

1 SAMUEL 10

INTRODUCTION

Through a number of mundane everyday events Saul is led to Samuel where he is told that he is God's choice as King. Even though that choice seems unlikely from a human perspective because Saul is from the smallest tribe of Benjamin and is a quiet shy man nevertheless He is God's choice.

Samuel tells Saul that the donkeys have been found, and that he is told to send his servant on ahead because Samuel has a message for Saul. As our chapter opens Samuel takes a flask of oil and anoints Samuel as God's leader over Israel. Now put yourself in Saul's shoes; he set out to look for some lost donkeys and ends up being anointed King over Israel.

No wonder Saul is having difficulty grasping the significance of all that is going on so Samuel gives him three confirmatory signs (vs. 2-7) in order to encourage Saul in his new role.

1. GOD REASSURES SAUL THROUGH SIGNS (vs. 1-16)

Samuel tells Saul that when he leaves Samuel that same day three things are going to happen that will be so detailed and so specific that even Saul will not be able to miss that God is assuring him of his presence and his position. The first sign is the meeting of two men near Rachel's tomb who will confirm that the donkeys have been found and that Saul's fear about his Father worrying about him is true (v 2).

The second sign happens at the great tree of Tabor when three men going to worship God at Bethel will meet Saul. They will be carrying specific things listed for us in v 3. These men will greet Saul and offer him two loaves of bread, which Saul will accept (v 4). The final sign will take place as Saul approaches Gibeah where he will meet a procession of prophets.

There the Spirit of the Lord will come upon Saul and enable him to prophesy (praise God) and the result will be that Saul will be changed into a different person (v 7). As soon as all these signs are fulfilled then Saul is instructed to do what his hands find him to do and he is reassured that God is with him (v 7). However although Saul may be King He is dependent upon Samuel to bring God's word to him to give him God's instructions (v 8).

All these signs took place just as Samuel had said and Saul was a changed man a man changed by the power of God (v 9).

This change is noticed by others (v 11) and is so unlikely that the proverb "Is Saul also among the prophets" was used for what was very unlikely to happen. When Saul finally arrived home he kept what had happened to him a secret (v 16), there is a mystery going on in this section; God is at work but not everyone knows it or is informed about it (v 16).

But the point of these opening 16 verses is to remind us of some principles of how God assures his people. We live in dark and difficult days for gospel work and therefore we all are in need of assurance that God is with us. How does God go about doing that today?

We all need to be assured by God that we are doing his work his way. Sometimes God's work overwhelms us so that we need the Lord to assure us that we are doing the right thing and that we are doing his work in the right ways. The signs that Saul was given are so specific that there could be no mistake that they were from God, this could only be God at work and therefore Saul would be assured that God was with him.

Now our assurance comes from the Bible today and from his promises but there are times when God is so gracious to us that He assures us through circumstances that He is with us.

This is not normally how He does it and I am not a subjective sort of person as you know; but there are times when our faith has been so weak and our trust in his word so fragile that God confirms his presence with us through the daily circumstances of life. Perhaps something happens that we cannot miss the point that God brought it about and that assures us of his grace to us.

At other times we may have an overwhelming subjective feeling that we are doing the right thing or doing God's work the right way; but we must be careful here and we need to always remember that any circumstantial signs or subjective feelings must always be judged in accordance with the word of God.

However I do not want to rule out the possibility of God confirming his will to us through secondary means that confirm to us that God's word is directing us in a certain direction. But the main way that Saul will understand that God is with him is through his Spirit. It's as the Spirit comes upon Saul that he is a changed person and then he knows that God is with him (v 6). However that does not give Saul the right to do as he pleases, he must wait for Samuel to direct him; for Samuel is the prophet who brings God's word (v 8).

Now here is an important principle at work in this chapter. The Spirit and the word always go together. The power that the Spirit gives is power to obey God in accordance with his word it is never a power that allows anyone to do his or her own thing. We can only enjoy the Lord's power and presence when we are submitting ourselves to his word.

We live in an age when many crave the power of the Spirit and long for dramatic signs that the Spirit is at work; yet at the same time those same people can be very careless about the word of God and have little enthusiasm for common obedience to the Lord's word.

Assurance in the Christian faith comes primarily when we walk with the Lord in the light of his word and consequently we experience the power of and presence of the Lord helping us to daily obey him and assuring us of his presence and encouraging us to follow his ways. Do you want assurance of God's presence and power? Do you want to know the Spirit's power at work in your life? Then faithfully obey the word of the Lord and the Lord of the word will make his presence known to us.

2. GOD REVEALS HIS CHOICE OF A KING (vs. 17-27)

Having been privately chosen and anointed for his task as King and having been spiritually equipped by God the time was right to make God's choice public. Samuel summons the people of Israel to meet before the Lord at Mizpah (v 17). Once all the people are gathered Samuel reminded the people of the background to this appointment (vs. 18-19).

It seems that Samuel wants to ruin the party by stating again that it is because the people have rejected the Lord as King; the Lord who has redeemed them. It is because of this rejection that they were now appointing an earthly King like all the other nations. But Samuel has already made that point before in 8:6-22 can he not just let it lie now and get on with appointing and celebrating the new King?

The simple fact is that Samuel is a prophet and it is his task to bring to the people the word of God again and again. God wants the people to see the error of their way for in future days their choice of an earthly King will haunt them. Likewise how often does God bring the same word to us again and again because we have rejected his way and word in our hearts?

Why does God not just forget about our rebellion and get on with it, why does He constantly have to remind us. The simple answer is that He loves us too much to leave us in our rebellion. His word may pursue us relentlessly until we finally hear it and repent. His word persists until He gets our attention and we obey. That is why pastors keep saying the same things about salvation, God wants you to get it, for you are a sinner and you must be saved.

He keeps on bringing his word to you until you finally hear it and respond. In the same way perhaps tonight God is speaking again to you Christian because you know that in your heart you have another king, someone else or something else is reigning in place of God and you feel uncomfortable about it as God brings his word to you again about this matter. If that is the case can I encourage you to hear the word and respond to it in true repentance and in obedience?

Now the appointment of a King even though appointed by God was one of process. It was important for the people to understand that the choice of Saul was God's choice and not someone that Samuel was forcing upon the people. The process of finding their king was lengthy and was probably confirmed by the use of lots (Proverbs 16:33). During this process the tribe of Benjamin was chosen then a clan within Benjamin and finally Saul was chosen from within that clan (vs. 19-20).

The choice must have shocked the people of Israel certainly someone from the tribe of Benjamin would not have been their choice, but God had chosen Saul from the smallest tribe and from a family unknown within the nation. But the selection had been conducted in such an open and public way that no one could argue with it. You can never argue with God's choice.

You would not choose the people that God chooses to be in his church. You or I would not choose those that God chooses to be leaders in his church. But God chooses the unlikely people of this world in order to demonstrate his power and in order to bring glory to his name. If God's church grows with these people in it and with these people leading it then the only explanation is that God is at work.

Therefore we can never argue with God's choice God saves those He chooses to save and He brings them into this church and it is not for us to argue with his choice we must simply be amazed at his choice and seek by God's grace to work with all that God has chosen in order to see His work progress.

If you ever want to argue why God brought that person into our church then look at yourself first and ask that question about yourself. Why would God choose me? No reason other than He is gracious and his choice is sovereign. But then the shock comes to the people; where was Saul? If he is to be the king where is he? When they looked for him he could not be found (v 22).

Saul of course had already known the result of the selection process and had concealed himself revealing something of his genuine humility and reluctance to take on such a post.

There are men in God's church who feel like Saul when it comes to leadership. They feel unworthy for such a calling, they feel reluctant and ill equipped but at the same time these men know that God has called them into his work and although they often feel like hiding they know that God has appointed them for such a task and therefore they must faithfully seek to fulfil their task. We need to pray for such people that God will equip them for the task to which He has called them.

However the people are unable to find Saul so they consult the Lord who reveals his location among the baggage (v 22); If they were shocked by Saul's appointment they must have been delighted when they saw him for he looked like a king; he was a man who stood out from the crowd (vs. 23-24).

Now having appointed Saul as King; Samuel goes over the constitution of the monarchy (v 25), he highlights the sort of King Israel were to have perhaps these regulations were similar to the ones already given in the book of Deuteronomy (17:14-20). Everything was now complete Samuel dismisses the people (v 25) and Saul goes back to his own home accompanied by men whose hearts the Lord had already touched.

These men would be his bodyguards and run errands for the new appointed King (v 26) until a proper administrative system could be set up. However not everyone was happy with the Lord's appointment for there were some who wanted to stir up trouble who began to question Saul's appointment (v 27). How could this man save us they say and so they despised him and refused to accept his authority (v 27).

But Saul held his peace knowing that he was God's choice and God's choice will always have opponents. Let me give you one final lesson from this section of God's word. We see in Saul's appointment as King a similarity with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not that Saul is a type of Christ but it is the office that they both held that I want to bring to your attention.

The troublemakers as they are called are not just rejecting Saul for who he is but because of the office he is holding. That is true of the Lord Jesus He came as King and his mission caused division among the people. Some questioned how Jesus would be able to save them they knew his Father Joseph (John 6:42).

It is true today that many still reject Jesus as God's king they often say how could someone who lived and died all those years ago save me in my marriage or help me with my problems? How can what he did on a cross save me from my sin? Sadly there will always be people who reject Jesus as God's appointed King; but thankfully there are some who accept him. Which one are you? Do you reject Jesus and ask how can He save me?

If so then I plead with you to turn to God's King because He is the only one who is able to save you. But if you have turned to Jesus as God's appointed King then just as there were written regulations about the earthly Kingship so God has given us written regulations about his heavenly king.

He has standards that He expects of his citizens they are given to us in his word, but these laws are not tiresome but are delightful because unlike an earthly King, God's King is always consistently good, kind and gracious and our obedience to his law is one of love rather than one of duty.

Therefore every day we should delight in studying his word and learning more of his ways and then seek by his grace to live according to his word and to do so in order to demonstrate our love for the King who has saved us.

May God help us to follow our king and to serve him and to consistently follow his ways as He reveals them to us through his word?

Amen