

The Books of 1 and 2 Samuel

Lesson 5: Saul Anointed and Made King -- 1 Samuel 9:1-10:27

It begins with lost donkeys. Not a vision, not a thunderclap, not an angel in the doorway, but a young man sent out by his father to find some strayed animals. Saul wanders from district to district, finds nothing, and is ready to turn back for fear his father will start worrying about him instead of the donkeys. It is the most ordinary errand imaginable. And it is the road by which God leads a man to a throne. Hold on to that, because it tells you how God so often works, threading His purposes through the small, unremarkable details of an ordinary day.

Saul is the kind of man the world would pick. He is tall, head and shoulders above everyone else, handsome, from a family of substance. When the people later see him, they shout, and you can understand why. He looks the part. He looks like a king from central casting. And right there, gently, the story begins to plant a question that will haunt the rest of these chapters: is the man who looks like a king the man whose heart is fit to be one? God will say it plainly in the next lesson, the Lord looks on the heart.

But for now there is real beauty in Saul. When Samuel hints at his coming greatness, Saul protests: am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families? It is a genuinely humble word, and we should not rush past it. Saul began small in his own eyes. Many of us would give anything to start there. The tragedy that comes later makes this early humility all the more poignant, and all the more instructive.

Then the Spirit of God comes upon him, and he is, the text says, turned into another man, given a new heart, swept up among the prophets so that the neighbors marvel. God equips the man He calls. The beginning could hardly be brighter: providence, humility, the Spirit, a fresh start. And yet, as we will see across this study, a promising beginning is not the same as a faithful ending. The question this lesson presses into us is not only how do you start, but will you keep walking with the God who gave you the start?

Group Discussion: The people wanted a king who looked impressive, and Saul certainly did. In what ways are we, in the church and in our own lives, still tempted to value outward appearance, charisma, and stature over the condition of the heart?

Personal Reflection: Saul said, “am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes,” beginning small in his own eyes. Where has God placed you that feels small or insignificant, and how might He be using even that ordinary place for His purposes?

Read 1 Samuel 9:1-10:27

Study Questions

1. Saul's path to kingship begins with a search for lost donkeys (9:3–4). What does this ordinary errand reveal about how God works His providence through the everyday details of our lives?
2. Saul was reluctant to keep searching for fear of worrying his father (9:5). What does this small detail show about Saul's character, and where in your own life does considerate, ordinary faithfulness need to grow?
3. Samuel had been told by the Lord the day before that Saul was coming (9:15–17). What does this reveal about God's sovereignty and foreknowledge even in events that seem like coincidence?
4. When told of his coming honor, Saul protested that he was from the smallest tribe and least family (9:21). How does genuine humility about ourselves prepare us to be used by God, and where do you need it most?
5. Samuel anointed Saul privately and gave him signs to confirm the call (10:1–9). Why does God confirm His word and His callings, and how does He give us assurance today?
6. The text says God “gave him another heart” and the Spirit came upon him (10:9–10). When have you experienced God changing you and equipping you for something beyond your natural ability?

7. Saul was “turned into another man” by the Spirit (10:6), yet later fell away. What does this teach about the difference between being equipped by God and remaining faithful to God?
8. When the kingdom was chosen by lot, Saul had hidden himself among the stuff (10:22). What might his hiding reveal, and where do you tend to hide from a calling or responsibility God has placed before you?
9. Some sons of Belial despised Saul and brought him no presents, “but he held his peace” (10:27). What does the whole chapter teach about God choosing and equipping leaders, and how a promising beginning must still be matched by ongoing faithfulness?
10. Name one specific way Jesus is forming you through this passage, whether in humility, in trusting God's providence, or in the resolve to follow through faithfully on the calling He has given you.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: 1 Samuel 16:7, the Lord looks not on outward appearance but on the heart; Judges 6:15–16, Gideon's protest that his family is poor and he is least, and God's answer; 1 Corinthians 1:26–29, God choosing the weak and lowly to confound the mighty; Philippians 2:12–13, working out salvation while God works in us; Hebrews 3:12–14, the warning not to depart from the living God but to hold fast to the end.

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