly by the LORD in every way - women, guys with food, anointing of the Spirit, prophesying, now the lots picking him out. I mean, you couldn't miss this. God had called him, wanted to do a work in him. No, no. This was a spiritual problem for sure. He was hiding because he didn't want to be this guy. And even in verse 23, "So they ran and brought him from there; and when he stood among the people, he was taller than anyone." They had to bring him out. The appeal to the people, by the way, they didn't care that he wasn't bold. They didn't care that he didn't have much spiritual strength. They took one look at him and went, "Yahoo! We got a tall one! And a big guy." It's his appearance. Why do we hide when the LORD calls us? When the LORD sets before us the calling to preach the gospel, to share our faith, to pray for the sick, to forgive or to ask for forgiveness? Why do we hide when we are confronted with God's Word? And I think, so often, it could very well be the same thing: it's a lack of faith, it's an unwillingness to do what God has said. Faith would demand Saul's response with great confidence. But Saul is about as far away from obedience as Samuel, in all of his life, was close to it. And he's very

different than the next king, David, is going to be. But this is the people's choice. And so the people didn't mind what they saw.

Verse 24, "And Samuel said to all the people, 'Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen, that there is no one like him among all the people?' So all the people shouted and said, 'Long live the king!' " That's all they cared about. Big guy. I think when you see man's ideal, you also see his heart. When you find what people value the most, you also find where their heart is. These guys didn't want Samuel. Remember? They said that "You're old." He was a proven spiritual leader with fifty years or sixty years of track record, who spoke and God spoke, who prayed and God answered. But they were going to trade him off for a tall guy that could dunk basketballs. Right? Who could play center, as a power forward or it was his looks, it was his appearance. Spiritual qualifications mattered nothing to the people. So God gave them their desires. They thought this was going to be their answer for their national problems. They were wrong. But if you live without God long enough, you'll still begin to think, "I got all the answers that I need," and you'll reach from one thing to the other. So you have two pictures here: the people, who are just thrilled and Saul, who is unwilling to do - he's heard from God. These guys aren't listening, but neither is he.

So, verse 25, we read, "Then Samuel explained to the people the behavior of royalty, and wrote it in a book and laid it up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house." So God's Word about the king had been written down before. If you go to Deuteronomy 17, there are about seven verses there (beginning in verse 14) which tell you about the king that the king shouldn't multiply horses for himself (trust in them), shouldn't go back down to Egypt to get more horses either, shouldn't be interested in getting rich with gold or silver, was certainly not supposed to be marrying a bunch of wives, should sit down with the law, write a copy of it for himself - in his own handwriting so he'd really know it, and then carry that book around with him, God's law, the rest of his life and look to live by it. That was God's plan for the king. Samuel gives to Saul one of those, "Here you go. These are the orders. These are the plans. These are the commands. This is what God wants for you." It should tell us that God's desire was to give them a ruler that would honor Him. But the people didn't care about that. They literally could have said, "All right, Samuel. Thanks, man. That's exactly what we want. You can leave now." And off they went. So we read, in verse 25, that the people are sent home.

Verse 26, "And Saul also went home to Gibeah; and" (notice) "valiant men went with him, whose hearts God had touched." He wasn't giving up on this guy. He's giving him every opportunity in the book. Meanwhile, "But some rebels said, 'How can this man save us?' So they despised him, and brought him no presents. But he held his peace." Any leader.....if you want to lead, you're going to have enemies - even those who don't know you. Well, they didn't know Saul. "Oh, that guy's not gonna help us!" But they would have said that about anyone. But notice, verse 26, that Saul goes home. He doesn't go to a place of leadership. He doesn't go with Samuel to find out what's next. He goes home. "Yeah, I'm goin' home. I'm just gonna go home." In fact, he's gonna stay home for quite a while until the nation's in a battle, and they go, "Hey, Saul, can you help us?" "I guess so. I don't know." He's big. He's not easily put off. He's a fighter. He will start recruiting people just that have bigger muscles than he does. That'll be his recruitment schedule.

So, Samuel goes home, the people go home. The nation's much worse off than they realize. Saul doesn't seem to have changed at all. But God sends home with him valiant men, men of great conviction: godly counsel, godly support, men God has touched. What more could you want than that? So, it's quite a statement of the potential of Saul, and I guess I would say to you - that's you and me in a nutshell. God has called us, we don't deserve it, we're of the least group, we certainly have nothing to offer, and we may have to fight with, "Am I going to surrender or not?" or "Am I going to go hide in the bushes, am I going to say nothing, am I going to try to hide behind something else that I don't want people to know? I don't want people to depend on me." But Saul is a man that God called, and he's given every advantage in the book.

Saul seems to ignore the slight that these men didn't bring him gifts which was, I guess, typical if you were going to be in some place of power. But, instead, he goes home and disappears from the scene. And until he hears from Jabesh that the Ammonites are attacking one of Israel's cities, you really don't know what the king's going to do; and he's not going to do anything. And, unfortunately, we only have four more chapters, and Saul will be gone; except for he'll be around for seven and a half years bothering David. But his life, his influence, his potential, his opportunity will have been wasted.

So, carry this away tonight - God's really good at leading us through daily life. We might see lost donkeys; God sees plans. We might see difficulty; God has a plan for those difficulties. And He will empower and enable us so that we are really

without excuse. He will clearly make Himself known. He has given us of His Spirit. The only thing we can do is respond in faith and obey, not be ashamed of the LORD or of His work. And from Israel, I guess, the nation, we should learn that we shouldn't really want what the world has because that's what we got out of there for, isn't it? That's what we were so tired of. So, have spiritual vision, and let God's Word guide you. God is more powerful than seven-foot muscle men. So don't settle for less. Wait for His best, and be among those whom God has touched their hearts. Hang around with those God's speaking to. That'll help you, too. But Saul is the big lesson. And it's a big disappointment. The people wanted him, and God sought to use him and would certainly have blessed them. In fact, the LORD will say one time, "Had you been faithful, I could have continued to allow you to be a king forever" (1Samuel 13:13-14). That wouldn't have changed God's prophetic plan, but it would have blessed Saul, certainly. But it didn't work out that way at all.

Next week, all right, read ahead. Try chapter 11, maybe 12. We'll see. And then we'll continue from there.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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