

A BAD IDEA

Of all peoples and nations we Americans should understand it was not a good idea for Israel to appoint a king. America was born out of an outrage over the King of England's abuse of power. American author Walt Whitman writes, "For many a promise sworn by royal lips and broken and laugh'd at in the breaking... the blows strike revenge... heads of the nobles fall... people scorn'd the ferocity of kings." People do eventually scorn the ferocity of kings.

Israel though, wanted to be like their neighboring nations. They wanted a king and all that comes with it: *a throne, a crown, a scepter, a court, a coronation, pomp and circumstance*. Rather than have faith in the invisible God, the Hebrews wanted a visible ruler on which they could fix their aspirations and hopes. On the field of battle, with the enemy breathing down their necks, they assumed it would be easier to rally around a leader they could see with their eyes, than trust God.

From the outset, God wanted to be Israel's king. His ideal form of government was a *theocracy*, not a *monarchy*. But Israel ignored God's warning about "*the ferocity of kings*", and persisted in their demand for a *king made of clay*. Finally, God gave in, and gave 'em a king. A king they would regret again and again.

Samuel's sons are the excuse Israel gives to justify their request for a king. Unlike their godly dad, Samuel's sons were more crooks than judges. But if Samuel's boys were actually the issue, all Israel would need to do was ask for new judges. The real point of their request surfaces in verse 5, "make us a king to judge us *like all the nations*."

Famous Bible commentator, G. Campbell Morgan calls this "*the supreme wrong*". He writes, "Israel had been chosen to be unlike the nations, a people directly governed by God." "*Israel*" means "*governed by God*."

God called Israel to be holy – to be set apart, or different. God's people were to march to a different drummer. They were to keep in cadence with the will and wisdom of God. Instead the Hebrews utter the familiar refrain every parent is accustomed to hearing from a testy child, "*Everybody else is doing it- why can't I?*"

The Lord reveals the problem to Samuel in verse 7, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected

you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them." The people's request for a king had nothing to do with Samuel, they just didn't want to submit and trust in God.

The Hebrews wanted more than God to depend on. Perhaps they sensed a certain security in an authority they could see. Maybe they felt a king's demands would require less than God's. Or they could've concluded a king was easier to manipulate. They might've wanted a *system to follow* - complete with a chain of command, and rights of succession - rather than a *relationship to maintain*.

Whatever their specific reason, the bottom line was they rejected God.

In verse 9 God tells Samuel to comply with the people's wishes, but to warn them of "*the ferocity of kings*". He does so in verses 11-17.

As the old saying goes, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." History records the reign of very few benevolent dictators. It's difficult for even a good man to handle the power and authority afforded a king.

Of the 42 kings who will rule over either the northern or southern Hebrew kingdoms, only 9 will get a positive approval rating from God. Every horrible injustice, and abuse of power Samuel predicts will eventually come to pass.

As I tell my kids, if your friends stick their heads in the oven and bake their brains, does that mean you should do the same? *No way!* If God forbids it there's a good reason it's forbidden, and Israel will have to learn that lesson the hard way.

Guys, God doesn't want us to go with the flow of this world. He wants our lives to draw a contrast. We're to be governed by God – not winging it on our own.

God wants us to be loyal to our covenant, and different in our approach to life. We need the gumption to stand up, and stick out for Jesus Christ! Guys, following God is trusting that His way is best, even when no one else in the room thinks so.

It's sad that no one in Israel had that kind of trust in God. Despite the prophet Samuel's warning, we're told in verse 19, "Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No, but we will have a king over us..."

Bible Scan - 1 Samuel 8-15

E s t a b l i s h e d 1 8 7 7

Devotion Box - The Cure for Insecurity

The filling of the Holy Spirit is the only cure for a person wrapped up in their own insecurities. When the Holy Spirit comes upon us, and infuses us with His supernatural dynamic, we're turned inside out. Our focus is no longer on ourselves – either on our strengths or weaknesses – suddenly our focus is shifted onto the Lord and other people.

This is what turned *petrified Peter* into *power-packed Peter*. This is what turns us from wimps into witnesses – from flickers into flames. Ask the Lord to pour out the Holy Spirit upon your life – not with an eye-dropper, but with a bucket.

In the waning seconds of a championship football game – after the outcome has been decided – the victorious players will sneak up behind the victorious coach and dump a bucketful of gatorade on top of his head. This is after the victory has been won. But for the believer in Jesus, a similar outpouring is necessary for victory. If we ask, God will pour out His Holy Spirit upon us.

SEERS AND PROPHETS

1 Samuel 9:9 identifies the man of God as a prophet, but tells us that at this time “*prophets*” were known as “*seers*”.

The name is descriptive of what a true prophet does – God gives him or her ability to see into the spiritual realm, and speak a message.

Today, the term “*prophet*” is probably just as descriptive since there are far too many, so-called “*prophets*”, using the things of God to *profit* monetarily.

Devotion Box - Humility or Insecurity?

Humility and insecurity look alike - but they're two different animals. Humility is an others-centered attitude. I'm so concerned with you I'm not worried about me. But insecurity is the ultimate form of selfishness. I'm so worried about my image I'm afraid to step up to the challenge, lest I fail and embarrass myself. Later, we'll see plenty of reasons to believe Saul was more insecure than truly humble.

God wants us to be humble, but have you mistaken humility for insecurity in your life?

HEAD AND SHOULDERS

Chapter 9 begins, “There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish... a Benjamite, a mighty man of power.” Kish was a wealthy landowner, and a man of clout in the community. “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.”

When you scanned the crowd it was easy to spot Saul. He was always head and shoulders above everyone else. If Saul had played basketball in the NBA he could've pulled down millions of dollars. He then could've parlayed his stardom into a movie career, because we're told he was “*a choice and handsome son*”.

Saul had Robert Redford's good looks, and Diekembe Mutumbo's height. He was the proverbial hunk – *tall, dark, and handsome*. And as we'll see, he ended up playing for the kings – not the Sacramento Kings, but the kings of Israel.

Devotion Box - A Venture in faith

I love Jonathan's daring faith in 14:6, “Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, “Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the LORD will work for us. For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few.” Rather than propping up the status quo, let's take a step of faith, and see what God will do. Hey, *nothing ventured nothing gained*.

Guys, we need to take some *ventures of faith*. God blesses people who are not content to sit back, but are looking for opportunities to count for Christ. Men and women of faith who are not afraid to take the initiative, and go on the offensive. Guys, sense a need - a direction – then just go for it, and see if God blesses.

God loves it when we create impossible situations where He can show off His miracle power. Jonathan doesn't focus on obstacles, but on possibilities. I love his comment, “For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few.”

Let me sum up the four ingredients of Jonathan's venture of faith. I hope you'll take the initiative, and win new ground for the Lord – and here's what's involved.

First, *a daring faith*. Second, *a deliberate plan*. They discerned God's will. Third, *a discreet approach*. They didn't just run into the camp kamakaze-style. Jonathan climbed discreetly to the top of the rock where he could gain the upper hand. And fourth, *a divine intervention*. God joined the venture.

With a *daring faith, a deliberate plan, a discreet approach, and some divine intervention* - people of small means can accomplish great things for God. What might God want to accomplish through you today if you were willing to venture out in faith?

CONFIRMATION FOR SAUL

In 1 Samuel 10, note the sequence of what happens to confirm God's blessing on Saul...

*what was lost is found
a hunger gets fed
he joins in the praise of God
he's filled and transformed by the Holy Spirit.*

This is how God confirms His blessing on us. We who were lost are found. Our spiritual hunger gets met. A desire is born in our hearts to praise the Lord. And we're filled with the Spirit. And the end result is also the same, we're "turned into another man."

Before his conversion, Augustine was a flagrant sinner who lived with a mistress. One day after he'd come to Christ, he saw the woman walking toward him on the street. She was excited to see him, and ran toward him shouting, "Augustine, it is I, it is I!" But Augustine ran in the other direction, calling out over his shoulder, "Yes, but it is not I, it is not I!"

The power of God changes you into a new man.

SAUL'S FINEST HOUR

Saul's real test occurs in chapter 11. The Ammonite army camps against the Hebrew settlement of Jabesh Gilead. They offer peace, but at a steep price. They'll sign a treaty with the Hebrews if everyone surrenders his right eye.

Peace for an eyeball – that's a pretty vital piece of the body. *I'm not sure I could see to do that.* They suggested the right eye because that would immobilize them for battle. In ancient times the left eye was covered by a shield, and the right eye focused on the opponent. Without a right eye, the average man couldn't fight.

Saul comes to the rescue of Jabesh Gilead. 330,000 Israelis rally around their new leader, and King Saul leads them in a decisive victory. In the aftermath of the battle, someone suggests the Hebrews who opposed Saul's coronation need to be punished, but Saul refuses. He wants nothing to overshadow the salvation God has accomplished for Israel.

No one really knows it at the time, but this will be Saul's finest hour. The rest of Saul's story will go downhill from here.

ARE YOU A SAUL OR A DAVID ?

Saul had a problem many of us share. *He was an externally motivated person.* He was a reactionary who lived for people's approval. Circumstances and opinions – external factors dictated his behavior. To Saul, *perception* was more important than *principle*.

Whereas, God wanted him, and God wants us, to be internally-motivated people. Conviction, virtue, and spiritual truth need to guide us.

Before his coronation, Saul was afraid and fearful of people. His insecurities caused him to appear humble, but when he gained some success, and some attention, he became enslaved to it, and tried to keep it at any cost. Saul was the same *before and after* – *image was everything*. When he lacked power, he was fearful to assume it. When he possessed power, he was fearful of letting it go.

Guys, you may be a person like Saul. You've been called to step up, instead you've shrunk back. You're hiding among the stuff - when God has called you to be out in front - leading, serving, and stepping out for Him. You need to be filled with the Spirit, act on the fact, and learn to walk by faith.

The problem though was Saul's heart. God wanted a man after His own heart. He finds him in a shepherd boy named David. Saul's insecurities kept his heart preoccupied with his own desires and status. Everything was viewed through the lens, *what does this do for me?* David thought in terms of, *how can I please God?*

Here's a little poem with a huge truth, "When conducting the band, you'll find it's allowed; you're expected to stand with your back to the crowd."

This conveys what Saul lacked. He was unable to lead with his back to the crowd. Every move Saul made was to play to the crowd. His only goal was to enhance his image.

Guys, what about you? Do you allow the winds of circumstance to drive your ship, or are you anchored to principle? Do you allow your insecurities to make you vulnerable to the opinions of others, or are you trusting God to make you strong? *Is image everything,* or do you want to please the Lord?

Are you a Saul or a David?

Bible Scan - 1 Samuel 8-15

Calvary Chapel

If you have questions on tonight's study, email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org

Calvary Chapel Announcements - February 20, 2000

WOMEN'S CONFERENCE – FEBRUARY 25-26, FRIDAY AND SATURDAY

"God's Design" – Guest Speaker: Kelly Bell, CC Murietta, CA

Like a Quilt, God has a plan, and pattern, and a purpose for your life. Come and learn more about God's love for you. Conference Begins 7:30 on Friday and ends 5:00 on Saturday. Lunch on Saturday is included.

Cost: \$15 per person. Sign up today!

TUESDAY 10:00 AM - Women's Prayer and Praise in the Fellowship Hall (childcare provided)

Next Bible Scan- February 27- 1 Samuel 16-31

"Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams." - 1 Samuel 15:22

**Bible Scan
Memory Verse**

Devotion Box - Waiting on God

FB Meyer once said, "God can only use those who trust Him absolutely; and He often tests them by long delays." Guys, a prerequisite for Christian service is the willingness to wait. Get ahead of God, and you're on your own. God wants us to stay in step – step by step. Not too far ahead, or too far behind.

Samuel has ominous words for Saul in chapter 13. His impatience has been costly. Rather than wait on Samuel to offer the sacrifice, Saul went ahead and did it himself.

Samuel says to Saul in verse 13-14, "the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you." When will we learn we never get behind when we wait on God?

It's been said, "Time spent with God is time never wasted. The carpenter saves time who pauses to sharpen the blade on his saw." When God slows us down to sharpen our blade, He's accelerating our effectiveness, not impeding it.

Devotion Box - The Sin of Prayerlessness

1 Samuel 12:23 is an extremely vital verse. After Samuel's sermon, and the Lord's affirmation of it – the people repent. In verse 19, they ask Samuel to intercede for them. Samuel tells them not to fear. The Lord is faithful. He won't forsake them.

And neither will Samuel. Look at what he says in verse 23, "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you..." Guys, did you realize there is such a thing as the sin of prayerlessness?

This comes as a shock to the believer who views prayer as an optional activity – as an elective - rather than part of the required curriculum. There is such a thing as the sin of prayerlessness. Prayer is an incredible privilege – to touch the hem of His garment – to communicate with the Almighty – to let my request be made known... but prayer is more than a privilege, it's a responsibility.

Guys, it's our duty to pray for one another.

THROWING GOD A BONE

In 1 Samuel 15 Saul substitutes sacrifice for obedience. Many people do. They assume you can do as you please as long as you throw God a bone. They figure God can be pacified, or bought off, by offering some kind of suitable sacrifice.

They don't know God. God cares little about our sacrifice. He wants us – our hearts, our devotion, our obedience. He wants a relationship of submission and trust – and an occasional tip of the hat is no substitute. Samuel tells Saul in verse 22, "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams."

Outwardly, Saul was considered a faithful Hebrew. When it came to religion and rituals he made all the right moves, but he lacked a tenderness toward God. On the surface, Saul was not a diabolical person. He wasn't into witchcraft or idolatry – yet, to God *rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness as idolatry.*

Saul was rejected because he wasn't a man after God's own heart.