

Saul 1 - The Reluctant King

As we continue on in 1 Samuel, the time has come for the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel. The first three kings, Saul, David, and Solomon would each in their turn, rule over a united kingdom. Because of this, there is an interesting spiritual picture that we can draw from the relationship between the first three reigns. Each king was a sinner and imperfect.

For the first king, Saul, Samuel had informed Israel what having a king would entail. Even though God had plans for Israel as a kingdom, they were not totally ready for it as they thought they were. Israel was given Saul as the king they were asking for. His rule was fraught with decisions based on fleshly convenience. Though he personally might have been saved, his *reign* represents the carnal state of the lost man.

The second king, David, will be a man after God's own heart. His reign represents the new nature of man after salvation. David's rule was marked by struggle and warfare. Christians are also saved and struggling spiritually while living for God in the world.

The third king, Solomon, ruled in a time marked by peace and represents the glorified man. The relationship between the three reigns can be summed up, then, by the three states of man: lost, saved, and glorified. This does not mean that Saul himself was lost, that David was the ideal believer, or that Solomon was perfect. But the *character* of their *reigns* forms an interesting parallel in the depravity, sanctification, and glorification stages of the believer.

There is yet another interesting characteristic about each reign regarding the place of worship. Since the first two reigns represent the state of man while he is on earth, the place of worship was in the Tabernacle. A tabernacle is a temporary dwelling place that was moved from place to place. Paul described our earthly bodies in the same way and how we are looking forward to our permanent body that will be in glory.

2Cor 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

The presence of God represented by the Ark of the Covenant was absent from the Tabernacle during the carnal reign of Saul. In the spiritual reign of David, the Ark of the Covenant was restored in the Tabernacle. The dwelling of God changed from the Tabernacle to the Temple during the reign of Solomon. Just as we will be changed from a physical, temporary body to a glorified, permanent body in the resurrection, the dwelling place of God changed. It went from a temporary tabernacle to a permanent structure in the Temple which was filled with the glory of God.

For now, we are going to begin to focus on how Saul's reign runs parallel to the life of a man lost without God.

1. Saul was not seeking God

When Saul is first introduced, we do not see someone who was of any particularly Godly character. The thing he *was* noted for was that he was strong and handsome. He was merely at work, which is not a bad thing, but when he and his servant lost their mules, he was not the one who thought of seeking after God. In 1Sam 9:1-10 we read about Kish, a mighty man who had a "goodly" son:

1Sam 9:2-10 And he had a son, whose name *was* Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and *there was* not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward *he was* higher than any of the people.

3And the asses of Kish Saul's father were lost. And Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses.

Saul and his servant traveled far and wide but came up empty handed. Saul was ready to go back home, concerned about how his father might be getting worried about him being gone so long. Seeking God's help doesn't seem to have occurred to Saul. It was his *servant* who came up with that idea.

6And he said unto him, Behold now, *there is* in this city a man of God, and *he is* an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can shew us our way that we should go.

Saul balked at the idea because he didn't have an offering, but the servant came up with one so Saul gave in to him.

8And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: *that* will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way.

9(Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for *he that is now called* a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer.)

10Then said Saul to his servant, Well said; come, let us go. So they went unto the city where the man of God *was*.

In this regard, Saul is doing what comes natural to man...which doesn't include seeking after God.

1Cor 2:11-14 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

12Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

13Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

14But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

Rom 3:11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

If it weren't for the conviction of the Holy Spirit, no one would care about God on their own. Without the prompting of the Holy Spirit (convicting the world of sin and of righteousness), no one would seek out God. The witness of nature and the Word of God draw people. You are here today because you have responded to that drawing. Even if you woke up this morning and said to yourself, "I think I'll try Christianity and God out," that thought was not by accident. People don't avoid church just because it is inconvenient, although that is part of their reasoning. It is because man is in a natural state of rebellion against God. Even after salvation, in our flesh we resist God's leading like the toddler who has just learned how to say "No!" Everything is *no*, even if it is something the child actually likes.

Saul was looking for his mules when he came to Samuel. He wasn't looking for a sermon or a calling.

2. Saul was reluctant -

In 1Sam 9:15-17, God prepared Samuel to receive Saul. When Samuel saw Saul, God told him, "Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people." Samuel went out and was ready for Saul when he got there.

1Sam 9:18-21 Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where

the seer's house *is*.

19And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I *am* the seer: go up before me unto the high place; for ye shall eat with me to day, and to morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that *is* in thine heart.

20And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom *is* all the desire of Israel? *Is it* not on thee, and on all thy father's house?

21And Saul answered and said, *Am* not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?

In vs. 21 you can see Saul's reluctance becoming manifest. Samuel had just pronounced a great calling on Saul but he was not ready to accept it. It would be reasonable to assume that Saul was, perhaps, just being humble. However, Samuel had just proved himself as a prophet of God by being there waiting for him and telling him about the mules without even asking. In light of that, Saul was possibly a little disrespectful of the message about being the desire of Israel. In the context of all that we see in 1Sam 9,10, his response is consistent with his gross reluctance. Samuel instructed Saul to stay over with him and the next day he would deliver a message of what was going to happen next.

In 1Sam 10, Samuel gave him a laundry list of prophecies which should have helped convince Saul *further* that God was *indeed* calling him:

- Two men in a specific place would tell them about the mules being found.
- *Three* men with *three* kids and *three* loaves and a bottle of wine would give Saul *two* loaves of bread.
- They would encounter a company of prophets by a garrison of the

Philistines

- And then, to top it all off, he would be overcome by the Spirit of God and he, himself, would prophecy.

After all that, he was to go home and wait for Samuel. You can guess what happened. Everything down to a "tee" came to pass. You might think that Saul was convinced by this. Yet, when he got to his uncle's house, he kept his mouth shut and only shared how Samuel told him the mules had been found.

When Samuel arrived at Mizpeh and summoned all Israel, he used the casting of a lot to reveal who would be the king of Israel. By God's hand the lot narrowed down God's choice for the king.

1Sam 10:20-21 And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken.

21 When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken: and when they sought him, he could not be found.

Saul's reluctance to serve was plainly revealed at this point. The reason they couldn't find him was because he was hiding.

1Sam 10:22 Therefore they enquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And the LORD answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff.

This same reluctance is going to plague Saul in his reign. When it came to unwise decisions, Saul was quick and impulsive. When it came to the things of the Lord, he was reluctant to do the right thing. He will regularly fall short of fulfilling God's commands and calling. It will ultimately lead to his death. He ended up accepting becoming the king. It's not as though he rejected the role that was forced upon him, but he

could have been used by God gloriously instead of as an object lesson in falling short. We can see this in two other kings: Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar. Pharaoh hardened his heart by resisting God. Nebuchadnezzar was humbled by God and gave Him glory. There are numerous kings that either resisted or worked with God.

3. The tragedy of reluctance -

Don't resist God's call. God is going to use you one way or another, you might as well do it willingly as you joyfully surrender to God and receive Christ as your Savior.

If you are a child of God, put off the former things. Don't struggle to hold on to the old.

Tragedies are a form of literature. The stories often recognize the tragic aspect of reluctance.

Joseph Addison, was a popular pre-Revolutionary politician, poet, and playwright. His play, *Cato, a Tragedy*, focused on how Cato's noble commitment turned to stubbornness and the inability to take advice. The play covers themes of individual liberty versus government tyranny, Republicanism versus Monarchism, logic versus emotion. It was widely successful in England and America. John Miller of Hillsdale College wrote, "no single work of literature may have been more important than Cato" for the leaders of the American revolution. Addison has said, "There is nothing which we receive with so much reluctance as advice." His work inspired such men who overcame reluctance as Patrick Henry's in his famous ultimatum: "Give me liberty or give me death!" Or, Nathan Hale's, "I regret that I have but one life to give for my country."¹ The play served as a

¹Reference to
Act II, Scene 4:
"It is not now time
to talk of
aught/But chains
or conquest,
liberty or death."

message to be careful to take advice in the face of the national cause of the Revolution.

Jean Racine was a famous 17th century author of tragic dramas. He saw the tragic difficulty that we impose on ourselves when he wrote, "There is nothing so easy but...it becomes difficult when you do it with reluctance." Hesitancy and stalling makes things more difficult.

Saul certainly was a tragic figure in the classical sense. He had all the makings for success if it weren't for his tragic flaw that practically doomed him. Tragedies are fatalistic. What is truly sad is the reality that life is *not* controlled by fate. Whatever flaws we have that drive us to destruction can be overcome by renewal in Christ. Saul had such opportunities, but chose his way to his fall.

With all the opportunities we have in Christ, it would be tragic if we fall short of God's call for our lives because we were reluctant to hear God's Word, heed His voice, and impose on ourselves the failure that comes from not giving our all.

Luke 9:62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Ps 78:35-37 And they remembered that God *was* their rock, and the high God their redeemer.

36Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.

37For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.

Reference to Act
IV, Scene 4:
"What a pity it
is/That we can die
but once to serve
our country."

The Israelites fell short when the twelve spies came back due to their reluctance to trust God and go up to battle. They ended up wandering in the wilderness for 40 years.

Jonah found himself in the belly of a whale because he was reluctant to answer the call to go to Nineveh.

Joash smote the ground reluctantly when commanded by Elisha and failed to get complete victory over his enemies.

Cain was reluctant to use the sacrifice that God provided for him and slew his brother instead.

We need to press on with a firm commitment.

Phil 3:12-14 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

13Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

14I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Eccl 9:10 Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do *it* with thy might; for *there is* no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

Heb 4:1-2 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left *us* of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

2For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it*.

If you have not turned to Christ, repented, and asked Him to save you from the Father's wrath and judgment, don't let reluctance hold you back.

2Cor 6:2(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)

When the opportunities to be a witness for Christ, don't let reluctance hold you back. When you are faced with a responsibility to obey God, don't let reluctance rob you of the joy that comes with serving Him. There have been people who have declined opportunities because they couldn't separate from the world. "I have to give up drinking? Smoking? Worldly entertainment? I can't do that!" We *can* press forward with the Lord if we put our heart into it. As we sometimes sing, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face, And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, In the light of His glory and grace."

2Cor 5:1

1. Saul was not seeking God 1Sam 9:2-10, 1Cor 2:11-14, Rom 3:11
2. Saul was reluctant - 1Sam 9:18-21, 10:20-21, 10:22
3. The tragedy of reluctance - Luke 9:62, Ps 78:35-37, Phil 3:12-14, Eccl 9:10, Heb 4:1-2

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