

1 Samuel 9: 1-10:27

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[0 : 0 0] Ah, well, good evening, friends. Good to see you tonight. We are looking at 1 Samuel, the book of 1 Samuel, chapters 9 and 10. That's page 231 in the Pew Bible, if you want to turn there. 1 Samuel 9 and 10. Both chapters, the whole way through. We're going to do it tonight.

It's a big chunk of Bible we're looking at this evening. These two chapters tell the story of how Israel got its first king, King Saul.

Let me just say a brief prayer for us before we jump in. God, we pray that you would indeed open our eyes and our hearts and our wills and our affections to hear and to receive what you're saying to us tonight. Lord, we ask this for Christ's sake. Amen.

So over the next few weeks, we're actually going to be following the story of Saul as we work our way through 1 Samuel. We're going to look at Saul's rise to the kingship in chapters 9 through 11, and then in chapter 12 as sort of Samuel's farewell. And then in verses 13, 14, and 15 are sort of Saul's downfall. So we're going to look at his rise and fall over the coming weeks. But tonight, in these two chapters, we're focusing on Saul's beginning. Where did he start? In chapter 8, remember, that we looked at a couple weeks ago, the people demanded a king. And so here he is. In chapter 9, Saul is introduced. Then in the beginning of chapter 10, as we'll see, Saul's privately anointed to be king by the prophet Samuel. And then at the end of chapter 10, that choice is made public.

The Lord makes known his choice of Saul before the whole nation. That's basically the flow of these two chapters. Now, obviously, there's lots that we could learn here, and we won't get to all of it tonight. So tonight, I want us to just focus on three lessons in particular that we see in these two chapters. So three lessons. The first that we see in the opening verses is a lesson in God's providence. So let's pick up the story in chapter 9, verse 1.

[2 : 0 9] There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechoreth, the son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth. And he had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he.

From his shoulders upwards, he was taller than any of the people. Now, the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. So Kish said to Saul, his son, take one of the young men with you and arise, go and look for the donkeys. And he passed through the hill country of Ephraim and passed through the land of Shalishah, but they did not find them. And they passed through the land of Shalim, but they were not there. Then they passed through the land of Benjamin, but did not find them. When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him, come, let's go back, lest my father cease to care about the donkeys and become anxious about us. But the servant said to him, behold, there's a man of God in this city and he has a man who is held in honor. All that he says comes true. Now, so now let us go there. Perhaps he can tell us the way we should go. And Saul said to his servant, but if we go, what can we bring the man for the bread in our sacks is gone and there's no present to bring the man of God. What do we have? The servant answered Saul again, here, I have with me a quarter of a shekel of silver and I will give it to the man of God to tell us our way. Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he said, come, let us go to the seer for today's prophet was formerly called a seer. And Saul said to his servant, well said, come, let us go. So they went to the city where the man of God was. As they went up the hill to the city, they met young women coming out to draw water and said to them, is the seer here? They answered, he is behold, he's just ahead of you. Hurry. He has come just now to the city because the people have a sacrifice today in the high place. As soon as you enter the city, you will find him before he goes up to the high place to eat for the people will not eat till he comes since he must bless the sacrifice. Afterward, those who are invited will eat. Now go up for you will meet him immediately. So they

went up to the city as they were entering the city.

They saw Samuel coming out toward them on his way up to the high place. Now the day before Saul came, the Lord had revealed to Samuel tomorrow about this time, I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin and you shall anoint him to be prince over my people, Israel. He shall save my people from the land, from the hand of the Philistines. For I have seen my people because their cry has come to me.

When Samuel saw Saul, the Lord told him, here's the man of whom I spoke to you. He it is who shall restrain or govern my people. Then Saul approached Samuel in the gate and said, tell me, where is the house of the seer?

Samuel answered Saul, I am a seer. Go up before me to the high place, for today you shall eat with me. And in the morning I will let you go and tell you all that is on your mind. As for your donkeys that 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?

[5 : 18] Is it not for you and for all your father's house? Saul answered, am I not a Benjaminite from the least of the tribes of Israel?

And is not my clan the humblest of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Amen. Why then have you spoken to me in this way? Let's pause there.

We know it must have seemed like an ordinary day at the start of it. Some livestock had gotten loose and wandered away. And so Saul is sent to find them. It's a pretty typical scene in ancient Palestine.

Little did Saul know that God was orchestrating one of the most surprising and important days of his life. Look at all the little details as you scan back over this portion we just read.

Look at all the little details that come together. The donkeys that just happened to go missing. The servant who just happens to have a silver coin in his pocket. The women who just happen to be coming out drawing water.

[6 : 24] And at just the right moment, who should meet them but Samuel, the great prophet himself. And we know that none of this is just mere coincidence.

Look again down at verse 16. Tomorrow about this time, God says, I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin. You see, God was working in and through all these ordinary events to bring about his plan for Saul and for Israel.

This chapter is a striking picture of what we often call God's providence. Here's one way God's providence has been described. Providence is the almighty and ever-present power of God by which he upholds as with his hand heaven and earth and all creatures.

And so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty. All things, in fact, come to us not by chance, but from his fatherly hand.

In other words, God orders all things for the good of his people. Look again at verse 16.

[7 : 42] Why is God bringing Saul to Samuel? Why has he orchestrated things in this way? Why is God going to make Saul king? After all, we know from chapter 8 that the people wanted a king for all the wrong reasons, right?

They wanted to be just like the nations around them. Why does God even entertain the thought? Well, even though the people are rebellious, you see, God is still merciful toward them.

Here's why God's going to make Saul king. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines, for I've seen my people because their cry has come to me. Verse 16.

That sounds a lot like the hand of Exodus chapter 2, doesn't it? Where God hears the people groaning in slavery in Egypt. And the text says he sees and he knows.

And what happens? He raises up a deliverer. God's providential control of all things, you see, is motivated by his mercy for his people.

[8 : 49] Of course, in the middle of our life stories, we certainly don't see how all of it fits together, right? I mean, how could we?

Think about Saul. After the young Saul had trucked all around the hill country in the hot sun, only to not find the donkeys, the only thing he was probably thinking was, I'm tired of looking for donkeys, and it's time to go home, right?

He wasn't thinking, I know this is part of God's providential plan for my life, and today is going to be a very special day. No, he didn't know how it was all fitting together. And yet what he couldn't see

was that losing the donkeys meant finding the kingdom.

And there's a lesson here for all of us. The lesson to trust that God is working through the everyday events of your life to bring about God's good work.

Again, it's not our job to try to figure it all out. To try to guess in the middle of the story how and why God does certain things. Because no doubt if we try to do that, we'll probably get it wrong.

[10:00] But we can trust that even in the little things, God is working his fatherly mercy in our lives. Now there's a lot more that we could say about that, and maybe afterwards if we have some time we can engage that in Q&A.;

But I think that's the first brief lesson we see here, is this lesson about God's providence. The next thing we have is a lesson in assurance. Let's pick up in 9, 22.

Then Samuel took Saul and his young man and brought them into the hall and gave them a place at the head of those who had been invited, who were about 30 persons. And Samuel said to the cook, Bring the portion I gave you, of which I said to you, put it aside.

So the cook took up the leg and what was on it, it set them before Saul. And Samuel said, See, what is kept is set before you. Eat, because it was kept for you until the hour appointed that you might eat with the guests.

So Saul ate with Samuel that day. And when they came down from the high place into the city, a bed was spread for Saul on the roof, and he lay down to sleep. And at the break of dawn, Samuel called to Saul on the roof, Up, that I might send you on your way.

[11:14] So Saul rose, and both he and Samuel went out into the street. As they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Tell the servant to pass on before us. And when he has passed on, stop here yourself for a while, that I may make known to you the word of God.

Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on Saul's head and kissed him and said, Has not the Lord anointed you to be prince over his people, Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the Lord, and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies.

And this shall be the sign to you that the Lord has anointed you to be prince over his heritage.

When you depart from me today, you will meet two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah.

And they will say to you, The donkeys that you went to seek are found, and now your father has ceased to care about the donkeys and is anxious about you, saying, What shall I do about my son? Then you shall go on from there farther and come to the oak of Tabor.

Three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there, 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 accept from their hand.

[12:19] After that, you shall come to Gibeath Elohim, where there is a garrison of the Philistines. And there, as soon as you come to the city, you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre before them, prophesying.

Then the Spirit of the Lord will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man. Now when these signs meet you, do what your hand finds to do, for God is with you. Then go down before me to Gilgal, and behold, I'm coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait until I come to you and show you what you shall do. When he turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart, and all these signs came to pass that day.

When they came to Gibeah, behold, a group of prophets met him, and the Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he prophesied among them. And when all who knew him previously saw how he prophesied with the prophets, the people said to one another, What has come over the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets? And a man of the place answered, And who is their father? Therefore it became a proverb, Is Saul also among the prophets? When he had finished prophesying, he came to the high place.

[13:29] And Saul's uncle said to him and to his servant, Where did you go? And he said to seek the donkeys. And when we saw that they were not found, we went to Samuel. And Saul's uncle said, Please tell me what Samuel said to you.

And Saul said to his uncle, He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found. But about the matter of the kingdom of which Samuel had spoken, he did not tell him anything.

So it's clear from these verses that God had chosen Saul to be Israel's first king. And here we see how God goes to incredible lengths to give Saul such rich assurance of this fact.

First, there's this feast, right? Imagine how Saul must have felt. He hadn't met Samuel before in his life, but Samuel in essence says, Ah, I've been expecting you. Here, sit at the head of the table, and I'll tell the cook to bring the choice portion of meat that I'd set aside for you.

That must have been really strange for Saul. Here he is a stranger being welcomed as the guest of honor. Next, there are these signs that Samuel tells him will come true.

[14:42] And notice how concrete and specific they are. Two men by Rachel's tomb who will give you word about the donkeys. Three men going up to Bethel who will give you bread to eat. You know, these aren't your sort of general, horoscopy, could probably come true in a lot of different ways sort of things, right?

They're super specific because God wants to give Saul assurance. And then comes the third sign. The spirit rushes upon Saul at Gibeah and he begins prophesying along with a group of prophets there.

And Gibeah, as we find out a little later in chapter 10, is Saul's hometown. So some of his neighbors see this and say, is Saul also among the prophets?

Which ends up becoming this sort of slang way of saying, well, you don't see that every day. That's kind of hard to believe. Those two things don't usually go together.

Is Saul among the prophets? The feast, the signs, the rushing of the spirit, all of this is confirmation of the anointing that Saul receives at the beginning of chapter 10.

[15:52] Anointing, by the way, was a sort of symbolic way of setting someone apart for a special role, for a special task. And here, this anointing symbolizes that God is setting apart Saul to be Israel's king.

And you might ask, well, why is God doing all of this in private? Why is he sort of anointing Saul without anybody around? And the answer is probably that God is preparing Saul for what's about to happen at the end of chapter 10.

In other words, he wants Saul to be personally ready when God makes his choice public. He's preparing him in advance and God gives Saul all these assurances so he won't be afraid when that day comes.

God wants Saul to know that he's chosen him and that he'll be with him. And that's what 10-7 is all about. Look at that verse again. It says, Now when these signs meet you, do what your hand finds to do.

In other words, be assured of your kingship for God is with you. I think there's a lesson here for us about assurance.

[17:02] Now, of course, none of us will have an identical sort of experience as Saul. Right? On the one hand, none of us in this room is going to have God come to us and tell us that we're going to be the next king of Israel.

I'm pretty confident of that. Even more so, I don't think we need to expect God to use similar kinds of miraculous signs or powerful outward manifestations of the Spirit to grant us assurance today. Not that God can't do those things. He certainly can. But we need not depend on those particular kinds of assurances. But having said all that, the reality is, friends, God doesn't want us to be timid or fearful in our relationship to Him.

He wants us to be reverent. He wants us to be humble. But He doesn't want us to be afraid. He doesn't want us to be timid. You see, friends, the New Testament teaches us that everyone who turns from sin and places their trust in Jesus is completely forgiven and counted righteous in God's sight.

That is, they're fully and objectively justified before God. And if that weren't enough, everyone who's justified in Christ, the New Testament says, is also fully adopted as one of God's own sons and daughters with all the rights and privileges and joys that come with that status.

[18:32] So you see, we're not just forgiven and given a perfect legal record before God in Christ, but we're also brought into the family. And you see, friends, the deeper you come to grip those twin truths that we've been made righteous in Him and that we've been brought into the family in Him, the deeper and deeper you cling to those and come to know those in your heart, the more and more your life begins to change and unfold in all sorts of ways.

In some sense, that's the secret to Christian growth. Really coming to believe who we are in Christ. Forgiven family.

And the question is, how do we grow in that deep, rich assurance of what we have in Christ? And you see here, the secret is not to try to replicate Saul's experience that we see in this chapter. The secret is not to try to hunt down coincidences that might confirm it or try to whip up ecstatic experiences that might sort of bring some assurance. Look, if God wants to give you those, fine, great.

That's fun. But that's not really where assurance comes from. Don't try to replicate Saul's experience. Instead, if you want assurance, look more and more to the one who fulfilled Saul's experience.

[20 : 13] And what I mean is this. You see, when Saul was anointed king of Israel and when the spirit rushed upon him, it's as if God was tracing a pattern into history.

It's as if God was making an outline in the midst of time. But you see, Saul himself, he couldn't fill in the outline.

He couldn't fill in and complete the picture. We'll see in chapters 13 and following that even though Saul started well, he didn't finish well.

He ends up being one of the most tragic figures in the Old Testament. You see, friends, Saul was just a trace of the one to come.

Because there would be one who would come who would be the truly anointed one. There would be one who came who would be utterly and completely filled with the spirit.

[21 : 16] And not in some sort of momentary way that sort of came and went, but one who would be filled with the spirit permanently in all of his ways.

You see, when Jesus Christ began his public ministry and was baptized by John the Baptist, do you remember what happened? the heavens tore open and the spirit descended and remained on him. And then God the Father spoke these words of assurance. This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. And Jesus having begun well, we know finished well.

He obeyed his father to the end. He ascended the cross for our sins and he rose again three days later demonstrating that he had destroyed the power of sin and death through his death on the cross.

And he ascended to God's right hand where he sits right now enthroned as the world's true Lord and true king. You see, that little sketch that Saul makes in history of one who would be anointed and filled and sent out to ministry, it was just an echo of what God has done once and for all in Jesus Christ for us and for our salvation.

[22 : 48] And friends, as we look to him, not to ourselves, as we look to him with growing love and with growing trust, that's where our assurance comes from.

It's like the song we often sing here at Trinity. Before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea. A great high priest whose name is love, whoever lives and pleads for me.

My name is graven on his hands. My name is written on his heart. I know that while in heaven he stands, no tongue can bid me thence depart. Behold him there, the risen lamb, my perfect, spotless righteousness, the great unchangeable I am, the king of glory and of grace.

One with himself I cannot die. My soul is purchased by his blood. My life is hid with Christ on high, with Christ my savior and my God.

Friends, that's where assurance comes from. That's what the Holy Spirit will take in your heart and it will cause to well up into a deep confidence, not in yourself, but in him.

[24 : 04] So God doesn't want us to be timid or fearful. He wants us to look to Christ and know that we're his and that he is with us. It's a lesson in assurance. The last lesson we learn from this chapter is a lesson in dependence.

Let's read the end of chapter 10 starting in verse 17. Now Samuel called the people together to the Lord at Mizpah and he said to the people of Israel, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.

But today you have rejected your God who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses and you have said to him, set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and by your thousands.

And Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by Lot. He brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its clans and the clan of the Matrites was taken by Lot and Saul, the son of Kish was taken by Lot.

But when they sought him, he could not be found. So they inquired again to the Lord, is there a man still to come? And the Lord said, behold, he's hidden himself among the baggage.

[25 : 14] Then 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. And Samuel said to all the people, do you see him whom the Lord has chosen? There's none like him among all the people and all the people shouted, long live the king.

Then Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship and he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the Lord. Then Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his home. Saul also went to his home at Gibeah and with him went men of valor whose hearts God had touched.

But some worthless fellow said, how can this man save us? And they despised him and brought him no present. But he, that is Saul, held his peace. So I want to end just focusing on verse 22. You know, it's, the narrator doesn't say why Saul was hiding among the baggage. But it's one of those details that when you read this chapter you just can't forget.

There's Saul whose head and shoulders above everyone else hiding. You know, we can only speculate what was going on in his mind and his heart. You would think that after the sort of powerful experiences that had just happened to him, he'd be ready to sort of take up this new role with courage.

[26 : 31] But he's hiding among the baggage. Maybe it was humility. You know, maybe it was some political prudence. He didn't want to sort of just jump in there.

First king, who knows what was going to happen. You know, sadly, maybe it was simply unbelief. Maybe Saul doubted God would be with him after all. We just can't say.

We don't know. But what we do learn from verse 22 is that the people of God are totally dependent on the Lord. And here's what I mean.

Verse 21 ends, when they sought him, that is Saul, he could not be found. Even after God confirms his choice of a king publicly through the casting of lots, the Lord has to practically take the people by the hand and lead them to Saul who's nowhere to be found, who's hiding among the baggage. God's got to take him the whole way. You see, friends, it's the Lord the whole time. When the people want a king for all the wrong reasons, God in his mercy still acts in his providence to send him a rescuer.

[27 : 45] When Saul's doubtful that God could want him, a mere Benjaminite, as king, God showers him with these undeniable assurances.

And when at last the human king God has chosen is hiding, perhaps still riddled with doubts. God in his mercy brings the people to him.

You see, friends, we are dependent on God from first to last. And we can do nothing apart from him. And that is completely and utterly good news.

Because the God that we know in Jesus, the true king, is a God who's utterly dependable. These two chapters are all about God finding a king for his people and overcoming Saul's doubts.

But in Jesus, we have a king who comes to find us. We don't have to go searching for him. He comes to search for us. So tonight, do you acknowledge that you need a king like that?

[29 : 02] Can you admit that you're needy, that you're sinful even, and that you need a savior? friend, friend, if you can admit those things, then you are so close to being in the most secure place possible.

Because Jesus is a king who can be trusted. If you can admit that you're needy, then step into him in faith.

we're an utterly dependent people. But what Samuel shows us here is that we have an utterly dependable God. Let's pray.

God, we're thankful that you overcome our fearful and our timid hearts and that, God, you come to find us. So, Lord, I pray tonight that you would open the eyes and hearts of those who are seeking for you and help them to see, God, that you have been seeking them.

Lord, help us to trust your good providence in our lives. Lord, grant us assurance, we pray, of the salvation that we have in Christ. Lord, and help us to be a joyfully dependent people in you.

[30 : 29] We ask this in Christ's name. Amen. The music team is going to come up. We're going to continue worshiping God together. Let's stand together.

Well, it's typically our practice in the evening service to end with just some time of interaction and Q&A;, but we're out of time. So, I will hang around up front if you have any questions and want to sort of banter about the passage.

I'd be happy to do that. But let me just end with a couple quick announcements. I hope you got a bulletin on the way in. If not, grab one on the way out. There's a bunch of stuff going on on the way out. There's a bunch of stuff going on. I'll be happy to do that.

There's a bunch of stuff going on. I'll be happy to do that. I'll be happy to do that.