

## Foundations of a Godly Leader: The Call of Saul

Today, I am beginning a sermon series called “Foundations of a Godly Leader” which will come from the book of 1 Samuel. Even as we look at the texts in the bible, I will still call your attention to where the different characters are hearing God and how they are doing so. I believe that HEARING GOD is so foundational to your life that every opportunity we have to learn how to hear Him better should be underlined!

As we begin this study, Ps. 75:6-7 tells us that leaders are not born, they are made by God.

### 1. Godly Leadership is primarily about godly character.

You might say, I’m no leader, what does this have to do with me? To understand leadership you need to remember that:

### 2. A Leader is someone who possesses influence over another person.

That is every one of us! Whether your influence is in your home, your community, your neighborhood or in your church...you are a leader of **someone**. So if you want to be used by God, listen up! Find out how God makes leaders...and how they break sometimes as well.

We will discover Saul, the first official king of Israel’s character today.

#### 1. Historical Background

##### a. Situation in Israel

- i. Clamoring for a king...choosing a man instead of God’s rule.
- ii. Severely divided nation, tribal differences.
- iii. Tribe of Benjamin almost wiped out in a tribal war, only 600 men were left...it is indeed the smallest tribe of all.

#### 2. Story begins with the description of a man named Saul (Chapter 9)

##### a. 1 Samuel 9:1-2:

i.

##### b. He is described as having natural leadership characteristics, those that would appeal to a nation looking to have a king like all the other nations.

- i. His clan was wealthy
- ii. His father was viewed as a man of valor
- iii. And he was considered handsome and a head taller than all others.

##### c. The story develops as Saul is being sent by his father to find some lost donkeys.

- i. Realize that God probably led these donkeys to wander off, so that Saul could have this encounter with the prophet Samuel that we will be looking at today.
  - ii. Remember...last week I spoke on how God is in control of events, circumstances, opportunities and obstacles in our lives and He is always speaking through them?
  - iii. In the same way, God is using these unique circumstances to set up a meeting between Saul and Samuel that will change the direction of a nation.
  - iv. **God takes our mundane frustrations and turns them into life changing encounters!**
- d. We will join the story at a point where Saul and his servant have looked everywhere for the donkeys and decide to ask a prophet that they hear lives in the area.
- i. Chapter 9, Verses 14-17:
  - ii. *14 So they went up to the city. As they came into the city, behold, Samuel was coming out toward them to go up to the high place.*
  - iii. *15 Now a day before Saul's coming, the LORD had revealed {this} to Samuel saying, 16 "About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over My people Israel; and he will deliver My people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have regarded My people, because their cry has come to Me."*
    - 1. Did you see? Samuel hears God and knows an encounter is coming that has incredible implications.
      - a. Samuel is ACTIVELY listening for God and READY to act when He hears God speak. This is why the bible says none of his words fell to the ground and became useless.
      - b. I visited a person in the hospital this week that said she has never prayed with another person aloud before.
        - i. But while in the hospital, she clearly heard God tell her to ask a mother if she wanted someone to pray for her and her son.
        - ii. She did so. She got to be powerfully used in that mother's life!
        - iii. And it was because she was ACTIVELY listening for God and READY AND WILLING TO act when she heard God speak.
        - iv. Let me repeat this lesson from last week again: **To be used by God we must be Actively listening for God and Ready and willing to act when we hear Him speak.**
    - 2. Back to our passage:
      - a. Israel had rejected Samuel and God's theocracy, and asked for a king.
      - b. They were choosing less than God's best for themselves...yet God gives them what they ask for.
    - 3. It has been said that a nation often gets the leader they deserve.

4. It is even more true in a democracy...where in our media driven culture, we often choose image over character in our elections and later find the character so lacking that we become ashamed of our leaders.
  5. In a church, it is so easy to choose leaders based upon their contributions, their position in the community or in business, and forget the Godly character that must be the prime determinate for their calling. There are pages of instruction in the new testament on how to select leaders for a church.
  6. In Saul's case, he has a great family background, his father is a man of valor and influence, Saul is a handsome man and a head taller than anyone else.
    - a. His external qualities were useful in gathering a nation to unity, but as we will discover next week, his character was somewhat weak. This brings up a vital principle about leadership.
    - b. **Our internal qualities are more important than our external ones when it comes to being a Godly influencer or leader.**
- iv. <sup>17</sup> *When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, "Behold, the man of whom I spoke to you! This one shall rule over My people."*
1. Again...Samuel hears God's voice. Just a few weeks ago when we did the first part of our "Hearing God" series, we looked at Samuel as a boy. Samuel is old now, but he is still hearing God. He is well acquainted with God's voice and is listening intently.
  2. He is able to tell-forth what God has shown him and said to him.
  3. He is also God's mouthpiece.
  4. Samuel understands how to listen to God in order to speak for God.
  5. It is easy for us to speak up for God when we aren't listening to Him. But it is much harder to wait until you hear God speak to you before you raise your voice in criticism.
    - a. We can condemn others for the lives they live very easily, assuming we are speaking for God.
    - b. But are we hearing God?
    - c. I encourage you to listen for God before you speak for Him.
- v. <sup>18</sup>: *Then Saul approached Samuel in the gate and said, "Please tell me where the seer's house is." <sup>19</sup> 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 in the morning I will let you go, and will tell you all that is on your mind.*
- vi. <sup>20</sup> *"As for your donkeys which were lost three days ago, do not set your mind on them, for they have been found. And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for you and for all your father's household?"*

- vii. <sup>21</sup> *Saul replied, "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 to me in this way?"*
1. Can you imagine an encounter like this? It would certainly put the fear of God in my life!
    - a. Someone tells me why I am where I am...and I haven't told him!
    - b. It would be like going shopping at the grocery store and having someone walk up to you and tell you what is on your shopping list without reading it!
  2. Samuel also tells Saul that he will tell him all that is on Saul's mind...
    - a. Imagine that...not just reading my mail but also reading my mind? That is scary! And powerful!
    - b. **As human beings, I believe that there is only one thing we fear more than anything, and that is the exposure of our innermost thoughts..**
    - c. We are afraid of what is hidden being brought to light.
    - d. If we had some prophets in our churches today who could see as clearly as Samuel, and hear God as well, either our attendance at churches would be way down
    - e. Or there would be a revival because we would know that God is in our midst.
    - f. Or maybe, we should even be asking...God where are the prophets?
      - i. Are they just not listening? God may have given you the ability to clearly hear His voice and to speak out or act on His behalf, but you might not be listening.
  3. And... Samuel tells Saul that he is the one that Israel has been clamoring for...in other words...he is the next king!
  4. Saul responds to Samuel's utterance with excuses just like many great leaders have in the past...NOT ME!
    - a. I don't have the qualifications!
    - b. Remember Gideon just a few weeks ago?
    - c. Saul is very similar. In fact, his has some validity, because Benjamin is the smallest tribe.
  5. Well, chapter 9 continues with an account of how Samuel invites him to dinner and gives Saul the seat of honor, one that implies that he is a valuable guest at this occasion.
- viii. Chapter 10 begins with a private anointing of Saul as king of Israel.
1. *"Then Samuel took the flask of oil, poured it on his head, kissed him and said, "Has not the LORD anointed you a ruler over His inheritance?"*
  2. The anointing of Saul is not Samuel's choice. It is God's choice.

3. The King is God's anointed, not man's anointed.
4. It is not an election. It is not even a popularity contest. It is a divine act of God.
5. This is a bomb shell for Saul.
  - a. From the events of the previous day and the mysterious statements Samuel has made to Saul, it is evident that Samuel might be speaking of Saul as the coming king.
  - b. But now there is no possibility for misunderstanding. Samuel's words and actions (the anointing) make it very clear that Saul has been appointed and anointed to be the king.
  - c. But Saul is a man who needs some convincing (as we will see in a moment in chapter 10:22).
  - d. So Samuel prophesies regarding the events which will happen in the next few hours

### 3. The Confirmations of God's Word

- a. God loves to confirm His Word.
  - i. His promises in the Bible tell us this!
  - ii. **God wants us to know that He and His Word is trustworthy and whatever He promises will come to pass.**
  - iii. When God makes a promise He keeps it!
- b. Quotations from Scripture (multiple)
  - i. **Nu 11:23** - The LORD said to Moses, "Is the LORD'S power limited? Now you shall see whether **My word** will come true for you or not."
  - ii. **Isa 55:11** - **So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding {in the matter} for which I sent it.**
- c. The 3 Confirmations for Saul: - *Read this passage or not?*
- d. The first two signs are almost entirely for the benefit of Saul alone. He alone has been told these things will happen
  - i. Meet some folks who confirm that his father has found the donkeys
  - ii. Fed by strangers
  - iii. Meet a band of prophets and be like them
    1. The Spirit of God has come upon him, empowering him to judge the nation as their king.
    2. This event is clearly supernatural, and it is done in public.
    3. In fact, the change in Saul becomes proverbial, so that even those who do not witness this sign hear of it.
    4. This is the first public indication that Saul is to be Israel's king
- e. Have you ever heard God say to do something and then have Him confirm it? Let me tell you about what happened to me when I was in Texas: (called to a church in MASS ; I graduated from Seminary in Dec. 1996 and the church I was at had me working part-time until roughly the

Spring of 1997. The budget allowed me to come full time then...but between the times of my graduation and my full-time call, I had my resume out. 1<sup>st</sup> call in Oct 1997, 2<sup>nd</sup> call in Feb 1998)

4. V10:17-27 Saul is publicly designated as King

- a. *Thereafter Samuel called the people together to the LORD at Mizpah; <sup>18</sup> and he said to the sons of Israel, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'I brought Israel up from Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the power of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.' <sup>19</sup> "But you have today rejected your God, who delivers you from all your calamities and your distresses; yet you have said, 'No, but set a king over us!' Now therefore, present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your clans."*
  - i. <sup>20</sup> *Thus Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. <sup>21</sup> Then he brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its families, and the Matrite family was taken. And Saul the son of Kish was taken; but when they looked for him, he could not be found.*
    1. The sacred lots, known as the Urim and Thummim, could be used when "yes" or "no" answers are all that were needed.
    2. The Urim and Thummim were kept in the breastplate worn by the High Priest (Exodus 28:29-30, Leviticus 8:8) and were to be used to inquire of the LORD. (Numbers 27:18-21)
    3. They were used to discern who God had chosen, or who had sinned against the LORD. (e.g. Achan in Joshua 7:14-18).
    4. Each tribe would present itself before the LORD and the lots would be cast.
      - a. The Urim ("Curses") indicated a negative response.
      - b. The Thummim ("Perfections") indicated a positive response.
    5. Once a tribe was identified, the procedure would be repeated with the clans of that tribe and then again with the families of that clan and finally with an individual from that family.
    6. Far from being considered a random selection, it was believed that God controlled the outcome of the lots. Dt. 17 required that God select the king, not the people.
  - ii. <sup>22</sup> *Therefore they inquired further of the LORD, "Has the man come here yet?" So the LORD said, "Behold, he is hiding himself by the baggage."*
    - i. Then Saul is not found among the people but hiding among the baggage. And the word usage is "hiding himself"...or trying not to be noticed by mixing in with the traveling bags that are likely piled up.
    - ii. That is the bags that people would have brought to attend this assembly of the people. This must have been in incredible assembly. Tens of thousands of people, maybe even hundreds of thousands of people, gathered, with a sense of expectation because Samuel, the revered prophet of Israel would be unveiling their new King.

- iii. And imagine Samuel's embarrassment. He has already let Saul know he will be chosen, and Saul is probably hearing the lots drawn and seeing a bullseye on his chest getting bigger and bigger as it zeros in on his name. He works his way back further and further in the crowd until he is at the very back, in the baggage pile. And about that time, they call his name!
- c. *<sup>23</sup> So they ran and took him from there, and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. <sup>24</sup> Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? Surely there is no one like him among all the people." So all the people shouted and said, "Long live the king!"*
- d. *<sup>25</sup> Then Samuel told the people the ordinances of the kingdom, and wrote them in the book and placed it before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his house. <sup>26</sup> Saul also went to his house at Gibeah; and the valiant men whose hearts God had touched went with him. <sup>27</sup> But certain worthless men said, "How can this one deliver us?" And they despised him and did not bring him any present. But he kept silent.*
  - i. Not all the people liked him, as the text informs us there is a group of men – worthless fellows – who do not look upon Saul as their deliverer.
  - ii. Do these men know the “old Saul” too well
  - iii. Do they disdain the man for hiding amongst the luggage? Is he not their kind of leader?

5. Overcoming the divisions in the nation is the issue brought up in Chapter 11:
- a. Nahash, the Ammonite king, has besieged the Israelite town of Jabesh-gilead. The people are about to give up and ask Nahash to declare what his terms for peace are. The people of Jabesh-gilead are willing to be his subjects; they really seem to have no choice. But the king's terms for peace are severe. He not only wants the Israelite town to surrender to him, he insists that he will pluck out the right eye of each.
  - b. The people of Jabesh ask Nahash for seven days to plea to their Jewish brethren for help. If no one comes to their aid, they promise, they will become his subjects.
  - c. The surrounding countries and nations and peoples around Israel know the state of affairs in Israel. They know that Israel is a fractured group of related tribes, often in conflict with one another. Nahash is practically daring the people to come and fight...knowing just how disheartened this town will be when no-one shows up to help them.
  - d. But God has a different end to this story than the one Nahash would write.
  - e. *11:5 "Now behold, Saul was coming from the field behind the oxen, and he said, "What is the matter with the people that they weep?" So they related to him the words of the men of Jabesh. <sup>6</sup> Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul mightily when he heard these words, and he became very angry. <sup>7</sup> He took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent them throughout the territory of Israel by the hand of messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen." Then the dread of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out as <sup>R22</sup> one man."*
    - i. Saul is still farming, not attending to affairs of state, or for that matter, even forming a government yet.(v5)
      1. Why? He may still be "hiding out"...he hasn't come to a point of a crisis of leadership. That is where you look around and check to see if anyone else is going to do something about it. If not, then you do it.
      2. Not unlike the studies psychologists have done on people. Take a group of 10 people and one of them will take charge automatically. 5 of them will watch to see if anyone else steps forward and if not, then they will move. The other 4 won't do anything and will argue why they shouldn't.
    - ii. But word eventually comes to the town that Saul's family lives in, and when it does, the people of that city begin to weep. Saul is coming in from the fields and observes the weeping and asks what has happened. When he is told, he is furious. The Spirit of God comes upon him. God ignites the leadership within him.
      1. He slaughters a yoke of oxen and cuts them into pieces and sends these pieces around the land, warning that anyone who refuses to assemble for war will find his oxen slaughtered also.
      2. It seems as though some are excusing themselves from coming to the aid of their brethren because they cannot get away from the farm at the moment.

3. Saul's actions make it clear that they will have nothing to farm with if they refuse to help their brethren. He threatens to take away the equivalent of their "tractors."
  - iii. *11:11 "The next morning Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the camp at the morning watch and struck down the Ammonites until the heat of the day. Those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together. 12 Then the people said to Samuel, "Who is he that said, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Bring <sup>R328 FB9</sup> the men, that we may put them to death." 13 But Saul said, "Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has accomplished deliverance in Israel." 14 Then Samuel said to the people, "Come and let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there." 15 So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they also offered sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly. "*
  - f. Israel under Saul wins a great victory. At first glance, Israel is going to experience deliverance and have a great king. Some of us knows what happens next...and next week we will look at it.
  - g. But Saul is not given to Israel because God wants this man to fail.
    - i. God picks a physically superior man, whose appearance and stature seem to perfectly suit the task he is being given.
    - ii. God supernaturally empowers Saul, putting his Spirit on him to enable him to judge and to lead with wisdom and power.
    - iii. God is not trying to sabotage the reign of Saul, though He surely knows his kingdom will fail.
    - iv. The failures of Saul are not due to God's undermining, but to Saul's personal failure to walk in the ways of God, in his failure to trust and obey God.
    - v. Saul fails to appropriate the resources God has graciously given him to enable him to rule in justice and righteousness.
    - vi. Saul is not a second-class king, given by a spiteful God; he is a first-class king, completely equipped for his task, and wholly responsible for his failure.
    - vii. This king is not a David, to be sure, but neither is he a dud.
    - viii. How gracious God is to us, in spite of our sin.
      1. This king is the finest humanity available, a man transformed in heart and supernaturally empowered by the Spirit of God.
      2. When Saul walks in the Spirit, he functions as the deliverer of the people of God.
      3. When he walks in the Spirit, he recognizes that the victories his armies win are God's victories, not his own.
      4. He is initially, a man marked by humility and grace.
6. How about you?
- a. Are you hiding from God's calling on your life?
    - i. Are you full of excuses why you can't be used by God?
    - ii. Are you hiding among the baggage even though God has repeatedly given you confirmations that He wants to work in your life?

- iii. Sure, God might do better than you...but if it is you He picks, He has a reason.
  - iv. Only you can do what God can made you uniquely to do. Without you, it simply won't get done.
- b. Maybe you have started well...like Saul.
- i. You have experienced God's blessing and grace but you have wandered away from your good beginning.
  - ii. Rev 2:4-5: `But I have *this* against you, that you have left <sup>R82</sup> your first love. <sup>5</sup>  
`Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent <sup>R83</sup> and do <sup>R84</sup> the deeds <sup>E16</sup> you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand <sup>R85</sup> out of its place--unless you repent.
  - iii. Won't you return to your first love? Won't you respond to God's calling on you to give him your all?
- c. Let's pray:
- i. Pray this prayer with me if it expresses your heart this morning:
    - 1. Lord, I confess that I have failed to ask you daily to use me. O God, use me to touch someone's life. Lord, I am afraid I have been hiding among the baggage, resisting your call. Please forgive me. Change my heart!
  - ii. Some of us can relate with Saul and his good beginning but know we have left our first love...because of a number of reasons that You alone know, Lord. Lord we don't want just a good start and a lousy ending....We really want to be faithful. Forgive us for our faithlessness and wandering.
  - iii. With every head bowed and eye closed, if either of those prayers were your prayer this morning, will you simply acknowledge it by slipping your hand up in the air right now and making a physical act to say you meant what you just prayed.
  - iv. Thank you. Amen.
  - v. If you desire prayer today, you can come forward, or you can use these rails. Please stand and join us in our response song, hymn #\_\_\_\_\_.
  - vi.