

“God’s Unseen Direction”
1 Samuel 9:15-17
(Preached at Trinity, October 9, 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. In **Chapter 8** Israel cries out for a king. Their true motive was one of lusting after the ways of the other nations.
1 Samuel 8:20 NAU - "that we also may be like all the nations"
2. They were no longer interested in God’s covenantal separation, of being separate and distinct from the other nations. God recognized their motive and saw it as a rejection of His covenant.
1 Samuel 8:7-8 NAU - "he LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them. ⁸ "Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day-- in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods-- so they are doing to you also."
3. **Chapter 8** ends with God telling Samuel to give them the desire of their heart—give them a king. Samuel dismisses the elders to return to their respective cities. We are left wondering what God would do. But God was never uncertain. He knows every detail of every event in history. He knows it because He has decreed it.
4. Samuel was unaware that God had been working all along in raising up Israel’s king. Tonight I want to direct your attention to God’s amazing direction in accomplishing His purpose in raising up Saul as the first King of Israel. I title this sermon, “God’s Unseen Direction.” God’s unseen hand is carefully moving and shaping every event and every moment in time.
5. It is amazing how God has directed every point of your life to bring you to where you are today. One single day set the course for my entire life. I met my wife on September 24, 1974. If one tiny shift in that day had occurred, I wouldn’t have been at the right place to meet her. We wouldn’t have married. My children wouldn’t exist. My grandchildren wouldn’t exist. I probably wouldn’t be your pastor. That’s one single day.
6. How significant has each and every day been that I’m completely unaware of? That’s God unseen direction. God’s sovereign decree is all encompassing. He has determined every detail that takes place in the universe. And everything is significant. James White wrote, “*The decrees of God are the soul-comforting truth that God has wisely and perfectly decreed whatsoever comes to pass in this universe. Nothing is outside His control, nothing is without purpose. There are no renegade atoms in the universe, nothing that is beyond the positive decree of God.*” ¹

¹ White, James. *The Potter’s Freedom*, Amityville: Calvary Press Publishing, 2000, Page 45.

7. **Statement on the Divine Providence from the Second London Confession of 1689**

(Chapter 5, article 1) – “God the good Creator of all things, in his infinite power and wisdom, doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy providence, to the end for the which they were created, according unto his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will; to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy.”

I. Let's begin by looking at God's invisible hand in raising up Saul as king

A. We've already seen Saul's family

1. He was born of Kish of the tribe of Benjamin
 - a. That would seem insignificant. Since Kish is not mentioned elsewhere we have to assume he did not hold a place of significance in the tribe. But he is described as a person of substance. He had a head servant and donkeys, both signs of wealth. Some suggest he was a member of the ruling class.
 - b. Nothing is insignificant with God. Every detail of our life is important. God chose Saul's parents.
2. We read in **Verse 2** - "choice and handsome *man*, and there was not a more handsome person than he among the sons of Israel; from his shoulders and up he was taller than any of the people."
 - a. This is genetics. Saul inherited his physical traits from his parents.
 - b. From his childhood the influence of Saul's parents made an impact on who he would become.

B. Next, consider the wondering donkeys and Saul's meeting Samuel

1. This too seems insignificant. Animals wander away all the time.
Verse 3 - "Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost."
2. To Kish and his son Saul this was just another day with its common annoyances. Neither understood the significance of the invisible sovereign hand of God. Neither could see God's unassailable hand moving the pieces of their life like a giant chessboard.
3. Nothing is common or insignificant to God. God chose to use the means of these donkeys to accomplish His purpose for Israel. Imagine God using a herd of donkeys as a means of raising up of Israel's first king.

Second London Confession of 1689

(Chapter 5, article 2) – “Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly; so that there is not anything befalls any by chance, or without his providence; yet by the same providence he ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.”

(Chapter 5, article 3) – “God, in his ordinary providence maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them at his pleasure.”

4. Saul and his servant were sent on a mission to find the donkeys. But it was a mission ordained to failure. God purposed the donkeys to stay well beyond the sight of Saul and his servant.

5. They traveled a long distance and happened upon the territory of Samuel.
Verse 5 - "When they came to the land of Zuph" – We find Zuph in the genealogy of Samuel in **Chapter 1**.
Verse 9 - "So they went to the city where the man of God was."
 6. As they arrive at the city we witness another amazing act of Providence
 - a. They enquire of some young women drawing water if Samuel was there. They had entered the city at the precise time Samuel had come
1 Samuel 9:12 NAU - "He is; see, *he is* ahead of you. Hurry now, for he has come into the city today"
 - b. How many details had to work out perfectly for this to take place? The day before would have been too early. The next day too late. They arrive at precisely the same time. Every step of both Saul and Samuel had to be in sync.
 - c. People today would say, "Boy, that was lucky." But it gets even more amazing.
- C. God had told Samuel the day before that Saul would be arriving – **Verses 15-17**.
1. God revealed to Samuel the day before that Saul would be arriving.
 2. Some see these verses as an intrusion. **Verse 14** flows into **Verse 18** naturally. These verses seem unnaturally added. But God's point is simple. All of these events were unfolding by His sovereign direction.
 3. God's omniscience displays His eternal decree
Isaiah 46:9-10 NAU - "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me, ¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'"
 4. God was revealing to Samuel what He had determined in eternity. God only reveals to us His secrets in His Word. Everything else remains a mystery to us as God works out His purpose.
Deuteronomy 29:29 NAU - "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."

- II. God carries out His decree without the will of man seeming to be infringed upon
- A. Both Saul and Samuel were doing what they desired to do. Neither felt the invisible hand of God. Neither felt like he was being forced to do something.
1. Saul, as a faithful son, went searching for the donkeys. He chose the direction of his travels; each turn was an act of his will.
From his perspective, he decided to seek out the direction of the seer. At no time did he feel his liberty was being interfered with. He was simply doing what he thought best.
 2. Samuel had previously planned to go to the city to bless the sacrifice and share a meal. This was by his own choosing.
- B. Every decision, however, serves to fulfill the purpose of God
1. Judas Iscariot, the religious leaders, and the Roman authorities were acting according to their free volition. They *wanted* to crucify Christ. They didn't realize that they were acting out the foreordained plan of God.
Acts 4:27-28 NAU - "For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur."
 2. God rules and overrules the hearts of men from the greatest to the least.
Proverbs 21:1 NAU - "The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes."
Proverbs 16:9 NAU - "The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps."
 3. Pharaoh in Egypt was doing precisely what he wanted with the Israelites. He determined in his heart, "I will not let them go."
And yet, Paul explains this in Romans 9
Romans 9:17-18 NAS - "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth." ¹⁸ So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires."
 4. God works in such a way that we actually believe the ideas and decisions originate in us.
 - a. Bill Gates started Microsoft and created Windows – but it was by God's providence
 - b. Steve Jobs started Apple through which the Mac computer and the "i" revolution began – iPod, iPhone, iPad. But it was all by God's providence—God ordered it from all eternity.
 - c. God directs the lives of men.
1 Samuel 2:7-8 NAU - "The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts. ⁸ "He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap To make them sit with nobles, And inherit a seat of honor; For the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, And He set the world on them."

- III. No greater place is this demonstrated than in the salvation of men
- A. God is working out His redemptive purpose
1. All of history is an unfolding of God's eternal purpose
 2. Notice the redemptive language in God's message to Samuel
1 Samuel 9:16 NAU - "you shall anoint him to be prince over My people Israel; and he will deliver My people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have regarded My people, because their cry has come to Me."
 3. God was revealing His rich mercy towards His people.
 4. God was telling Samuel of His temporal deliverance for His people but it was but a foreshadow of His eternal purpose of deliverance.
- B. Our salvation is by God's design
1. It was God who loved us from eternity, who elected us unto salvation. Christ was ordained in eternity lay down His life for those whom the Father had given Him.
 2. The Gospel is God's work by God's purpose
Ephesians 1:4-5 NAU - "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will"
Ephesians 1:10-11 NAU - "In Him ¹¹ also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will"
- B. God works unseen in bringing a sinner to Christ
1. He raises up the one to bring the message of salvation by stirring his heart with a love for the glory of God and mercy for perishing sinners.
Romans 10:13-15 NAS - "Whoever will call upon the name of the LORD will be saved." ¹⁴ How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!"
 2. He providentially brings together the sinner and the preacher. This is often mysterious and cannot be orchestrated. Paul didn't know he was going to meet Lydia at the riverside, or that the Philippian jailer was one of God's elect.
 3. He opens the heart of the sinner to receive the Gospel. And He does so in such a way that we think we have made the decision to follow Christ
Philippians 2:13 NAS - " for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure."
 4. No one is saved against his will. Nor is someone who desires to be saved prevented from turning to Christ.

Conclusion:

1. God is wonderfully working in our lives. Nowhere is this more beautiful than in His great work of salvation. We, in no way, feel that God was forcing us to do something. And yet, we joyously came. But we came because He powerfully, irresistibly drew us to Himself.
2. God's ways are mysterious. Look again at **Verse 16**
1 Samuel 9:16 NAU - "you shall anoint him to be prince over My people Israel; and he will deliver My people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have regarded My people, because their cry has come to Me."
 - a. God didn't change His purpose because of their cry. He ordained their affliction and ordained that they would cry out to Him. And He ordained their deliverance.
 - b. But Israel, in no way, felt compelled to cry out. They saw their great danger and cried out.
3. This is the powerful work of the new birth in sinners. He changes us in such a way that we find the Gospel most glorious. And He does so in such a way that we are unaware of His powerful hand working in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.