**Faithful Regardless**

**King Saul & Apostle Paul**

R. Giglio 6/24/21

Review: The People asked God for a King so they could be like “other nations”

Samuel did all he could to convince them to NOT have a king…

**19**But the people refused to listen to Samuel. “No!” they said. “We want a king over us.

(even after all that, they insisted on having a King)

**20**Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.”

(They were completely motivated by envy, jealousy, covetousness…Ignoring God!)

**21**When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the Lord. **22**The Lord answered, “Listen to them and give them a king.”

God gave them what they asked for, over time they would see the consequences of what they decided.

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So begins a new era in Israel’s history, the time of the Kings… (about 400 years)

From Saul, to David to Solomon to the over 40 kings that ruled over Israel and Judah, some of them were wise and righteousness, but most of them did not lead their people in the ways of God and the nation suffered terribly as a result.

**1st Samuel 9 “**There was a Benjamite, a man of standing, whose name was Kish son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bekorath, the son of Aphiah of Benjamin. **2**Kish had a son named Saul, as handsome a young man as could be found anywhere in Israel, and he was a head taller than anyone else.

**3**Now the donkeys belonging to Saul’s father Kish were lost, and Kish said to his son Saul, “Take one of the servants with you and go and look for the donkeys.” **4**So he passed through the hill country of Ephraim and through the area around Shalisha, but they did not find them. They went on into the district of Shaalim, but the donkeys were not there. Then he passed through the territory of Benjamin, but they did not find them.

**5**When they reached the district of Zuph, Saul said to the servant who was with him, “Come, let’s go back, or my father will stop thinking about the donkeys and start worrying about us.”

**6**But the servant replied, “Look, in this town there is a man of God; he is highly respected, and everything he says comes true. Let’s go there now. Perhaps he will tell us what way to take.”

**7**Saul said to his servant, “If we go, what can we give the man? The food in our sacks is gone. We have no gift to take to the man of God. What do we have?”

**8**The servant answered him again. “Look,” he said, “I have a quarter of a shekel[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Samuel%209&version=NIV#fen-NIV-7400a)] of silver. I will give it to the man of God so that he will tell us what way to take.” **9**(Formerly in Israel, if someone went to inquire of God, they would say, “Come, let us go to the seer,” because the prophet of today used to be called a seer.)

**10**“Good,” Saul said to his servant. “Come, let’s go.” So they set out for the town where the man of God was.

**11**As they were going up the hill to the town, they met some young women coming out to draw water, and they asked them, “Is the seer here?”

**12**“He is,” they answered. “He’s ahead of you. Hurry now; he has just come to our town today, for the people have a sacrifice at the high place. **13**As soon as you enter the town, you will find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. The people will not begin eating until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterward, those who are invited will eat. Go up now; you should find him about this time.”

**14**They went up to the town, and as they were entering it, there was Samuel, coming toward them on his way up to the high place.

**15**Now the day before Saul came, the Lord had revealed this to Samuel: **16**“About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him ruler over my people Israel; he will deliver them from the hand of the Philistines. I have looked on my people, for their cry has reached me.”

**17**When Samuel caught sight of Saul, the Lord said to him, “This is the man I spoke to you about; he will govern my people.”

**18**Saul approached Samuel in the gateway and asked, “Would you please tell me where the seer’s house is?”

**19**“I am the seer,” Samuel replied. “Go up ahead of me to the high place, for today you are to eat with me, and in the morning I will send you on your way and will tell you all that is in your heart. **20**As for the donkeys you lost three days ago, do not worry about them; they have been found. And to whom is all the desire of Israel turned, if not to you and your whole family line?”

**21**Saul answered, “But am I not a Benjamite, from the smallest tribe of Israel, and is not my clan the least of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why do you say such a thing to me?”

**22**Then Samuel brought Saul and his servant into the hall and seated them at the head of those who were invited—about thirty in number. **23**Samuel said to the cook, “Bring the piece of meat I gave you, the one I told you to lay aside.”

**24**So the cook took up the thigh with what was on it and set it in front of Saul. Samuel said, “Here is what has been kept for you. Eat, because it was set aside for you for this occasion from the time I said, ‘I have invited guests.’” And Saul dined with Samuel that day.

**25**After they came down from the high place to the town, Samuel talked with Saul on the roof of his house. **26**They rose about daybreak, and Samuel called to Saul on the roof, “Get ready, and I will send you on your way.” When Saul got ready, he and Samuel went outside together. **27**As they were going down to the edge of the town, Samuel said to Saul, “Tell the servant to go on ahead of us”—and the servant did so—“but you stay here for a while, so that I may give you a message from God.”

Saul was selected as King of Israel, not only by Samuel, but by the Lord.

He is the first king, so his actions are precedent setting. This is why he is held to very high standards with regard to his level of obedience to the Lord and his actions. He failed multiple times to obey God’s specific instructions which eventually lead to his downfall.

Saul’s ultimate reputation as a king was not good. Throughout his life we see that he was a paranoid, selfish, idolator, who was jealous, hateful and murderous toward David. He neglected and minimized God's Word. He valued his own agenda over God's agenda. He valued his ambition over Samuel's instruction. 1 Samuel ends with Saul conquered. Saul and his sons are killed in battle against the Philistines and their decapitated bodies hung on a city wall in shame. Saul's story ends in tragedy, disgrace, and failure.

But it didn’t start that way…

Saul began his reign as a humble, faithful, capable king who was filled with the Holy Spirit, yes, he even prophesied…

**1st Samuel 10:9-11** “As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul’s heart, and all the signs came to pass that day.  When Saul and his servant arrived at Gibeah, a group of prophets met him. Then the Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he prophesied along with them.

All those who had formerly known Saul and saw him prophesying with the prophets asked one another, “What has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?”

Saul began as a likable, capable and respectable leader, but in his disastrous reign s a notorious failure.

What happened?

He lost his humility…

He began by even questioning his own eligibility,

**v. 21“**Saul answered, “But am I not a Benjamite, from the smallest tribe of Israel, and is not my clan the least of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why do you say such a thing to me?”

His humility made room for God to show himself strong on Saul’s behalf. He gave him heroic victories in battle, the ability to prophesy and he became the pride of his people.

He was the first king of Israel and had complete power over everything in the kingdom.

But as often happens in these situations,

"Absolute power corrupts absolutely" is the best-known quotation of the 19th century British politician Lord Acton in 1887.

People are prone to the insidious sin of pride creeping in and taking over their decisions. People in power are most vulnerable to that, and it is usually their downfall.

It happened to Saul, David, Solomon and just about every king of Judah and Israel, and most other dictators and monarchs through history.

The only way a king (or any leader) can avoid corruption and destruction, is to fully submit to God and His wisdom, not their own.

Saul began as a relatively humble guy, but soon became corrupt because of pride.

He went from *Humble and Honorable* to *Prideful and Paranoid*, and his kingdom came crashing down as a result.

What does this teach us? What could Saul have done differently, here at the very beginning that would have lead to success, not failure?

When Samuel first called him, he responded with;

“…and is not my *clan the least of all the clans* of the tribe of Benjamin?

He sounded very much like Gideon, when God called him,

**Judges 6:14-15** “The LORDturned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel from the hand of Midian. Am I not sending you?”

“Please, my Lord,” Gideon replied, “how can I save Israel? Indeed, *my clan is the weakest in Manasseh*, and I am the youngest in my father’s house.”

God used Gideon BECAUSE of his humility, not in spite of it. In fact his army was reduced SO THAT the people would not boast in their own strength.

He starts with an army of 32,000 against 135,000 Midianites.

**Judges 7:2-4** **“**The Lord said to Gideon, “You have too many warriors with you. If I let all of you fight the Midianites, the Israelites will boast to me that they saved themselves by their own strength. **3**Therefore, tell the people, ‘Whoever is timid or afraid may leave this mountain and go home.’” So 22,000 of them went home, leaving only 10,000 who were willing to fight.

**4**But the Lord told Gideon, “There are still too many! Bring them down to the spring, and I will test them to determine who will go with you and who will not.”

He then reduced the army to 300 men, against an army of 135,000!

When the battle took place, the Lord confused the Midianite army and they turned on each other. Gideon emerged victorious.

God can greatly use a leader who is humble and dependent on God, but his hand is against those whose pride cause them to forget or neglect God.

James 4:6/Prov.3:34 ““God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”

Although the whole idea of having a King was not God’s first choice, when He relented and allowed them to have a King, God chose Saul,

[1 Samuel 9:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Sam%209.17) When Samuel caught sight of Saul, the Lord said to him, "This is the man I spoke to you about; he will govern my people."

Saul *may have* had success IF he humbled himself before God, and carefully followed his instructions, but he didn’t and as we’ll see in the following chapters, He first lost his anointing, and then lost his crown.

*Another Saul (Paul):*

A thousand years later, another Saul was born, also a Benjaminite. This Saul started out arrogant, prideful and murderous but when He was called by God to be a leader among his people, became increasingly more humble, more obedient to God’s word and more effective as a result.

The Apostle Paul began as Pharisee Saul of Tarsus, a mean-spirited persecutor of Christians throughout Judea and Damascus.

He was prideful and powerful and took delight in dragging men and women off to jail, and watching them be martyred before his own eyes.

When Jesus spoke to Him on the road to Damascus, his life was changed forever,

**Acts 9:1-6 “**Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest **2**and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. **3**As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. **4**He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

**5**“Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. **6**“Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

Saul’s name was changed soon after, but not just his name, his heart was transformed into a humble, obedient and caring servant of the Lord who wrote some of the most tender words about love in the history of literature, including, among others;

**1st Cor 13:4** “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.”

Saul understood the importance of leading with humility and dependence on God, even though he was an expert teacher of the law and had much to be proud of in His culture;

* A Roman Citizen
* A Student of Gamaliel
* A “Hebrew of Hebrews

**Phil 3:4-8** “If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: **5**circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; **6**as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

**7**But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. **8**What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ.”

Paul did not consider any of his own accomplishments or abilities to be the source of his power or significance.

**1st Cor. 2:1-5 “**And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%202&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28396a)] **2**For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. **3**I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. **4**My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, 5so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.”

This is the message to all of us.

God has called us, just as he called King Saul and the Apostle Paul.

We must be careful however NOT to rely on our own abilities, position, power or pride.

God wants to do amazing things in us, to us, and through us,

but we must remain humble and allow HIS spirit to do the work in us, and not we ourselves.

When we do that we can do all the things that He has for us, but when we rely on our own pride, we will likely fail.

**Closing verses:**

* + **1 Cor 2:5** “your faith must not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.”
  + **Phil 4:13** “We can do all things through CHRIST who strengthens us.

**Let’s remain humble and rely on God’s strength and wisdom,**

**and see what He can do through us.**