

“Despising the Word of God”
1 Samuel 9:5-10
(Preached at Trinity, October 23, 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 cried out for a king. The text tells us that 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.
4. As we entered **Chapter 9** we are immediately introduced to Saul. We know that he will be the future king, but we find no hint in these opening verses. He is introduced as the son of Kish who is being sent on an errand to find some wandering donkeys.
5. To the uninformed we ponder, who is this Saul? What is he like? Is he a faithful servant of God? We know the end.
1 Samuel 15:23 KJV - "For rebellion *is* as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is* as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king."
6. But already in this chapter we find the seeds of Saul’s demise. He had no regard for the Word of God.
 - A. Saul had searched high and low for the missing donkeys with no success. He had been gone so long that he feared his father would turn his concern away from the donkeys and fear for Saul.
1 Samuel 9:5 NAU - "Come, and let us return, or else my father will cease *to be concerned* about the donkeys and will become anxious for us."
 - B. It was at this time Saul’s servant told him about 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. On the surface this sounds like a good thing. They were going to seek the face of God with regard for the missing donkeys.
This is where we find the fatal character flaw with Saul.
There is an infinite difference between seeking God’s help with a problem and seeking His rule in your life.

I. The Problem

- A. Israel had strayed further and further from following God.
1. Their sin was as a consuming cancer. It continued to spread with increasing severity.
 2. We saw it in the wilderness
Exodus. 32:9 NAU - "The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people."
 3. An entire generation died in the wilderness. The next generation entered into Canaan, but their heart had not changed. They continued to stubbornly resist the Law of God.
Joshua warned them:
Joshua 24:19-20 NAU - "You will not be able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression or your sins. ²⁰ "If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you."
 4. After the death of Joshua they continued their downward spiral in sin
Judges 3:5-7 NAU - "The sons of Israel lived among the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; ⁶ and they took their daughters for themselves as wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods. ⁷ The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth."
 5. It was a very dark time. God hid Himself from them and seldom spoke.
1 Samuel 3:1 NAU - "And word from the LORD was rare in those days, visions were infrequent."
 6. It was in this dark hour that God in His mercy raised up Samuel as His prophet.
1 Samuel 3:19-20 NAU - "LORD was with him and let none of his words fail. ²⁰ All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD."
 7. Finally, God was once again revealing His Word to Israel. Finally, a man could stand before them and declare, "Thus saith the Lord."
There is no greater blessing than to hear from God; to know His holy will.
- B. But Israel despised the Word of God
1. They knew clearly that God had raised up His prophet
1 Samuel 3:20 NAU - "All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD."
 2. They had little interest in hearing God speak. In **Chapter 4** we find Israel going to war with the Philistines but they made no effort to enquire of God. They were still doing what was right in their own eyes.
In **Chapters 4-6** God's prophet Samuel is completely absent. There was no word from God because Israel was not interested in hearing.

- C. It is in this context that we read **Verse 9**
 "Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he used to say, "Come, and let us go to the seer"; for *he who is called* a prophet now was formerly called a seer."
1. The author is telling us as a side-note that what they currently referred to as a prophet was formerly known as a "seer."
 2. What is the difference between a prophet and a seer?
 - a. A prophet speaks forth the Word of God. He speaks forth direction from God with Divine authority. He speaks the will of God and heralds warnings when the people move outside God's will.
 - b. A seer foretells the future. He is more like a fortune teller. Israel was interested in knowing the future. They wanted God as their servant to direct them through uncertainties. They DID NOT want Him as their Lord and King.
 3. Why does the narrator give us this information in **Verse 9** when we the word "seer" doesn't appear until **Verse 11**?
 The answer is because he wants us to see what Saul is seeking.
Verse 6 - "perhaps he can tell us about our journey on which we have set out."
Verse 8 - "I will give *it* to the man of God and he will tell us our way."
 4. Saul wasn't seeking God's rule. He was only seeking to know where the donkeys had gone.
 5. We saw in **Chapter 8** that Israel rejected God as their King. They didn't want to be ruled by Him. His Word had little value for them.
1 Samuel 8:6-8 NAU - "But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD. ⁷ The 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."
- C. Saul also rejected God's rule over him. Until now he had little regard for God or His prophet. He despised God's Word
1. We should note that all of Israel knew that Samuel was God's prophet.
1 Samuel 3:20 NAU - "All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD."
 2. It speaks loudly that Saul seems to have never heard of Samuel.
 It would seem that the servant of the future king of Israel knew more about God's prophet than Saul did.
 Could it be because his family had little regard for spiritual matters? Could it be that they were uninterested in seeking a Word from God?

3. Saul was merely seeking Samuel as a fortune teller to show him where the donkeys were—and nothing more.
Matthew Henry: “Had they said, ‘Let us give up the asses for lost, and, now that we are so near the man of God, let us go and learn from him the good knowledge of God, let us consult him how we may order our conversations a right, and enquire the law at his mouth, since we may not have such another opportunity, and then we shall not lose our journey’-- the proposal would have been such as became Israelites; but to make prophecy, that glory of Israel, serve so mean a turn as this, discovered too much what manner of spirit they were of. Most people would rather be told their fortune than told their duty.”¹
4. Saul never had a regard for the Word of God. He had no regard for obeying God. And this would be his downfall.
1 Samuel 15:22-23 NAU - "Samuel said, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *And* to heed than the fat of rams. ²³ "For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from *being* king."

II. What does this have to say to us?

- A. God is speaking today
 1. The Bible is God’s Word to us. God speaks loud and clear through His Word—“Thus saith the Lord.”
 2. He reveals His holy will through His Word. He communes with His people through His Word. He reveals His Divine essence through His Word. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin through His Word. The Christian is equipped for service through God’s Word.
2 Timothy 3:16-17 NAU - "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."
- B. The importance of the Word of God has been greatly diminished to the modern church.
 1. The church I was saved in years ago never preached on how essential God’s Word is to the Christian life. I never heard that it was inerrant and infallible. I never heard that it is all-sufficient and the source of Christian sanctification. I never heard that we meet God in His Word. It was only through Christian radio that I began to see the great treasure of God’s Word.
 We finally left that church to join a church that preached the Word.
 2. Too many today fail to recognize how essential the Bible is to the Christian life. Hopefully, this doesn’t include you. We preach and teach this continually so that no one can misunderstand.

¹ Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry’s Commentary, Vol. II*, New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, Page 326.

- C. What place does the Bible hold in your life?
1. It's one thing to read the Bible. It's a far different thing to approach it as the very Word of God—as that which has absolute authority over your life. Do you approach it with great reverence?
Do you see great value in your Bible?
 2. There is always a danger of approaching the Word of God academically.
 - a. This is pretty much what Saul was doing. He was merely seeking information.
 - b. People who are Reformed in their soteriology tend to be readers. We tend to love doctrine and love the quest for greater and greater knowledge. This is commendable, but we must guard against merely approaching the Bible academically. We must approach it humbly and obediently. We must come with a desire to be conformed to God's Law.
 - c. This was the heart of David
Psalm 119:11 NAU - "Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You."
Psalm 119:33 NAU - "Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, And I shall observe it to the end."
Psalm 119:66 NAU - "Teach me good discernment and knowledge, For I believe in Your commandments."
 3. There is no greater desire for your elders than to see you grow and mature as Christians. It is impossible for this to happen apart from the Word of God.
 4. Do you read it daily? Do you study it and meditate upon it?
Don Whitney writes in his book, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, "In the Bible God tells us about Himself, and especially about Jesus Christ, the incarnation of God. The Bible unfolds the Law of God to us and shows us how we've broken it. There we learn how Christ died as a sinless, willing Substitute for breakers of God's Law and how we must repent and believe in Him to be right with God. In the Bible we learn the ways and will of the Lord. We find in Scripture how to live in a way that is pleasing to God. None of this eternally essential information can be found anywhere else except the Bible. Therefore, if we would know God and be Godly, we must know the Word of God—intimately."²

² Whitney, Donald S., *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, Colorado Springs: NAV Press, 1991. Page 24.

5. There has been a sad decline in people carrying their Bibles to church.
 - a. There was a time when everyone arrived at church with their Bible in their hand. They wouldn't have considered coming without it.
 - b. Electronic Bibles are not a substitute for a personal Bible. An electronic Bible is a wonderful blessing because it allows you to have God's Word with you all the time.
 - c. Your phone is no substitute for a personal Bible that you become intimately familiar with. You can highlight it, write notes in it, underline in it. You become so familiar with it that you know exactly where verses are located on a particular page.
 - d. You should never attend a Bible study or worship service without your Bible.

Conclusion:

1. Saul's great downfall is he had no regard for God's Word.
 - a. **Chapter 15** will open:
1 Samuel 15:1 NAU - "Then Samuel said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you as king over His people, over Israel; now therefore, listen to the words of the LORD."
 - b. But Saul thought little of God's Word. By the time we get to **Verse 11** we'll read:
1 Samuel 15:11 NAU - "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands"
2. Despising God's Word was Saul's downfall and it will be our downfall as well. Make it your daily bread. May it be the delight of your heart. May David's words be our words as we approach the Bible:
Psalm 25:4-5 NAU - "Make me know Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. ⁵ Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; For You I wait all the day."