

Gods Unfolding Plan

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[0 : 00] Let's turn back to that chapter and look at it for a short time. 1 Samuel chapter 16.

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before God had said to his people Israel that there would be a king over them. In fact he had he had given rules as to what qualifications that king must have and there wasn't a king until hundreds of years later and of course the first king of Israel was King Saul but of course there was a history to Israel where they never had a king. They didn't have a king. God was their king and when they eventually wanted a king it was for the wrong reasons. 1 Samuel chapter 8 tells all the people of Israel they gathered to Samuel and they said we want a king but their motives their reasons for asking for a king were the wrong ones even though it was always God's plan to give them a king. There's a very important lesson there. We can actually want the right thing for the wrong motives and when we want the right thing for the wrong motives we're sinning in wanting it.

You know we're really complicated people. Sin has so complicated us our hearts that we have to we can actually ask for the right thing with the wrong motives and that's we always ask we're always checking ourselves and examining ourselves and asking what I am praying for do I want it for the right reasons. Now here if these people had come to if they had gathered around Samuel and the people of Israel said God has always promised us that we would have a king that would have been different but that's not what they said. They said we want a king in order to be like the nations round about us.

That was the wrong reason. They wanted to be like the Canaanites round about them because they had kings they seemed to be doing well enough they seemed to be thriving with their kings therefore they wanted to be like the nations round about them and in so doing they were rejecting God's kingship over them and yet God is able to take a wrong situation like that and he's able to turn it around by showing his people how far they've gone wrong and he's able to turn it around and make it work for good. You know it's marvelous to look at the history of Israel and see how God's grace works through them. Some people think that that the God of the Old Testament is a ruthless merciless God. That is nothing could be further from the truth. It's just simply not true to say that the God of the Old Testament is a ruthless merciless God. God is acting always in mercy but he's acting also in civic judgment at the same time.

[5 : 11] He has to in order for him to be God. He has to have perfect justice and have to exercise perfect justice. Now the reason why God always promised that there would be a king over Israel was that in the person of the king Israel would be able to recognize the coming of the king the king of kings kings. And in the process of anointing a king because that's how a king was established by the process of anointing in which oil was poured over his head. God was saying to his people Israel one day there will be a single anointed person. And do you know what the word for anointed one is? The word is Messiah. The word for the word for anointed one is Messiah.

Messiah. And so God is preaching to his people promising them that they would have there would be a kingship. A monarchy would reign one day in Israel. And but yet that monarchy would look

forward to a day when there would be a king who would never be replaced because he would be on the throne of David forever.

forever. So what we're having what we see in this chapter is actually an event of enormous significance. Because God is sending Samuel to the family of Jesse in order to choose out one of his sons because here was God's chosen to reign over his people Israel.

And I was going to I was going to I was going to go through the rules God's rules for kingship and I can see the time is passing. I want us to move quickly on to the events that happen in this chapter and try and get some extract some simple lessons from this chapter as to how God's plan operate. because once again in this narrative part of scripture we see God's plan unfolding for his people. God's plan is still unfolding for his people today and what we see from this chapter what we derive from this chapter are principles that help us understand how God's plan unfolds in the 21st century as much as it unfolds in the centuries long before the birth of Jesus Christ.

[7 : 43] I want us to see first of all that God overcomes failure. God overcomes failure. The people of Israel had sinned in asking for a king. Their motives were wrong. Their reasons were wrong.

And they came to realize that in chapter 12 where God sent thunder and rain as a judgment as a punishment against his people Israel in order to show them how wrong they had gone and how their sin was that they had it was an act of dishonor to God.

They had turned their backs on the leadership that God had given to them. But instead of refusing to give them what they asked for God gave them what they asked for but he gave them it on his own terms and he turned the whole situation into one which brought good out of evil.

You know only God is able to bring good out of evil. He puts it another way like this. God works all things together for good to those who love him and are called according to their purpose.

And you can see example after example of how God does it. It's part of his God's mercy doesn't end with forgiveness. God's mercy is it works through wrong things evil things bad things and he's able to turn them around in order to glorify himself and to bring good out of them.

[9 : 22] Now that does not give us an excuse to sin. You know there's a lot of people who might respond to that and say well in that case we might as well just live any way we want. If God is able to bring good out of evil does it matter then how I live?

Let me just take one example and that's the example of David. If you read further on in 2 Samuel you all know the story of how David committed adultery with Bathsheba.

He had arranged for her husband to be put in the front line. He arranged for his killing and how she became pregnant and had a son called Saul. The son of course died.

The first son died but then she became pregnant again. And this son was Solomon. Now here is a sinful situation. A situation in which David is breaking God's laws.

I think he probably broke every one of the Ten Commandments in one act. And yet if you follow the history God not only forgave David as he came to God in repentance for what he had done.

[10 : 25] But in the course of time God turned things around and placed Solomon on the throne of Israel. And made him the wisest person that ever walked the face of the earth.

He's one of the authors of the scriptures. That did not mean that David was right in what he had done. He was sinful in what he had done. And David had to pay the consequences.

His whole kingdom became divided. His son rebelled against him. Absalom his son rebelled against him. David became a refugee. And all because of this one act of disobedience and foolishness that David had slipped into.

And yet God turned the whole thing around. So that Solomon one day sat on the throne of Israel. And Solomon was greatly used. So God overcomes our failures.

You know I've heard people saying well I've failed God so much that he cannot have anything more to do with me. I have put myself outside of the plan and the purpose of God.

[11 : 33] You know some people, some Christians get to feel like that because they're so aware of making wrong decisions. Sinful decisions in which they've backslidden and they've done the wrong thing.

And they say that's it. God must be finished. He has no more for me in this world. Well that's simply not the case. You have example after example in scriptures where God takes a person out of the depths.

And where he restores them. He restores my soul said David. And restoration is where God brings a person back.

And he sets them on the right path once again. God overcomes our failures. And that's what he's doing here.

He's overcoming the failure of Israel. I reckon in this chapter this must have been a huge encouragement for Samuel as well.

[12:34] Because it was because of Samuel's failure, his personal failure in Israel, that a king was being set up over them. And Samuel well knew this.

At the end of his life he looked back over his life and he must have wondered what have I achieved for the Lord. And it's every possibility that at this moment in time Samuel must have been depressed and despondent and in despair as to what had happened.

And it was at least in part because of a failure on his part. It's not surprising that God said to Samuel, how long will you grieve over Saul?

But here again, God is saying to Samuel, the story is not finished by no means. And your life has not been a failure. And I'm going to take what you've done over all these years and I'm going to make it work together for good.

And I'm going to establish over my kingdom a man after my own heart. That's what David was. A man after God's own heart.

[13:45] That's the first thing then. God overcomes our failure. So if tonight you are conscious of having failed God in some way, then know for sure that God is bigger than our failure.

His grace extends beyond our failure and our guilt. And he is able by his power to restore his people back to himself and to bring good out of evil.

That's why everyone here tonight should be worshipping and praising God and determining within our own hearts to serve him all the more faithfully and all the more lovingly as we move on in our Christian lives.

I want us to notice also how, and this is on a very practical level, how God overcomes danger. It was highly dangerous for Samuel to be in this situation.

If Saul had found out what he was about, what he was up to, in going to another family in order to anoint a king who would be his replacement, Saul would become jealous and Saul would seek to take Samuel's life.

[14:59] It was a highly dangerous thing to do. Samuel said, how can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me. And he would have. If he had heard it, he would have killed him.

But here again, God overcomes. He overcomes our fears. And he overcomes the possibilities. And he overcomes the eventualities and the likelihoods.

Isn't it amazing how we live in terms of possibilities and what might happen? How many times do we live like that? How many times do we wake up in the middle of the night, and it's always when it happens that it's worst.

And where things that we fear, all of a sudden they're ten times worse than what they are. And we always think of the worst possible scenario.

It happens to me, and I'm sure it happens to you as well. And here it was happening to Samuel. What if, if Saul hears it, he will kill me? Well, if Saul heard it, and if Saul was in control of his own destiny, then he probably would have.

[16:06] But Saul was not in control of his own destiny. God is in control of his destiny. And God is in control of your destiny and my destiny and whatever we might fear this evening.

Whether it's irrational or irrational. And how much of what we fear is foundless and irrational, isn't it? And we so quickly forget that God is in control.

And what we need to do is to put our trust in the God who knows the end from the beginning. And if you are in covenant relationship with the Lord through faith in Jesus Christ, he has promised to keep you and protect you and uphold you and keep you and guide you in every step of the way.

And God will move mountains in order for his will to be done in your life. Make no mistake of that. God overcomes our fear.

How many times the disciples, they were shaking in fear when it was completely... One of the times they were in the boat with Jesus and the wind arose and the storm arose. Jesus was in the front of the boat.

[17:16] He was asleep. And they went to him and they said, Master, do you not care if we drown? And Christ woke up. Jesus woke up from being asleep in the boat.

And he stilled the storm. And he rebuked them because of their faith. And how often have we heard that same rebuke? And how often have we made that same cry?

Does God not care if I drown? Well, God does care. He cares deeply. And he will not let us fall. God overcomes the dangers that we often perceive, even if there's a possibility of the reality.

Thirdly, I want us to notice this, that God's plans work for the Christian. God's plans work through our worship.

It's a very simple but a very basic and foundational principle in this chapter. They work via our worship.

[18:22] What does God say? He says, take a heifer with you. In verse 2, take a heifer with you and say, I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. And invite Jesse to the sacrifice.

And I will show you what you shall do. Now, if you don't read this right, you might jump to the conclusion that the sacrifice was a front. All it was was a front by which the anointing would take place.

That's not the case at all. The heifer was a real one. And the sacrifice was a real sacrifice. And the worship service was a real worship service. And the reason was a very important one, that God meets with people particularly as they worship, either privately or publicly, as they gather with others.

And you see that in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. And I want us to rediscover the importance, once again, of worship and what God does in and through worship.

For example, it was as Peter, remember in Acts chapter 10, when Peter saw the vision of the sheep being lowered down to him and God was going to teach him an enormously important lesson about the equality of Jew and Gentile.

[19:43] It was as Peter was praying that God spoke to him. God could have chosen another occasion to speak to him and give him this vision but strangely, it was as it was that time that God chose to meet with Peter in a special and a living way.

Do you remember when Hannah? It was as Hannah went into the temple to worship God and to pray to God that God answered her prayer in and through worship.

It was as Peter and John were going to the temple in Acts chapter 3 to pray that they met and healed a crippled man. It was when the disciples were worshipping at Antioch in Acts chapter 13 that the Holy Spirit spoke to them and he said to them, set apart for me Saul and Barnabas for the work that I've chosen them to do.

I don't know if I can understand this. I don't believe I'm meant to understand it but you know when we worship something happens. I know that sounds really mysterious and mystical and all the rest of it but after 40 years as a Christian that's my conclusion.

I can't explain it. It doesn't always appear to happen. Sometimes worship is very mechanical and when it is we have to pray to the Lord that God will deliver us from mechanical worship and from just going through the motions of what we're doing.

[21:16] But yet other times that something happens. God meets with us in a special way. You remember how you remember how Moses met with God at the burning bush.

And it was there as the two beings came together as Moses saw the burning bush and as he wondered why is it that the bush burns but it's not consumed I will go over and see this strange sight.

As he went over God spoke to him and he discovered that God was in the bush and it was then that God said Moses take off the shoes from your feet because the place where you are standing is holy ground.

At that moment there was a meeting there was a fellowship there was a coming together of Moses and God and that was the moment when something happened. I can't explain it something happened and it was of crucial monumental importance for the history of Israel and it was through worship that it happened.

Now I'm saying this because in today's world worship is either a thing we fall out over or it's a thing that we ignore and that we just treat as of lesser importance.

[22:28] How often do you hear people saying well I'm a Christian but I don't do church. I'm sorry that person is not reading the same Bible as I am because I as a Christian rejoice to do church.

I suppose because I'm a minister I have to but I don't. I love it. I love church. I know I'm as I'm as I'm as aware of the difficulties and the tensions and of course anytime you get people together you

always have the potential of it always has been like that potential of things going wrong. I'm as aware of the difficulties but I'm not going to walk away from it. no way. No way. Because God has brought us all together and God has a purpose for us and God has promised that when as in and through our worship please don't tell me I don't take part in worship.

That's the other thing people say. Well the worship I've got no place in worship. Every time you come in that door and you open your mouth and you sing praise to God you are taking part. You are taking as great a part in worship as I am.

And it's there that God moves. And there that God speaks and he opens people's hearts and he changes people's lives and he transforms people and sometimes you walk out that door a completely different person from the person that walked in that door.

[23 : 52] So I'll tell you whenever you walk in that door watch out because that's where God moves. Be prepared for something happening.

That's where God meets with people. He meets with his own people and he changes them and he makes them see things that they shouldn't be doing. He makes them see something in the Bible that they've never seen before something that encourages them.

He makes us see things about himself that we never knew were true in the past that we see all of a sudden we go out and we're completely uplifted. And he talks to people who haven't yet come to know him.

and he makes them realize that this Bible is the truth. He makes them realize that he means business that he is a claim he lays hold on their lives that we're accountable to him and he makes us to see that there's only one way to be saved and that's through believing in Jesus Christ.

And you know who knows but that tonight there's a person in here you've walked in that door and you go out a new person because you've come to meet with God. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

[25 : 01] Wouldn't that be the best thing that could ever happen this evening? I'll tell you don't underestimate worship. Don't ever underestimate worship. And every Sunday from now on you wake up on a Sunday morning and you ask that God will move in a mighty way as we come together.

That's what he did here. It was in the worship service as they came together on the basis of the sacrifice that God spoke to Samuel and that a king was born in Israel.

A king that would be the greatest Old Testament king that there was. Somebody that would prefigure the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

There was nobody like David. There wasn't a single person like him in all the history of the Old Testament. And then fourthly God's and I know at the time God's plans override our initial impressions.

That's the most famous verse verse 7. Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature because I have rejected him for the Lord sees not as man sees.

[26 : 14] Man looks on the outward appearance but the Lord looks on the heart. You know if ever there was a lesson that we need to rediscover in our 21st century celebrity culture it is that very important lesson when we put value on riches and the size of houses and the size of cars and the size of businesses and all the empires and institutions that are in the world that we have created for ourselves the governments of the world that we think are unshakable and impregnable and that are eternal one of these days they will all come crumbling down.

Have you ever wondered why it is that God never operates through these empires? Have you ever wondered why it is that God takes ordinary people the plainest simplest ordinary people and they are the people that he uses I'm thinking of the woman at the well that we spoke about with the children this morning she sat down beside Jesus and yet that same woman who had come out that midday a thirsty dejected lonely woman who was at the end of her tether because she had tried every effort to find happiness and fulfillment in this life through her relationships that was the moment that Jesus met with her changed her life and you know what happened then she went back to her people and she became an evangelist with this message come see a man that told me everything I ever did that was her message and it had more effect than the disciples because they all came flocking to

Jesus and they all listened to him through that one woman's testimony an ordinary hurting dejected lonely woman who God had turned around that's the way that God works that's the way that God communicates his word through ordinary people like you and I that's who he uses to fulfill people like the Hannah's of this world the Hannah's who went into the temple and simply prayed for a son

and that's what God gave her the ordinary people of this world God looks at our hearts I wonder what it is that's keeping you away from coming to faith in Jesus tonight I believe the reason more than anything else why people choose not to follow Jesus is because they're too proud because their hearts refuse to come to know

Jesus Christ because they know that if they were to come this evening it would be an admission of a life of failure that's correct we are all failures when it comes to God and for you to come to Jesus to faith in Jesus tonight that's what you have to confess I am a sinner it's probably the last thing you want to say tonight I am a sinner but that's the only way of coming to Jesus and coming to see what he can do for us God God looks at the heart fifthly there's another interesting point here God's plans do not depend on our being in the right place at the right time

I remember talking to a fellow once way back when I was back in industry I got to know this fellow and he was in a very promoted successful position I remember having dinner with him one night and I remember I'm telling his story of how he had been promoted from one place to the other and he had rocketed to great success and he said this you know he says for much of my life he says I was just in the right place at the right time and I know you know we all know what he meant by that he'd be at some function somewhere he'd get into a conversation with the managing director of some company and the company they would start talking and he would offer him a job and he would come and work to that company and then he would be in another place where he was in the right place at the right time and where there was another opportunity and he was promoted because someone became ill and an opportunity was created and he would be promoted and so on and so forth that's the way it works in the world isn't it that success in the world depends on our being in the right place at the right time so that coincidentally we manage to get opportunities

[31 : 24] God doesn't work that God doesn't work like that if that was the case then Eliab would have been chosen king or Shammah would have been chosen king or one of the seven sons that passed because they were the ones that were in the right place at the right time and naturally speaking they were all the candidates and God rejected all of them the right candidate was in the last place that you would ever expect to find him he was in the field looking after his father's sheep and God wasted no time before calling him in making sure that someone called him in because he was God's choice and if God has a purpose for you and God has a purpose for you he will make sure that it takes place and I hope that tonight I'm stopping again I've said this before I really hope that our young people who follow Jesus and live for Jesus

I really hope that you're asking the Lord about the decisions that you make in your lives big major decisions and the small ones and I hope that you're never ever discount the possibility that perhaps one day God wants you to be a missionary a minister some kind of work that God has set aside for you to do I hope that you're keeping that in mind that perhaps that's the kind of work that it may not be but I hope that you're keeping that in mind but in any case that if you're asking that God will show you and lead you and guide you through your life as a Christian you don't need to worry about being in the right place at the right time God will make sure you are that's what happened with David lastly God's plans always involve his perfect preparation you and

I would never think would you that the place of perfect preparation for the king over Israel would be the fields looking after his father's flock but that was there could not be a better training ground it sounds so it sounds so pathetically simple doesn't it imagine God choosing a king who's a shepherd and yet there was no better place for a king to be prepared God always prepares his people if God's got a work for us to do he always prepares in the very best possible place and so tonight God has worked in our hearts if you've come to the Lord Jesus if you haven't then come and don't delay in coming but if we've come if you've come to the Lord Jesus tonight then I hope that you have discovered even in this chapter how the

Lord operates or at least some of the principles by which he operates things that we see in our own experience and things that we relate to and we connect with things that will lead us into a greater confidence in the God that we serve and our relationship with him that will encourage us day by day to face the unknown to go out tomorrow to tackle whatever arises knowing that God is on our side and if he is for us no one can be against us let's pray Father in heaven we once again want to rejoice in the Lord this evening we want to once again take hold of your word we bless you for it for how practical it is for how encouraging it is for how helpful it is and we ask that you will that you will Lord that we will receive it gladly and that we will not be like the the fruit that withers away when the sun shines or when the weeds grow but that we will grow and that the seed that you plant in our

hearts will find good ground so that we may bear fruit in abundance in
Jesus name amen