

1 Samuel 10:17-27 — Be Careful What You Ask For

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Have you ever wanted something, but after you bought it, you realized it wasn't what you expected? Most of my workout clothes were made before the invention of the Internet. This Christmas, I thought I would purchase a new pair of shorts to bring my wardrobe into the 21st century. I found a good-looking pair of fight shorts on Amazon. Even though they were my size, when they arrived and I tried them on, I realized they didn't fit. They were tight in all the wrong places. They would have fit me in my 20s but not in my 50s. Let's just say, my shape has shifted. Thankfully, I wasn't stuck with the shorts. They came from Amazon so it was an easy, no-hassle return.

Sometimes it doesn't work out that way. Sometimes when you want something but when you finally get it and realize it isn't what you expected, you can't return it. You are stuck with it.

This morning, we are going to look at a time when God's people desperately wanted something. When God gave it to them, they realized it wasn't what they expected but they could not return it. They had a major case of buyer's remorse. What was it? Let's find out.

If you are new, my name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors at CrossWinds. As a church, we are studying the book of 1 Samuel. Today, we are in the second half of 1 Samuel 10. Before we dive into the text, let me set the stage by giving you a little background.

Background

In previous weeks, we saw God's people were asking for a king. Up to this point, God was their king. God protected and provided for them. Now they were no longer satisfied with a God they had to trust. They wanted a king they could see so they would be like the other nations around them. God warned the people about the dangers of a human king, but they didn't heed his warning. God agreed to give them a king.

Last week, God began the process of revealing their king. It started with the story of a man named Saul searching for his father's lost donkeys. God providentially guided Saul's life so his search for lost donkeys led him to the city gates of Ramah, where he literally bumped into the prophet Samuel. God revealed to Samuel that Saul was the man he was to anoint as king. Samuel anointed Saul as king, plus, he gave Saul three confirming signs so Saul would know his anointing was truly from God. With the last of the signs, God changed Saul. God's spirit rushed on Saul and transformed him into a different man. At that time, God didn't just anoint Saul as king but gave him the gifts and abilities to be the king.

Then there was a strange twist at that point when we left off last week in the middle of 1 Samuel 10. After the third confirmatory sign, which was Saul prophesying with the prophets and being changed by God into a different man, Saul was to muster the people and attack the Philistine fortress at Gibeah-Elohim. After that victory, Saul was to meet Samuel in Gilgal for a victory celebration.

That is not what Saul did. Saul did nothing! Even though he was anointed by God and experienced numerous signs confirming God's calling on his life, plus being supernaturally changed and empowered by God for the task at hand, Saul did nothing about it. He simply went home. In addition, when he ran across his uncle who asked him what happened to him for the last few days, he didn't tell his uncle anything about being anointed as the king. He didn't tell him about the signs. He didn't tell him about the supernatural change of personality and gifts that he experienced. He hid everything and did nothing. These are not the signs of a good leader.

This morning, we are at the second half of 1 Samuel 10. The story picks up weeks, maybe months, after where we stopped last week. Saul still hadn't attacked the Philistines as God told him to do. He was hiding his anointing. Samuel was going to give this king business with Saul a second chance but this time, there would be no way Saul could hide it from people.

Samuel's speech.

Now Samuel called the people together to the LORD at Mizpah. 1 Samuel 10:17 (ESV)

We are familiar with Mizpah. This was the place Samuel assembled the people in chapter 7. It was the place where he called the people to put away their idols. It was a place of national repentance. Thirty years before, when people were at the nationwide revival rally at Mizpah, they were attacked by the Philistines. Instead of the Philistines slaughtering the Israelites, God fought for them. God thundered against the Philistines. The Philistines were utterly defeated. There was peace and security for God's people. At that time, we

learned the big idea of that passage was that repentance makes a difference. When God's people repented, God went from fighting against them because of their sin to fighting for them because of their repentance. Repentance makes a huge difference in our relationship with God.

At this point, 30 years later, Samuel summoned the people back to Mizpah. I don't think Samuel wanted them to merely remember the repentance of prior years on this hallowed ground. I think he was hoping for new repentance. He was hoping and praying the people would return to embracing God as their king and stop demanding a human king. Unfortunately, as we will see, that isn't what happened.

At Mizpah, Samuel gave the people a little speech. It had two points. It was intended to lead the people to repent of rejecting God as their king and demanding a human king. The first part of the speech was about the faithfulness of God to his people, and the second part was about the unfaithfulness of God's people to him.

What had God done for his people?

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.' 1 Samuel 10:18 (ESV)

God said, "Remember the Exodus?" If you are using the Take-Up-And-Read Bible reading plan and are reading the Old Testament portion of the plan, you will be familiar with God saving his people out of Egypt because we just read that portion of Exodus this past week. God's people were helpless against the Egyptian superpower. God stepped to the plate and began striking the Egyptians

with plagues. God turned water into blood. Frogs covered the land. The dust turned to gnats. The land was covered with flies. Locusts ate everything. Hail destroyed the crops. The last plague was the death of the firstborn in all of Egypt. The first plagues touched all people, but God quickly made a distinction and began protecting his people and the later plagues only touched the Egyptians. Eventually, the Egyptians kicked God's people out of the land. God saved his people from certain death in Egypt and they didn't have to lift a finger.

In addition, once God's people came to the Promised Land, God had continued to fight for his people for the last 250 years. When God's people hadn't walked faithfully with him, God allowed their enemies to harass them. He never allowed their enemies to destroy them.

The implication is obvious. If God destroyed the Egyptians in the past and protected his people for the last 250 years in the Promised Land, God could be trusted to save his people from the hand of the puny Philistines that were like annoying pests. God saved his people from the Philistines only 30 years before this when the Israelites repented, at this very location, Mizpah! If God's people would just repent of their sin again, God would save them again. God had never let them down in the past. He would not let them down now. They needed to have faith and trust in God and stop thinking a human king would solve their problems.

Before we laugh at the silly Israelites who didn't remember God's faithfulness in history and were quick to turn to a worldly solution to all their problems, are we any different?

Has God been faithful to us in the past? Yes! He has never let us down. Will God be faithful to us in the future? He promises that he loves us. He will never let us go. As Romans 8:38-39 tells us, God will not allow anything to separate us from Christ's love for us. If God has been faithful to us in the past and promises to be faithful to us in the future, why is it that as soon as we face challenges in life we turn to the world for a solution instead of turning to the God who loves us and has promised to never leave us?

Application: Are we just like the Israelites? As soon as we see a problem on the horizon of life, do we turn to everyone but God for help?

If the problem is with our children, people tell us to take them to a counselor. The world tells us they need meds to calm down. It is so easy to jump right to the worldly solutions to our problems, to think that if we just had a king, our problems would go away. That isn't the truth. As Christians who are known and loved by God, the first instinct of our hearts should be to call out to God in prayer over our children and tell God we know that what our children need is him. If our children are not born again, they need Jesus to change their lives. If they are born again, they need a big step of spiritual growth in their lives. I am not saying there is no place for counselors and medications. God uses those things. However, the primary thing our children need is a close and healthy relationship with Jesus. That changes everything. As Christians, that is the first thing we seek. That is what we pray for and desire before worldly solutions.

Maybe for you, the problem is not your child. It is your job. It is hard. The hours are long. The work is hard. Your friends are putting their resumes on

monster.com to get a new job. As Christians, that should not be the first thing we do. As Christians, when the job is hard, we go to prayer and ask God what he wants us to do. Maybe God will tell you that the reason he has you in a hard job is he wants you to be a bright light for Jesus in a dark place. Changing to another job is exactly what God doesn't want you to do. Maybe God will tell you the reason he has you in a hard job is that you are needed in that place. You shouldn't seek to transfer out of that place.

My simple point is that, as Christians, we do not approach the challenges of life just like the world around us. We turn to God before we jump to worldly solutions. He has never failed us in the past. He will never fail us in the future. That is why we turn to and trust in him.

Look at what the Scriptures tell us to do in the trials of life.

...casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7 (ESV)

Do you really believe that? The Israelites struggled to believe that. That is why they wanted a king they could see, not a God they had to trust.

What had Israel done to God?

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.'... 1 Samuel 10:19 (ESV)

I don't know, but after Samuel spoke the words of verse 18, I think there was a pause before he spoke the words of verse 19. He was hoping the people would repent at Mizpah. Unfortunately, Samuel was met with stone-faced silence.

Samuel wanted the people to see the great disparity between the faithfulness of the Lord to them and how unfaithfully the people were being to the

Lord. The Lord had proven himself. He had faithfully rescued his people from all their calamities and distresses.

When God's people did face troubles and distress in the Promised Land, it was not because God forgot about them. It was not because God walked away from them. It was always because they walked away from God and God allowed a measured amount of trouble and distress into their lives to discipline them in the hope that they would repent and return to him. There was never a time God failed them. There was never a time God let them down.

This principle of how God works is not just true for the ancient Israelites. It is true for us as well.

Application: God loves us. Even when he allows trouble into our lives, they are always measured. They are limited. He allows them into our lives to either bring us to repentance so we return to him after wandering from him or he allows trials like that into our lives to draw us closer to him so we love him more.

In those trials, even though our world feels like it is out of control, God is limiting and measuring those trials so there are no more trials in our lives than are necessary to achieve God's good purpose for drawing us closer to him.

We see this in the book of Job. When Satan came to God about Job, Satan had to ask God's permission to touch Job. God limited the difficulties Satan could bring into Job's life. First God allowed Satan to ruin Job's business and his family, but Satan could not touch Job's health. God limited that trial. Then God allowed Satan to touch Job's health but he could not take Job's life.

In Job's trials, there was a different purpose. It was not so Job would repent of sin. It was so Job would bring glory to God as Job trusted in God as Job went through the trials. Sometimes God allows a measured amount of trials in our lives to turn us back to him when we wander away from him. Sometimes God allows a measured amount of trials in our lives so that we will bring glory to him as we trust in him in the midst of the storm. In both cases, the trials God allows in the lives of his children are measured and temporary. They are all intended for our good and God's glory. We need to remember that in the darkest hours, and it is so easy to forget. At least it is easy to forget for me when I am in the fog of suffering.

So even though God limited the trials of his people when he allowed the Philistines to oppress them and he had a good purpose in those trials to lead them to repentance, the people forgot God's goodness to them. They questioned God's character. They turned away from him.

There was truly madness in the people's hearts. God had always been faithful to his people but his people were rejecting him.

If you were in the audience at Mizpah on that day, when you heard of your unfaithfulness to God by asking for a human king, what do you think you would hear next? Any time a prophet reminded people of their guilt, the next thing that usually happened was God's pronounced judgment. That was what happened but not in a way we might expect.

The Lord's Choice

...Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your thousands." 1 Samuel 10:19 (ESV)

What took place was a selection process, a drawing of lots during which God revealed their king. How was that judgment on the people for rejecting God?

If you are familiar with the Old Testament, you will remember an earlier time in biblical history when God's people were forced to come before God by tribes and thousands and draw lots to select someone. Shortly after Israel entered the Promised Land, after the battle of Jericho, the Israelites found themselves utterly defeated by the much smaller and weaker city called Ai. God had the people come before him by tribes and thousands to use lots to determine who was guilty of the sin that had infected the camp and resulted in the defeat of the nation. This was the same type of selection process used but it was not used to determine who sinned in the nation but to determine who would be Israel's king who would be a form of judgment on the nation. Let's follow this selection process.

Then Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. 1 Samuel 10:20 (ESV)

I am sure all the other tribes breathed a sigh of relief.

He brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its clans, and the clan of the Matrites was taken by lot... 1 Samuel 10:21a (ESV)

...and Saul the son of Kish was taken by lot... 1 Samuel 10:21 (ESV)

We have already seen Saul privately anointed as king last week by Samuel. Now Saul was publicly identified as king by the use of lots, the lottery system. Saul won the lottery!

Why would God publicly select Saul as king through this Achan-like process which echoes a form of punishment?

Application: God sometimes punishes a nation by giving it a leader who is not a good and wise ruler for the nation. That is what God did to Israel when he gave them Saul as their king. We saw this principle in motion last week, but in these verses, we see it with even greater clarity this week. God disciplines a nation by giving a nation a leader whose policies, choices, and governance will diminish the people instead of doing what is best for the people.

That is not a political statement meant for today. It is a biblical statement about the way God always works. It was true a thousand years before today. If Jesus doesn't return, it will be true a thousand years after today. That is the way God works.

Later in biblical history, the prophet Hosea looked back on this moment and saw God's judgment in it.

I gave you a king in my anger, and I took him away in my wrath. Hosea 13:11 (ESV)

Saul was the human king given to God's people as God's discipline upon them for rejecting God as their king.

Let me take a little break from the narrative. This section raises another question we should handle, which is the selection process for Saul. Obviously, God was in charge of the casting of lots. We knew Saul was anointed king in the last chapter. Now, after they cast lots for everyone in the entire nation, Saul won the lottery. This reminds us of what we learned last week. Nothing happens by chance. God had Saul win the lottery so everyone knew he was the one to be king.

The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD. Proverbs 16:33 (ESV)

This week, when you are playing a board game and roll the dice, the truth is the way the dice land is not random. It is the way God has ordained they will fall because everything is under God's control. Nothing surprises God. In the Old Testament, since they knew nothing was truly random and God determined the outcome of everything, they would cast lots or use other things that appeared random as a way to determine God's will in a situation. Even the high priest had two stones in his vest. One was the Urim, the other Thummin. They each had a black side and a white side. If you cast the stones and two white sides turned up, God's answer was, "Yes." If two black sides turned up, God's answer was, "No." If they had a white and black side together, the answer was undecided.

The last time we see the casting of lots used for the decision-making in the Bible was when it came to deciding who should replace Judas among the apostles.

Is that the casting of lots, or the rolling of dice, the way we are to make decisions today? God is in control of all random events, but is that the way God wants us to determine his will today? For example, if you can't decide which college to go to attend do you put the names of the colleges in a hat then pull out one and claim that is where God wants you to go? One friend of mine had two people interested in him. He didn't know which one to marry. Should he have flipped a coin and claimed if it came up heads he marry one girl, if it came up tails he marry the other girl? Was the way that coin flip turned out the way he should determine God's will?

Application: Even though God is in control of all random things, like the rolling of dice, that is not the way God wants us to make decisions today. We have things available to us that God's people in 1 Samuel didn't. We have the entire Bible and the Holy Spirit. This is how God wants us to determine his will as we make choices.

When it comes to knowing God's will on a subject, we have all of God's Word given to us. At the time 1 Samuel was written, they probably only had the first five books. We know much more about God's will than they did because we have all of his Word to us. Look how the Bible describes itself as containing all the instructions we need for us to be able to make good, wise, and God-glorifying choices in life.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (ESV)

Everything we need to know to determine the difference between a right or wrong decision is found in this book. This book equips us for not just some good works but for every good work. It is the Word of God that is the primary way God reveals his will for our lives.

Let me give you a simple example. Let's talk about the hot-button topic of abortion. If you have experienced an abortion, please know I have compassion for you. God loves you. He offers to forgive you. Confess that sin to Jesus and Jesus forgives that sin. Let's look at what the Bible says about abortion.

Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. Psalm 139:16 (ESV)

When someone is just an unformed substance in his or her mother's womb, when he or she is just a ball of cells, God knows that person and has the life of that person planned out in advance. Verses like this are how we know that life begins at conception, not later in pregnancy, but from the moment of conception in pregnancy. From the moment a child is conceived, that person is known, loved, and his or her life is planned by God. This is why, as Christians, from the moment of conception onward we don't abort our children, we treasure our children. When people say life begins at six weeks or in the second trimester, that is not what the Bible claims.

Let's connect the discussion of life beginning at conception with the topic of birth control. There are many methods of birth control on the market. Unfortunately, many people are ignorant about how they work. Some methods of birth control prevent pregnancy. Other methods of birth control abort a child at the earliest stages of life after conception. As Christians, since we believe what the Bible says about life beginning at conception we oppose any form of birth control that aborts children. Unfortunately, many people don't know enough about birth control to determine the dangers of how it works.

A few years ago, I was teaching on this topic and I explained how an IUD works as a form of birth control for women. It aborts children after they are conceived. It does not prevent them from being conceived. After the message, a woman came up to me and her face was ghostly white. She proceeded to tell me she never realized her IUD was aborting her children.

You see, when it comes to making any moral decision in life, the Bible has in it all we need to know. If we don't know how to make the right decision on any matter, we either need to dig more into the Bible to find out what it says about a moral decision or we need to dig more into the details of the situation in front of us. As we dig deeper in the Bible and the situation, we will always find the Bible and the decisions of life connecting so we know how to make the right choice that pleases God. If we needed more details on how to make the right choice, God would have given us more of his Word. He doesn't need to give us more of his Word. That is why Paul said God's Word equips us for every good work, for every right choice.

Today, it is hard to find the truth on the Internet. What we find is a lot of spin. The good news is we have a rock-solid source of truth. It is the Word of God.

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. John 17:17 (ESV)

We have the Word of God, which always gives us the truth. How do we make decisions in an area of life that has no inherent morality or wisdom associated with it? In that case, we rely on the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has the job of guiding, convicting, and directing us. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came on people temporarily and situationally. After Pentecost in New Testament times, when we trust in Jesus the Holy Spirit indwells us permanently and guides us into God's will.

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth... John 16:13 (ESV)

So today we don't cast lots to find God's will. We study the Word and the situations we face to find where the Word of God and the situations we face connect. In addition, we pray and ask the Holy Spirit to direct us as we make choices so God leads us down the path he wants us on.

That was a fun little break from the text on how God guides us today without the casting of lots. Let's get back to 1 Samuel 10. Saul was drawn by lot. Look what happened next.

...But when they sought him, he could not be found. 1 Samuel 10:21 (ESV)

I am not surprised that Saul ran away. He knew the lot was going to end on him, and he didn't want the job of leading the people. After all, as we have already seen, Saul was a reluctant leader. So far, he was a do-nothing leader.

So they inquired again of the LORD, "Is there a man still to come?"... 1 Samuel 10:22 (ESV)

"God, are we missing something or someone. Where did he go?"

...and the LORD said, "Behold, he has hidden himself among the baggage." 1 Samuel 10:22 (ESV)

God gave away Saul's hiding spot. Saul was constantly hiding. Last week, he hid from his uncle the fact that he was anointed as king. Now he was hiding from the people when they drew lots so they wouldn't make him king.

This is the king the people asked for. He was a coward. So far he neglected his duty. The people wanted a king that would give them the leadership edge compared to other nations. That is not what they got. So far they had a coward. Unfortunately, he didn't come from Amazon. They were stuck with him. They could not return him. They wanted a king, but now they had buyer's remorse.

What I find so funny is the people want to reject God as their king, but they still needed God's help to find their king --- what an incredible statement on the futility of trying to reject God and live your life independent of him. The point is when people try to live independently of God, there will still be times in their lives when they are helpless and need the help of God. Even atheists are this way.

Application: No matter how hard we run from God, at times, everyone will find themselves calling out for help from God. As a church, we are about reaching people with Jesus. Sometimes it is hard to bring up Jesus in everyday conversation, especially with people who are adamantly opposed to Jesus and the Word of God. We must remember they may be that way for a period of time, but they will not be that way all the time. There were be times in their lives when they will be desperate for God's help. In those moments we can bring up Jesus in a conversation and they will be eager to listen.

For example, there are people who are devout atheists, but when they contract COVID and are in the hospital, if you offer to pray with them, I guarantee you they will be eager to talk to God. They are desperate for the intervention and rescue of God. My friends, as we seek to reach our region with Jesus, look for those opportunities in people's lives where they are broken, hurting, and desperate, then offer to pray with them and to love on them. They may have started out trying to be independent of God, but in that moment of weakness they will be desperate for the grace and mercy of God.

Then they ran and took him from there... 1 Samuel 10:23a (ESV)

This is a pathetic scene. The people comb through the pile of suitcases. There, at the bottom of the pile, they find Saul, their king, their fearless leader,

curled up in the fetal position. Talk about a reluctant leader. How could anybody want this guy to be king? Leadership qualities were completely lacking. You would think nobody wanted him to be king at this point. That isn't what happened.

...And when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. 1 Samuel 10:23 (ESV)

The people went right back to evaluating things by appearances only. He was taller than everyone else. Last week, we learned he was better looking than everyone else. He had those coveted chiseled abs and looked like a model. If you were just judging by appearances, Saul was your guy. At this point in the story, all of us know that leaders need to be evaluated deeper than the skin.

And Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? There is none like him among all the people."... 1 Samuel 10:24 (ESV)

I don't know, but I suspect Samuel was biting his lip when he said this to them. I think there was a touch of sarcasm. "Isn't this a great king? He may be a coward hiding in the baggage but he looks really good."

Application: Do not judge someone by his or her looks. We have to judge people by their hearts and character. Incidentally, Saul was known as the people's choice for king. The people wanted a king based on the way he looked on the outside. They did not judge their king based on his character on the inside. Later in 1 Samuel 16, God would choose a king for the people --- David. If you remember, David's father, Jesse, didn't even bring David to be considered as a future king because he was just a boy. He didn't look impressive like Saul. Look what God said about his choice of David to be king compared to the people's choice of Saul to be king.

But the Lord said to Samuel, “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: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” 1 Samuel 16:7 (ESV)

God chose David to be king based on his heart on the inside, not his good looks on the outside. Let's get back to the text.

...And all the people shouted, “Long live the king!” 1 Samuel 10:24 (ESV)

In spite of his poor character qualities, because God chose Saul by lot, and because Saul was so good looking, the people affirm Saul as their king.

The Duties of 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... 1 Samuel 10:25 (ESV)

Now Samuel read to Saul what the rights and duties of a king for God's people were.

In the estimation of most Bible scholars, what Samuel told the people was probably what is found in Deuteronomy 17:14-20.

“When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,’ you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall never return that way again.’ And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.

“And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.” Deuteronomy 17:14–20 (ESV)

As a king, Saul was forbidden to accumulate wealth or to devote himself to luxury. He was to be devoted to observing God's Word. He was to be a man of the book. He was to keep a handwritten copy of the book in his own handwriting with him at all times. He was to read it every day. It was only if the king was careful to observe God's law that he would enjoy success and endurance in his kingship. In other words, observing God's law would be the secret of his success.

Application: There is a great application for us. Just as the king was to obey God's Word for success, obeying God's Word also leads us to God's blessing. God's laws are not given to us to keep us from freedom and life. They are given to us to bring us freedom and life. Sometimes people get confused about this. They think we are saved by God's grace so it doesn't matter how we live. That is not true. Since we are saved by God's grace, it does matter how we live. Let's use an Old Testament example to make my point. In the Old Testament, God's saved his people from certain death in Egypt completely by his grace. All the people could do was receive God's salvation by faith. God did all the work of rescuing them from Egypt. After God set them free, he brought them to Mt. Sinai where he gave them the Ten Commandments which were intended to keep them free. They were saved and made free by God's grace, but they were given God's laws to keep them free. The same is true for us. We are saved by simple repentance of our sin and placing our faith and trust in Jesus who sets us free. Now that we have salvation as a free gift from Jesus, we love God's law because it is given to us to keep us free.

For example, the Bible tells us to love our neighbors as ourselves. That is not just a command that is good for our neighbors but it is good for us! Loving our neighbors gives us compassionate hearts. It develops caring hearts. The Bible also says we are to treat others the way we would like to be treated. This is not just good for other people. It is good for us. Treating others the way we would like to be treated helps us become kind and loving people, not cold and heartless people.

The Bible tells us this about the way we speak.

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.
Ephesians 4:29 (ESV)

Corrupting talk means rotten, hurtful, meanspirited talk. Our talk should always be known for building people up, not tearing them down. When God says these things about our speech, this is not just good for other people. It is good for us. Using our words to build others up, not tear them down helps keep us free from sin.

...Then Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his home. 1 Samuel 10:25 (ESV)

Didn't they just anoint a king? Why didn't Saul make a speech? Why didn't Saul do something? Samuel, not Saul, was the one who dismissed the nation.

Saul also went to his home at Gibeah... 1 Samuel 10:26 (ESV)

Even Saul listened to Samuel and went home. Saul's first act as king was to listen to Samuel and go home. Saul did not go home alone.

...and with him went men of valor whose hearts God had touched. 1 Samuel 10:26 (ESV)

Just as God touched Saul's heart and changed him into a different man, God touched the hearts of these men and gave them the desire to follow Saul. They were described as men of valor. That can also be translated as the men of the army. This was convenient. God gave Saul an army to follow him. God was really stacking the deck in Saul's favor. He was anointed to be king by Samuel. He was publicly recognized as king by the drawing of the lots. He was supernaturally changed by God into a different man. He was now given an army. What did he do? He went home.

The garrison of Philistines was still at Gibeah-Elohim. Saul didn't do anything against them.

Not everyone was quick to follow Saul.

But some worthless fellows said, "How can this man save us?" And they despised him and brought him no present.... 1 Samuel 10:27 (ESV)

Who were these people? They were the clear thinkers in the group. They knew Saul was taller and better looking than everyone else but he was baggage boy. He was not taking initiative. He hid from people. That was not the kind of person they had in mind when they asked for a king.

...But he held his peace. 1 Samuel 10:27 (ESV)

Saul did nothing to bring them into his camp. He did not meet with them. He ignored them. In my way of thinking, this was more lack of leadership on Saul's part.

Would Saul ever take initiative? Would he ever lead? You will need to come back next week to find out.

Application

We had a lot of practical applications from the text this morning. Let me just remind you of a few of the highlights.

- Sometimes God gives nations the kind of leader they want as a form of discipline on the people.
- Don't judge people by the way they look. God judges the heart.
- Even though God is in control of random events, we don't make choices based on chance. We check God's Word for his will and rely on the Holy Spirit for guidance.
- God's grace through Jesus is what sets us free from sin and bondage. God's law was given to keep us free.

Conclusion

Thankfully, today we are not following a flawed Saul as our king. In fact, all the kings from Saul forward would fail. While some were better than others, all would fail as a leader in some way.

The good news is that a thousand years after Saul God sent his own son to be king. He is the king that did not fail.

While Saul was the outwardly attractive king that was lacking in courage and character, Jesus had nothing about him to attract us to him physically but his character was perfect. He was without sin. Saul was a passive leader who up to this point had done nothing to save God's people. Jesus was an active leader. He chose to head to Jerusalem knowing he was going to die for our sins to save us. Saul ran from leadership and self-sacrifice. Jesus chose leadership and self-sacrifice. He is the king that gave his life for us to save us.

Today, thank you dear God that we are not following Saul as our king. We are following your son who is the perfect king. He will never fail us!



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