

May 21, 2023
God's Good News Story
King Saul & Young David
Another Story of Great Potential, Weak Character, Tragic Results
1 Samuel

Today we begin a bridge or a segue from the Judges Period to the Kings Period. Last week we left off with Hannah leaving her precious son Samuel with Judge Eli to be raised in Lord's House as a Priest, Judge and Prophet. Samuel ranks as one of the leading men of God in the Old Testament.

We need to begin with Samuel this week because He a Key Player in the life and reign of King Saul and the anointing of King David. He ties this story together.

I want to share some good news that follows up from last week's story where we left off with Hannah leaving her child with Eli. In 1 Samuel 2:18-21 we read...

¹⁸ Now Samuel was ministering before the LORD, as a boy] wearing a linen ephod. ¹⁹ And his mother would make him a little robe and bring it to him from year to year when she would come up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. ²⁰ Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife and say, "May the LORD give you children from this woman in place of the one she dedicated to the LORD." And they went to their own home. ²¹ The LORD visited Hannah; and she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew before the LORD.

Then in verse 26 we read...²⁶ *Now the boy Samuel was growing in stature and in favor both with the LORD and with men.*

Chapter 3... *Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD before Eli. And words from the LORD were rare in those days, visions were infrequent.*

Then we read of a quaint story where Samuel is sleeping and there is a voice calling him. He runs to Eli, who says it's not me, then a 2nd time and a third time same thing. Finally, Eli realized it must be God calling, so he told Samuel to wait and if he hears the voice to say, "**Speak Lord, for Your servant is listening**". That is exactly what he did, and God spoke to Samuel. We don't know exactly what all God said to him, but one portion that we do have is rather shocking for a young boy to have to deal with, and he seemed to actually shut down and tried to avoid telling Eli about it. That is probably what any of us would have done, because the message that he had to relay was to tell poor Eli that God had decided it was time to bring judgement upon his sons who had been violating God's laws and desecrating the Priesthood and that his family line would end in death. Wow, poor Samuel, he told Eli who responded with a resigned, but faith focused come back...vs. 18.... *So, Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, "It is the LORD; let Him do what seems good to Him."*

Later we read these words that set the tone for Samuel's ministry and his success as a Judge, Priest and Prophet

1 Samuel 3: 19-21...¹⁹ *Thus Samuel grew, and the 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.* ²¹ *And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, because the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD.*

Samuel is a breath of fresh air in the Good News Story as there is little to no negative comments about Samuel's behavior throughout his life of service to God. It seems his mother's sacrifice and offering were truly blessed and a great benefit to God's work.

Throughout the life and ministry of Samuel we find a constant refrain of how God revealed His Word to Samuel and how Samuel was faithful to follow that Word. **KEY POINT HERE – It is always best to listen to God, obey God and follow through completely.**

Well, we need to move ahead quickly, but just as a short synopsis, Samuel judged and led Israel faithfully for many years and did great works. But at some point, as he grew older and began to release some of his judge powers over to his two sons, Joel and Abijah, the people rebelled. Listen to what is recorded in **1 Samuel 8:1-7**...

¹*And it came about when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons' judges over Israel.* ² *Now the name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judging in Beersheba.* ³ *His sons, however, did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice.* ⁴ *Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah;* ⁵ *and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations."* ⁶ *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.*

Even though there is little to nothing said overtly wrong about Samuel, these verses cast a shadow on his parenting skills. Just like the previous Judge Eli's sons, Samuel's sons did not follow in his footsteps and thus the people cried out for a King.

This was terribly disheartening for Samuel, probably for several reasons... (1), he was disappointed in his sons and that the Judge/Priest leadership system was ending; (2) to Samuel it appeared that the people were turning their back to God's leadership and turning to a man to lead them. (3) I'm sure there were other factors as well.

But God takes this in stride, as He is never surprised and He tells Samuel to go along with this request from the people, but to warn them that what they are asking for will bring with it some very negative outcomes. But the people insist on a King. SO, they get one....

This is where Saul comes into the picture. In the region of the Tribe of Benjamin, there was a man named Kish who is described as a mighty man of valor. He had a son named Saul who is described in **1 Samuel 9:2**... “**a choice and handsome man**”, and later was described in chapter **10:23**...***So they found him and brought him out, and he stood head and shoulders above anyone else.***

So, we have here a tall, handsome valiant warrior who is going to be King, what could go wrong, RIGHT?

Well, nothing went wrong for a while, it seemed that Saul could do no wrong. Maybe that was part of the problem, he was too good, often depending on his own human merit. The world looks to the outward characteristics to judge people, and that can lead to false pride and eventual falling away. Saul was 30 years old when he began to reign and served for 42 years. We cannot be exact on the dates, but it appears that he reigned somewhere between 1050-1000BC.

At one point King Saul was going to go fight the enemy and he wanted to have God's blessing before he went, that sounds great, but he had called for Samuel to come, but Samuel was late in coming (7 days to be exact), so Saul got worried and jumped the gun. He did not wait for God's rightfully appointed man to bless the people, but he took matters into his own hand and decide to do it himself. It really was an open act of prideful disobedience. Just as Saul began to make the “**Blood Sacrifice Offering**”, (*think scarlet thread of Redemption Blood*

Sacrifice theme) and shed the blood, guess who shows up to the party? That's right Samuel, and he is NOT happy.

In Chapter 13 we see Samuel in a mixture of anger, sadness and disappointment, he delivers the bad news. Your action of disobedience is going to cost you and your descendants the throne. Samuel goes on to tragically say,

In **13:14**... ***But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.***”

It may seem a little harsh for God to take away the throne for this one act, but if you remember he did the same with Moses when he disobeyed God and didn't follow God's word and struck the rock rather than speaking to it. It is not so much the fact of 'just one little act of disobedience', but this actions were taken in open awareness and knowledge of what God had already demanded. It was an act of open rebellion that showed the true nature of the heart. A POINT TO NOTE: There is no such thing as a 'little sin' or just a small infraction. Disobedience is just that... disobedience, and God has the right to judge and punish as He sees fit. SO, the moral of the story, obey God every time completely. Now, we know that is not how it always works out, and we are grateful for His mercy and forgiveness. But we cannot let His mercy and compassion give us an excuse

to sin just because “we’re only human”! That is not an acceptable excuse!

Back to the story, well Saul had a son named Jonathan. Unlike some of the other sons of powerful people in the bible, Jonathan was a young man of character and integrity. It is just unfortunate that he got tangled in the mess that his father King Saul had woven.

Jonathan’s role is that of a protector and confidant of God’s next chosen King. It doesn’t seem to make sense that the rightful heir to the throne would be willing to support the rival to that throne, but that shows his character and most importantly his obedience to putting God’s will first even over his own personal welfare.

I bring Jonathan in here, because he plays a big role in our next main character of God’s Good News Story. A young man named David. David, along with Abraham and Moses are considered to be the most influential and important people in the Old Testament. Next Sunday, we will have a break from this series for the Adult & Teen Challenge Group. But on June 4 we pick up with our focus on David as King.

For now, we lay the foundation and the sad and erratic connection with the current King, Saul.

As Saul continues to decline in mental and spiritual condition, God calls Samuel to seek out the next new King (without Saul’s knowledge obviously). So God

sends him to the Tribe of Judah, to the town of Bethlehem, yes that same town that Jacob’s wife Rachel was buried in, the town where Ruth married Boaz and had David’s grandfather, Obed; the town where David lived near and where Samuel meets him and anoints him as the new King, secretly of course. There is a whole ‘nother story about how he was overlooked at first for his older brothers, but God choose him to be His King. He is also the blood line ancestor of Jesus Christ.

In 1 Samuel 17... we find the well-known story of David fighting Goliath and the great victory that he accomplished by God’s power. But time doesn’t allow us to elaborate now.

Back to poor Saul, most likely because of his alienation from God and from Samuel he becomes, erratic, neurotic, depressed and paranoid. It is a natural devolution for humans to turn to these characteristics when they do not follow God’s plans and try to run things their own way. Saul becomes so depressed that his son and his advisors suggested Music Therapy, yep, well that’s basically what they meant. They said to find someone who plays the harp and sings and maybe it will soothe the evil spirit that attacks you. That’s what they did, and just so happen, by coincident (NOT) nothing is by coincidence with God, they choose young David who was not only a strong young budding warrior and shepherd, but he was also a great musician. They brought him in to play whenever Saul went off the rails, and it seemed to work. Most of the time. Saul was erratic and sometimes he

would get so angry that he would take his spear and try to pin David to the wall and kill him.

As Saul continued to decline, David began to rise to power. When Saul was in his right mind, he would let David go into battle and there would be great success. Sadly, that success only created more problems for David as Saul became even more erratic and desperate. In two weeks, I will cover more of David's adventures, but during this time period of about 10 years, Saul and David had this on again, off again relationship. Then it came to Saul seeking obsessively to destroy David. Finally, God had enough and in one battle where Saul was trying to defeat the Philistines, his son Jonathan was killed, as well as two other of his sons, and Saul wounded so badly, he begged his armor bearer to run his sword through him and kill him so the Philistines would not have the pleasure, but the armor bearer was too scared so Saul, "*fell on his sword*" in other words committed suicide. The Philistines found his body, beheaded him and took the body to the temple of their god and hung him on the wall. That's a rather disturbing description but that is what happened.

How sad that we see Saul, a man with such great potential, but his willful disobedience brought about his destruction as well as his family.

I wish I had a better way to end this message, but, we can learn some key lessons, that may help us avoid disastrous results in our and our families lives: adapted from

<https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study/how-we-can-learn-from-king-sauls-mistakes-and-his-story.html>

KEY LESSONS TO LEARN

1. Success and good leadership do not solely depend upon your own power, skill, connections or appearance. Rather, if we want to truly lead or live our lives well, we must obey the Lord and listen to His will, not our own.

1 Samuel 16:7, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

2. A second lesson we can learn is don't get ahead of God. He has a perfect timetable. Be patient and trust God. If we try to go ahead without His guidance disaster is sure to follow. Saul did not wait for Samuel to come and follow God's protocol and he paid a steep price.

3. A third lesson we can learn is the destructive power of jealousy. Saul got so distracted chasing after David that his kingdom fell into ruin. If Saul had focused on himself and trusted God to do what He would with David, Saul might have salvaged some of his crumbling rule.

4. A fourth lesson is that God expects total obedience, not partial obedience with excuses. We did not go into this part of the story, but when God ordered Saul to completely destroy the Amalekites, including their livestock, Saul spared their king and some of the choice animals. Saul then lied to Samuel, saying the livestock would be used for a sacrifice. Saul thought he knew better than God. That is a sin, and it always has adverse consequences.

5. Final Lesson is that God will make sure His will and plans are accomplished. If we don't submit and follow His plans He may move around, beyond or through us and use someone who is "a man/person after God's Own heart" (A description of David by God).

Don't miss out on God's blessing, Join Him in His Good News Story.