

GOD CHANGED SAUL'S HEART

1 Samuel 10:1-27 (Key Verse 9)

"As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul's heart, and all these signs were fulfilled that day."

In today's passage, God used Samuel to anoint and appoint Saul as the first king of Israel. What a daunting task this is! Even though the people of Israel rejected God as their only true King, God remained faithful to them, and His hand was forever at work to prepare and give them king Saul. We all know that Saul was not the most spiritual of men, he amazed many people who even exclaimed, "what is this that has happened to the son of Kish"? He seemed not fit to be the king of God's chosen nation; Israel. It is easy to lose hope, and to begin writing a long script about how terrible he is. But, we cannot lose hope when we see how God changed this man. God took a mere person Saul, and changed his heart to be fit for taking up office as king of Israel. When his heart was changed by God, he became a completely different person. I pray that we can have this hope when we look at this passage today; for God to touch our sinful hearts and be transformed into different people fit for His purpose. May the Lord bless His word today.

The changing of Saul's was not necessarily an instant event. After having dismissed his servant to go ahead of him, Saul remained behind for a long, deep and detailed 1:1 meeting with Samuel. This was a very important meeting where Samuel revealed God to Saul. In this meeting, Samuel could tell Saul many things. But he only taught him about God.

Let us look at verse 1. ***Then Samuel took a flask of olive oil and poured it on Saul's head and kissed him, saying, "Has not the LORD anointed you ruler over his inheritance?"*** The anointing ceremony began in this manner; a flask of olive oil was poured on Saul's head, and most importantly, he was told that the Lord has anointed him as leader/ruler over the inheritance of God. This was a special event indeed. The anointing of olive oil was reserved for prophets, priests and kings, signifying how important their office was. The anointing of olive oil would be followed or coupled with, most importantly, the anointing by the Holy Spirit. In this manner, God would put His Spirit so that they lead and rule based on the mind of God, not their human will. This was the case with Saul. But something much remarkable was said to him. He was told that he is anointed by God as leader of the inheritance of God! These words were important to hear so that Saul understands the duties and responsibilities that come with being king. More so, he must understand the heart of God towards His people of Israel. God refers to the people of Israel as His inheritance. The people of Israel are that much precious to God. They were a special people to God who loved them so dearly. They were His treasured possession and would do anything to protect them. This is the heart of God towards His people.

Now, these people will be under the leadership of Saul. This means that Saul would be a co-worker with God. Have you ever wondered how precious you are to God? Have you wondered how God loves His sheep? We are dearly loved, and quite precious to God. For this reason, God would do all He can that He raises leaders who would work together with Him for the good of His people. I can imagine how Saul's heart would be touched when he heard these words about how God view His nation Israel. Knowing the heart of God is the beginning of having our hearts transformed. Instead of looking at people with our human and selfish hearts, when we look at them with the heart of God, we begin to value and appreciate all the people without favouritism nor bias. I pray that we might be moved by the heart of God so that we can love and accept all the people with the heart of God.

To be a king is something great. Many people would love to be king. Even today, many political parties aspire to become the ruling party and appoint a president from their cabinet. But given how important it is to become a king over the people of Israel, so loved by God, who have ruled and led by God in the past, and now having being told that you are taking over this office, indeed one would be shaken to the core, and grow cold feet. It was a heavy responsibility I must say. Saul became troubled, and his heart filled with fear. However, God encouraged him. This encouragement was done through signs that would be fulfilled. When Saul sees and understands what the signs meant, he would calm down and have faith in God. With this faith, Saul would, with courage and confidence, look forward to taking this reign as king of God's inheritance.

Let us look at these signs. The first sign is that of finding the missing donkeys. Look at verse 2 ***When you leave me today, you will meet two men near Rachel's tomb, at Zelzah on the border of Benjamin. They will say to you, 'The donkeys you set out to look for have been found. And now your father has stopped thinking about them and is worried about you. He is asking, "What shall I do about my son?"'*** The missing donkeys was something that has troubled Saul. As a responsible son, he wanted to try his best and find them, present them to his father Kish and bring much praises from his father. However, it has been quite difficult to find them. He had already set out deep in the land to find them. His father would start worrying about his safety. What if he would fall prey in the hands of evil people or be devoured by beasts? What if his father becomes so worried about his son who he loved so much to the extent that his heart fails him at the thought of losing his son Saul? This issue was quite serious, and troubling, more so because Saul could not find the donkeys. He needed help. However, God helped him to find these donkeys. He would meet two strangers near Rachel's tomb who would tell him about these great news. I am sure Saul's heart would be moved and begin to

wonder who God is. *Who is this God who knows what is in my heart and inner struggles? Who is this God who helps me even where my strength fails me?* This would be a sign to Saul that God knows him and cares for him so dearly.

The second sign was that of receiving two loaves of bread dedicated to God. Look at verse 3 and 4. **3 “Then you will go on from there until you reach the great tree of Tabor. Three men going up to worship God at Bethel will meet you there. One will be carrying three young goats, another three loaves of bread, and another a skin of wine. 4 They will greet you and offer you two loaves of bread, which you will accept from them.** Here, Saul would be met by strangers once again who would offer him some of the sacrifices of God. These strangers were worshippers of God. Imagine meeting a group of worshippers of God which you don't know, and out of nowhere give you food. It is quite strange isn't? It was a sign to Saul that as king, he also must worship God. The two loaves of bread were not his at all. They were dedicated to the Lord. To be given such gifts shows that he is special, that he has authority; that he is indeed a spiritual king appointed by God. He must be spiritual by worshipping God with all his heart. In as much as he was fed by the gifts dedicated to God when he was hungry and needing strength, so must he be sustained and live by worshipping God daily. Many kings rule with an iron fist because of their selfishness. They would not waste a breath to even enslave people just to fulfil their self-serving ambitions. But Saul was to be a different king. He was to be a spiritual king who first must serve God and worship Him.

The third sign was that of Saul also prophesying. Look at verse 5 & 6. **“After that you will go to Gibeah of God, where there is a Philistine outpost. As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, timbrels, pipes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying. 6 The Spirit of the LORD will come powerfully upon you, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person.** Prophets have the word of God revealed to them, and speak the word of God as it is to the people. Saul was told he would meet these prophets with musical instruments used for praising and worshipping God. The Spirit of the Lord would come powerfully on Saul to change him and also to prophesy. As a king appointed by God, Saul must lead the people of Israel and guide them with the words of God. He must know the mind of God, internalize the word of God in his heart and most importantly administer that word to the people of God, at all times. This was quite a drastic change. How can Saul, a mere spiritually unbothered man be a prophet? Not only was he shocked at this, but also the people. They were shocked to see this change in him. **11 When all those who had formerly known him saw him prophesying with the prophets, they asked each other, “What is this that has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?”** This would be a sign to Saul because he would see that God has changed him to be a prophet; an ambassador of God's words and he who knows the mind of God, and carefully reveal it to the people of God.

God promised Saul **7 Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you.** When we look at these signs, what do we think their purpose is? Their purpose was to reveal God personally to Saul so that he experiences God, and know that God is with him. These signs were part of the instruments God used to touch and change the heart of Saul. He would be very much encouraged to know that God is with him in this daunting task. He also must remain in God. He will do whatever his hand finds to do, as long as it is the will of God, and the fruits of the labour of his hands would be blessed. What a great assurance this is? Amen!

Samuel gave Saul this further instruction to wait for him for seven days in Gilgal. Look at verse 8. **8 “Go down ahead of me to Gilgal. I will surely come down to you to sacrifice burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, but you must wait seven days until I come to you and tell you what you are to do.”** What would Saul be doing as he waited for the message of God from Samuel in those seven days? What was the hope of God as he waited. It was for Saul's heart to be prepared and ready for his appointment as king. In this time, Saul would pray and seek fellowship with God. He would sit down and meditate about the words of God he has received from Samuel. In doing so, his heart and focus would be more to God.

All these; the 1:1 meeting with Saul, the anointing ceremony and the words spoken to Saul including these signs and their fulfilment, were God's doing to change the heart of Saul. Let us look at our key verse 9 and read it together **As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul's heart, and all these signs were fulfilled that day.** All these signs were fulfilled as foretold. The donkeys were found, Saul received the two loaves of bread and also when the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power, he prophesied as well. I am sure we would ask each ourselves why must God change the heart of Saul? I mean, there are many things that God has the power to change so that they make Saul's kingship a smooth ride. God can make sure that everyone in Israel is favourable disposed to Saul; he becomes the darling of Israel without any hindrances and opposition. God could change the political landscape and circumstances so that the Philistines and the Israelites live in peace among each other without wars and rumours of wars. God could make the land of Israel fertile to produce so much crop without any fears of famine; no recession, no health pandemics, no problems at all. However, God changed the heart of Saul? Why the heart? God is concerned about our wellbeing. If the heart is not changed, nothing else will change us into different powerful people. In the heart are all the sinful desires which corrupts the character

of a person. God in His great wisdom, saw it fit to change the heart of Saul so that he is ready and fit to be the king He has appointed him to be.

Saul was not naturally spiritual, and we are like him. None of us are naturally fit to obey and assume the duties of the calling of God. Saul can be drenched with a 100 litre tank of olive oil all day, but if his heart is not changed by the Holy Spirit, it would be for nothing. Saul could have as many political friends and good relations with other states, however if his heart is not changed to be godly, then all would be for nothing. We can hold and observe as many traditions and regulations however if the heart is not changed, then all will be for nothing. We all need the touch of God, and our hearts to be changed. For this reason, let us praise and thank God who changes the hearts of all His people. Amen!

It was not only the heart of Saul that needed to be changed, but also of all the people of Israel. For God to have a relationship with the people, their hearts must be in a good standing with Him. let us look further in the passage when Samuel was presenting Saul as king before all the people of Israel. Look at verse 17-19. **17 Samuel summoned the people of Israel to the LORD at Mizpah 18 and said to them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I brought Israel up out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the power of Egypt and all the kingdoms that oppressed you.' 19 But you have now rejected your God, who saves you out of all your disasters and calamities. And you have said, 'No, appoint a king over us.' So now present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and clans."** Why did Samuel summon the people of Israel before the Lord? This was a way for their hearts to be touched as well. Samuel reminded all the people of Israel about how God has been their King. God brought them out of Egypt and delivered them from the power of Egypt and all nation that oppressed them. They forgot how God has been so good to them. They rejected God and insisted that they wanted a king. This was a terrible sin. It was the hope of God that when they are all presented before Him, they could see how they have sinned and repent. God changes our hearts when we see His goodness and repent from our sin of disregarding His love and existence. This was God's way of changing their hearts so that even though they have Saul as king, they do not forget who their True Eternal King is; the King who will forever love and protect them even if Saul, and the many other coming human kings, might fall short. I pray that we all reflect and meditate on the goodness of God, and how He has always been with us, love and protected us, even in times where we were not deserving and aware. May God forgive us from our sin of disregarding Him, and melt our hearts with His goodness.

Samuel, in the assembly of the people of Israel, chose Saul by lot as king before the people. However, Saul was scared and hid himself among the supplies. Why would Saul hide himself? We have seen that when he spoke to his uncle, he also hid the message regarding his kingship? Can we say he was humble? No! Saul must repent! When God has touched our hearts, and changed it, there must be before us a great feeling of pride and courage. We need not shy away from the calling of God, but rather with open hearts welcome and embrace it. We need not be ashamed of God, but with confidence, renounce our old ways of thinking, and start seeing ourselves through the eyes of God. Over and above being anointed king in private with only Samuel before God, It was very important for Saul to be proclaimed king in public before the entire nation of Israel.

In conclusion, though there were some troublemakers who opposed Saul as king, we see that the hand of God was at work, and mightily moved and touched the heart of Saul who didn't regard such troublemakers and just kept quiet. Even though the people of Israel did not show remorse for asking for a king, and shouted, "*long live the king!*", God has already started to touch and open their hearts. **25 Samuel explained to the people the rights and duties of kingship. He wrote them down on a scroll and deposited it before the LORD. Then Samuel dismissed the people to go to their own homes.** We see God who was interested in the hearts of His people to be right before. This included Saul, the king of His people whom He anointed and appointed. Our hearts are very precious to God. From today's passage, we can learn how it is very important to focus on the well being of our hearts before anything else. Above all, we are encouraged because we have God who knows all of us by name. We have the Lord God who understands us so deep that He knows what to do to move and change our hearts. Let us therefore, come before Him with faith and confidence, to mend our broken and bruised hearts. Let us therefore pray to Him sincerely to heal our hearts from the corruption of sin, and make us fit for the purpose He has called us to. Let us ask for the Holy Spirit to quicken our hearts and give us the power to live lives worthy of the adoption as God's son and daughters. Amen!