

“A Goodly Start”
1 Samuel 9:1-2, 21
(Preached at Trinity, October 2, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we entered **Chapter 8** we find that Samuel has grown old and he has appointed his sons to judge – **Verse 1**
Sadly, we read in **Verse 3** that they did not walk in the ways of their father. We read: "but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice."
2. Representing the people of Israel, the elders met and determined it was time for a change. They wanted a king. But we saw that their true motivation had little to do with the poor leadership of Samuel's sons. God declared their true motivation for the change.
 - a. They no longer wanted to be under the rule of God. In essence they were opting out of being God's covenant people.
1 Samuel 8:7 NAU - "they have rejected Me from being king over them."
 - b. They had lost the sense of being distinct as the people of God. God had declared to them:
Exodus. 19:5-6 NAU - "if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; ⁶ and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."
Leviticus 11:45 NAU - "For I am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God; thus you shall be holy, for I am holy."
 - c. They were no longer interested in being God's holy and distinct people. Now we find they wanted to be just like the nations that did not know God
1 Samuel 8:19-20 NAU - "No, but there shall be a king over us, ²⁰ that we also may be like all the nations"
3. They had made up their mind. They would have a king at any cost. Their mind was made up; their heart was set.
4. **Chapter 8** ends with great literary tension.
1 Samuel 8:22 NAU - "The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to their voice and appoint them a king." So Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Go every man to his city."
 - a. We don't have the resolution we're looking for. The discussion ended and God tells Samuel, "Give them a king." Everyone went home.
 - b. So what will this new king look like? Who will he be? The final verse of the chapter leaves the readers guessing.
5. We aren't left guessing very long. **Chapter 9** opens with the introduction of Saul. Of course, we already know he was to be Israel's first king. We are told much about him. We learn of his family. We're told of his appearance. And we are told of his character.
6. What an excellent start Saul had. What providential blessings he enjoyed. But oh the tragedy of sin.

7. Tonight I want to consider this subject. This is of importance to us all, but it has particular relevance to our young people. Some have a splendid beginning, only to squander God's blessings. Others have a meager beginning, and yet they are good stewards of what God has given and end with a life well-lived to the glory of God.
8. Jesus often taught these principles
Matthew 25:23 NAU - "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'
Luke 12:48 NAS - "And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more."

I. Saul's excellent beginning

- A. He came from a good family
 1. On one hand, Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin – a tiny tribe in comparison with the others.
And his father, Kish, isn't known beyond this mention as Saul's father.
 2. On the other hand, His father is described as a "mighty man of valor."
The word for "valor" can refer to strength or power or bravery.
 - a. It's the same word used to describe David in **Chapter 16 1 Samuel 16:18 NAU** - "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is a skillful musician, a mighty man of valor, a warrior"
 - b. He would have been well-known among the Benjaminites
 2. God determines the family we are born into
 - a. Some are born into poverty, some into affluence
 - b. Some today are born to single moms who barely keep them fed
 3. In spite of a meager beginning some through hard work and determination rise from their poverty
 4. What a blessing to have been born in the U.S. with all of the freedoms we enjoy. What a blessing to be born into a family of loving parents. What a blessing to be born into a Christian home where Jesus is held high.
And what a curse to squander this wonderful blessing from God.
- B. Saul also enjoyed God's physical blessings
 1. **Verse 2** describes Saul as being stunning in appearance – "choice and handsome" – It is translated from the word טוב which can be translated simply as "good." It's the word God used every day to describe His creation – "And God saw that it was good."
In other words, Saul was pleasing to look upon. He made a good impression.
 2. The text tells us Saul was the most handsome man in all of Israel. He was tall and stood out in a crowd.
 - a. David's was also described in terms of his handsome appearance: **1 Samuel 16:12 NAU** - "Now he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. "
 - b. The same is true of Esther
Esther 2:7 NAU - "Now the young lady was beautiful of form and face"

3. This presupposes that human beings take notice of such things.
 - a. This is why we should make the most of our appearance. Ladies are commanded to dress modestly and discreetly. It would be wise to give attention to our appearance as we apply for a job.
 - b. It is also why young people seeking a mate should not ignore their appearance.
 - c. And we must not dismiss how we dress for worship. It displays our seriousness before God and men. Others visiting will see how we view worship.
 4. We must never dismiss the value of inner beauty
 - a. Saul's outward appearance is mentioned because this is what Israel was most concerned with. They wanted a king like the nations. They had little regard for inner beauty.
 - b. God looks upon the inner man. We'll see this with David
1 Samuel 16:7 NAU - "But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."
 - c. Later we read from King Lemuel in the Proverbs
Prov. 31:30 NAU - "Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, *But* a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised."
- C. Finally, Saul had some of the refinement of common grace
1. God shapes our character of men by common grace. This is not to be confused with the change wrought through regeneration.
 2. The character of the lost man is shaped by the influence of his parents and the mores of society. God's Providence, the various events of life, help shape the character.
 3. We can see evidence of refinement in Saul's character
 - a. He felt a sense of duty to his father. He searches diligently for the lost donkeys.
 He was a respectful son. He shows concern that his father will worry because of his delay in returning.
1 Samuel 9:5 NAU - "Saul said to his servant who was with him, "Come, and let us return, or else my father will cease *to be concerned* about the donkeys and will become anxious for us."
 - b. Saul had respect for those in authority. The custom of the day was to bring a gift when appearing before a person of importance.
1 Samuel 9:7 NAU - "Then Saul said to his servant, "But behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? For the bread is gone from our sack and there is no present to bring to the man of God. What do we have?"
 - c. Saul had a sense of humility
1 Samuel 9:21 NAU - "Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak to me in this way?"

4. There is no sanctifying grace apart from Christ and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.
Common grace will weaken continually through sin. Our hearts grow more and more calloused.

II. The great danger of despising God's blessings upon our life

A. We see in Saul that he squandered every common grace

1. Saul stood out from among his peers. He enjoyed the blessing of a good family. He was chosen and anointed by God as Israel's king.
2. And yet, Saul didn't recognize his great duty to serve and obey God chiefly above all things.
3. God would take away every blessing from Saul
1 Samuel 15:23 NAU - "Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from *being* king."
1 Samuel 15:35 NAU - "And the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel."

B. Saul's great problem was he didn't have a heart for God. He wasn't spiritually minded.

1. Some see Saul's gift to Samuel as an attempt to bribe him—that he thought God could be bought. Similar to Simon the sorcerer seeking to purchase the Holy Spirit. But to this point, we do not yet find glaring weaknesses in Saul's character.
2. It would appear that Saul had no knowledge of Samuel. Was it that Saul had little interest in spiritual matters.
1 Samuel 9:18 NAU - "Then Saul approached Samuel in the gate and said, "Please tell me where the seer's house is."
 - a. This is strange since we saw in **Chapter 3** that Samuel's anointing as prophet was known to all Israel.
1 Samuel 3:20 NAU - "All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD."
 - b. Even Saul's servant had knowledge of Samuel
1 Samuel 9:6 NAU - "Behold now, there is a man of God in this city, and the man is held in honor; all that he says surely comes true. Now let us go there, perhaps he can tell us about our journey on which we have set out."
 - c. Saul's lack of knowledge of Samuel could point to a lack of interest in God.

C. May this serve as a great warning to each of us

1. We are all inclined to trust in our own abilities.
 - a. For those with outward beauty we are inclined to use it to satisfy our lusts rather than to the glory of God.
Proverbs 11:22 NAU - "As a ring of gold in a swine's snout *So is* a beautiful woman who lacks discretion."
 - b. For those with natural intellect, the temptation is to trust our own wit and use it to outmaneuver others.
 - c. For those with the grace of a good upbringing, we easily abandon it if we think it's to our benefit.

2. Only a life lived to God's glory will be of any benefit. Sadly, how many do we see with an eye upon pleasing God? We seldom see spiritually minded teachers or corporate leaders. How rare to see a politician with a heart to please God alone.
3. It is tragic it is to be born in a nation where the Gospel has gone forth so freely and squander God's offer of salvation.
 - a. Some are born into Christian homes only to despise the presence of God and the offer of the Gospel of grace.
 - b. God's warning rings loud and clear:
Hebrews 3:7-8 NAS - "the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you hear His voice, ⁸ Do not harden your hearts"
4. And there are multitudes who are actually united with a church and yet have little interest in the things of God.
 - a. They have little true regard for the wellbeing of the church or of the people of God. They never pray for the spiritual health of their fellow church members.
 - b. They care little for God's Word. They give little regard to those who will set it before them.
 - c. They give little regard for worship. There is no sense of awe and amazement at the presence of God.
 - d. There is little interest in personal holiness. They live and think exactly as those outside the church. This disregard of holiness is what caused God to strip the kingdom out of the hand of Saul.
 - e. They have many opinions but few faith convictions, a conviction upon which they would be willing to die.

Conclusion:

1. Saul stands before us as a stark warning. We might look at him and think he had everything going for him—and he did. And yet, he lost it all.
2. May each of us determine to take what God has given us and used it all for God's glory.
Luke 12:48 NAS - "And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more."