

HE WILL GOVERN MY PEOPLE

1 Samuel 9:1-27 (Key verse 17)

“When Samuel caught sight of Saul, the Lord said to him, “This is the man I spoke to you about; he will govern my people.”

In today's passage we are going to learn how Saul who is to be king for the people Israel is introduced. The key verse says, God said to Samuel: *“This is the man I spoke to you about; he will govern my people.”* This suggests that it was God who provided Saul to govern his people Israel, therefore we are going to learn about the steps that God follows to provide a king for his people Israel, we are also going to learn God's heart in the provision of the king to his people Israel. I therefore pray that God may have mercy on us all to receive one word from today's passage, to truly learn and receive how God provides and his heart towards us.

Part 1: God's sovereign leading

In the previous passage we were introduced to the people of Israel who went to Samuel requesting for him to appoint for them king who will lead them such as all other nations have. Their request was a great offence to God, it reflected their corrupt hearts after worldly gain, rejecting God the creator of the heavens and the earth. Through Samuel, God warned them about the true nature of the king they are requesting, the rights that he will claim over them, how much he will take from them, their cattle and crops and turning them into slaves. Even with this warning, the people of Israel said to Samuel: *“No! we want a king over us.”* When they said this, God said to Samuel: *“Listen to them and give them a king.”*

God signed off on the request of the people of Israel, he gave Samuel a go ahead to give the people of Israel a king. And in today's passage we are introduced to the man who will be given to the people of Israel as king. The passage begins in **verse 1-2** saying: *“There was a Benjamite, a man of standing, whose name was Kish son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bekorath, the son of Aphiah of Benjamin. / Kish had a son named Saul, as handsome a young man as could be found anywhere in Israel, and he was a head taller than anyone else.”* Here we see the lineage of this man who is to be king, whose name was Saul, we are told that he was a Benjamite a Son of a wealthy man named Kish. This also implied that Kish was also person of influence amongst the tribe of Benjamin. Furthermore, we are told that Saul was a handsome young man like no one else in the land, we are told that he was a head taller than anyone else. Indeed, Saul was attractive, his appearance really resembled the qualities of a king that the Israel people wanted. He came from a wealthy and influential family, he was a head tall, he had the body of a hero like “Captain America.”

The Israelites said they wanted king who will go out before them and fight their battles, and Saul's physical appearance ticked the boxes of such a king. Also the name Saul was a Hebrew meaning for “Asked for” and indeed he matched the qualities that the Israelites asked for. Now in the household of Kish a challenge arose, Kish's donkeys went missing. At the time donkeys were very valuable, they were important for farming purposes and we can really credit Kish's wealth on them too. And so to solve this crisis, Kish called his handsome and strong son saying: *“Take one of the servants with you and go and look for the donkeys.”* Here we learn about Saul's character, when his father asked him he obeyed, he did not say *“why don't you ask one of your servants?”* but rather he obeyed his father. Furthermore, we see his dedication in the search of the donkeys, in **verse 4** it says: *“So he passed through the hill country of Ephraim and through the area around Shalisha, but they did not find them. They went on into the district of Shaalim, but the donkeys were not there. Then he passed through the territory of Benjamin, but they did not find them.”* Saul went from area to area, district to district dedicated to finding his father's donkeys. What a great quality for a man to possess, especially one who is to become king, how marvellous it is to imagine how he will fight for his people with such dedication.

When they went further and reached the district of Zuph, Saul said to the servant who was with him: *“Come, let's go back, or my father will stop thinking about the donkeys and start worrying about us.”* Here again we see another great quality of Saul, a concern for his father who might be worried about his son who has long left searching for the donkeys. Saul's concern was not because he is tired or hungry, rather it was for his father. This quality may also tell us that Saul will take care of the people very well by having compassion and concern upon them. Indeed, this would-be great news for the people of Israel, that their king would be such a person.

Now what happened when Saul suggested that they go back? They did not go back, rather in **verse 6** it says: *“But the servant replied, “Look, in this town there is a man of God; he is highly respected, and everything he says comes true. Let’s go there now. Perhaps he will tell us what way to take.”*” They were in the district of Zuph, Samuel’s town and so the servant having heard about Samuel suggested that they go to him and consult about their search of the donkey. Throughout it seemed like Saul and his servant were just searching for his father’s donkeys, we tagged along and got to learn about Saul and his qualities, his physique and character. But from here now we getting to see that the journey of Saul and the servant was not really about the search of donkeys, it was God leading Saul to Samuel. In **verse 8:22** it says: *“The Lord answered, “Listen to them and give them a king.”*” God led Saul to Samuel. The beauty about this story is not about Saul’s qualities, his obedience and good heart rather it is about God’s sovereignty, his leading. Through this God’s rule and power is revealed, his control over all things. In **Proverbs 16:9** it says: *“In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps.”*

God used the lost donkeys to lead Saul to Samuel, he orchestrated everything. In **verse 11 – 14** it says:

“As they were going up the hill to the town, they met some young women coming out to draw water, and they asked them, “Is the seer here?” / “He is,” they answered. “He’s ahead of you. Hurry now; he has just come to our town today, for the people have a sacrifice at the high place. / As soon as you enter the town, you will find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. The people will not begin eating until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterward, those who are invited will eat. Go up now; you should find him about this time.” / They went up to the town, and as they were entering it, there was Samuel, coming toward them on his way up to the high place.”

God prepared everything, the girls who directed Saul and the servant while drawing water were placed there according to God’s wisdom. The girls were excited to see the handsome young man Saul, they were concerned about their business of drawing water. But in the background God orchestrated everything, fulfilling his sovereign master plan for Saul to eventually meet Samuel. The meeting of Saul and Samuel, some might say it was a co-incidence that they could both be at the same place at the same time. But is the sovereignty of God, this is how God works through mundane, random and secondary events. In the midst of this events God establishes his works and leads according to the promises of his words. In this world we also might go through difficult circumstances, challenging situations and think God is not working. Last year it was quite difficult for many, we had COVID-19, many lost jobs, students had to adapt to new ways of attending lectures, we might have wondered about God. However, through this event we can learn and be encouraged that even through those circumstance, God was working. When we shared our year review, it was so graceful to see how God worked in each of our lives. Even though we might think the world is in control, the virus, governments, universities and corporates, above all God is in control and works according to his plan. In the previous passage God said to Samuel: *“Listen to them and give them a king.”* And God did not leave Samuel alone, but he worked and led Saul the king that the Israelites asked for to him.

Part 2: He will govern my people.

In part 1 we saw God who actively led Saul to Samuel. God had previously warned the people of Israel concerning their request of a King, what he will do to them, take from them and turn them into slaves. God made it clear that the Israelites will learn their lesson for rejecting God, for wanting to have a king like other nations, they will indeed learn their lesson for not trusting in the Lord and pursuing worldly ways.

But then why did God so actively grant the Israelites the king they requested? Why does it seem like God is actively working and delivering the man that will bring them misery? To understand the meaning and purpose of God’s actions in all this let us look at **verse 15-16** which says:

“Now the day before Saul came, the Lord had revealed this to Samuel: / “About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him ruler over my people Israel; he will deliver them from the hand of the Philistines. I have looked on my people, for their cry has reached me.”

This are the words of God to Samuel concerning the role of Saul in the land of Israel, this is the heart of God in raising Saul as leader for the people of Israel. God did not raise Saul to drive the people of Israel to the misery he spoke to them

about concerning what a king will do to them. But rather he raised Saul and orchestrated all events leading Saul to Samuel because of love, mercy and grace for the people of Israel. God said: “... **Anoint him ruler over my people, ...I have looked over my people**” in **verse 17b** he went on again saying: “... **he will govern my people.**” God did all this because of the covenant he made with the people of Israel. In **Exodus 6:7** he said: “*I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.*” God did not change, he remained the God of the Israel people, to him the Israelites remained his people.

But what does it mean that the Israelites were his people? What was the implications of this? First it means he sees them, he said: “*I have looked on my people*” God never lost sight of the people of Israel, he was always there every moment, in times of struggle God was there working for the good of the people of Israel. Today we saw how he worked and never lost sight of the people of Israel and led Saul their future king to Samuel. Furthermore, to be a people of God means, God heard their cry. Even though the people of Israel had wrong motives, God heard their cry concerning a leader to fight for them and indeed God granted them a leader they desired. Lastly, to be a people of God means, God fights for us, he delivers us from our enemies. Through Saul we will see how God delivers the people of Israel from their enemies. Yes, Saul will eventually cause misery for the people of Israel as God had warned them. But God used Saul still, he raised him and through him granted the people of Israel victories. God did all this because the Israelites are his people, they are his treasured possession. The people of Israel though they demanded a king and rejected God, they were not capable of raising a king for themselves to fight them. And because of God’s love for them he raised Saul, the king that they asked for, God wanted to reveal to the people Israel that he is indeed God, that all things are under his rule, God wanted to open the eyes of the Israelites.

When Saul finally met with Samuel, and God confirmed to Samuel saying: “*This is the man I spoke to you about; he will govern my people.*” Samuel highly honoured Saul and invited him to eat with him in the high place, he told him that the donkeys were found and told him about Israel’s desire to have him as their king. Samuel honoured Saul by having him seat at head of the table while dining with his other guests, he prepared for him a special piece of meat (a thigh) saying to him: “*Here is what has been kept for you. Eat, because it was set aside for you for this occasion from the time I said, ‘I have invited guests.’*”

Samuel spent time talking with Saul, he spoke with him at the roof, getting to know him, the following day when Saul and the servant were about to be on their way back Samuel said to Saul: “*Tell the servant to go on ahead of us, but you stay here for a while, so that I may give you a message from God.*” What message did Samuel have for Saul? Samuel wanted reveal to Saul that it is God who called him. Saul was not a spiritual man, when we met him, we were only told about his impressive physical appearance, his outward obedience, perseverance, his concern for his father. We are not told anything about his relationship with God. In fact, the fact that he did not know who Samuel is when his servant told him about him, tells us that he was not spiritual at all, he showed no interest in God’s servants. Samuel was a judge raised for the people of Israel, and he did not know about him.

God chose the people of Israel to be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, he wanted to raise for them a king that will lead them according to his ways and so when Saul was about to go on his way, Samuel began to reveal to him about the mysteries of God, he began the journey of transforming Saul into a man of God, a man that can be used by God. A man who will depend on God and acknowledge him.

Conclusion

When I was in final year at Wits back in 2008, Sh. Lesedi invited me to Sunday worship service his apartment at West Campus village, so I went with my friend Molefi. After the service he invited us for Bible Conference and I told him straight that I am busy, its final year and the course is chowing. I carried on with my life, at the end of the year I completed my studies. I then was looking for place to stay in Joburg, so I lived with Sh. Lesedi so that I can easily apply for jobs, go to interviews while I wait for graduation. My plan was really to get a place to stay, get a nice job in Joburg and get on with my long awaited good Jozi life. However, God was working in the background, I made plans for my future, but He established his steps. When I was living with Sh. Lesedi, God drew me near to him and I saw myself having Bible studies with Sh. Lesedi and Sh. Jacob, I saw myself attending worship services on Sundays, something I never thought I will be

doing my focus was a job and a good life. Since then, God continued to draw me near to him, God began to use me to teach the Bible to campus students and raised me as a Shepherd for campus students. Even though I was handsome and kind, I was totally not spiritual, I did not know the Bible at all. But God raised me for his people, as his people he appointed servants who delivered me from my life of sin through the word God. When I was on campus concerned only about my future, chowing course, and getting a good job, God saw me, he saw my deeper cry, my yearning for deliverance from the power of sin. And God in those mundane and random situations worked in the background and delivered me, he raised servants who led me to him.

I thank God for this passage, for revealing to me the unchanging heart of God towards his people. Even though we might reject God and go our way, God never stops looking upon us, he never stops directing the universe for our good, he never stops seeking to deliver us from our life of sin and leading us to the promised land. Even though we sinned against God, rejected him and refused to acknowledge him in our lives, he never changed. He heard our deeper cry from the torment of sin and death and he sacrificed his one and only Son Jesus, sending him to live among us, dirty sinners. God put all the burden of our sins upon Jesus and set him to death on the cross for our very sins so that we may live. God never changes.