

Did God get it wrong? (The loss of Saul's anointing...) 1 Samuel 10-13

Pastor Gladwyn Turner
11/07/2010

Introduction:

For those of you who follow the daily reading chart you will be aware that we have covered the call of Saul and his anointing as the first King of Israel by the prophet Samuel. I think that Saul is one of the great disappointments as a King because he had so much potential yet failed in the basics as far as his faith was concerned.

He was sovereignly selected by God to lead His people Israel who desperately wanted to be like the rest of the surrounding nations and have a King.

1 Sam.8:19,20 *Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."*

They desired to move from a theocracy, a God governed nation, to a monarchy. They wanted to be like the heathen nations around **v5b**. *Now make for us a king to judge us like all the nations.* The Lord said to Samuel....*they have not rejected you, they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them v7.* Samuel did his best to try and discourage them but the people insisted that they knew best. They wanted a King and nothing would deter them. God gave them Saul...

1 Sam.9:2 *And he (Kish) had a choice and handsome son whose name was Saul. There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.*

God acquiesced to the demands of the people giving them what they demanded of Him, a King named Saul.

We should not miss the fact that although the people were forcing God's hand on this issue of a King that Saul was still God's sovereign choice for the people. The people wanted a King and Saul was His choice.

1 Sam.9:15,16. *Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear the day before Saul came, saying, "Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him commander over My people Israel, that he may save My people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have looked upon My people, because their cry has come to Me."*

It is worthy of note that the word King is not used here. The word commander (Heb. 'nagid') is better trans' "prince" showing that God still intends to be the supreme ruler and King over His people.

1. What can we learn from God's call of Saul?

One of the things that we see is that God is aware of all of our circumstances. He forewarned Samuel that Saul was coming looking for his father's donkeys **1 Sam 9:3,16** and that he was the one who had been chosen to reign over God's people. This is consistent with the way God works in relation to mankind. In Jeremiah chapter one we see that God has selected Jeremiah from the womb,

Jer.1:5 *Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."*

The fact is that God sees every one of us before we were even conceived. No one is here by accident. You may have been told that you were an accident but not in God's economy. The other thing that we see from the call of Saul is that God knows our current circumstances. He engineered Saul's coming to Samuel. Firstly, the donkeys go astray,

then Saul's companion refers him to the prophet to take advice (9:8). You don't have to be a genius to see God organising events to bring his purpose to pass in order to meet the demands of the people and to fulfil His purpose for Saul's life. This shows the purposefulness of God in the affairs of mankind and that He has us as His creation in His heart. God is not removed from our current circumstances- he knows them intimately.

What we also see is the graciousness of God in the light of the absolute stubbornness of man and that He sometimes gives us what we want having warned us that what we want may not be that beneficial to us anyway. He certainly did this in Israel's case. They were warned yet they still wanted what they wanted. Some things in life never change.

2. When God calls He anoints:

The anointing of God is important to God's call upon a person's life. It is singularly the act of God through his servants to anoint those He calls. As He was in this world so shall we be....*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him Acts 10:38.*

It has always been God's way of declaring His call. The OT prophets carried anointing oil with them wherever they went. Apart from its use in healing it had other important uses and symbolism. It was always symbolic of the Holy Spirit.

In Saul's case the anointing was not public...

1 Sam.10:1 Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head, and kissed him and said: "Is it not because the LORD has anointed you commander over His inheritance?"

It is a principle of God that when He speaks He confirms. Quickly following Saul's anointing is a prophetic confirmation (V2) a sign confirming the confirmation (V3) and a promise of the Spirit coming upon him when he comes across a group of prophets coming down from a high place (Vv5,6). These are all to ensure that he understands that God is with him (V7).

All of these things are involved in the process of Saul's transformation. He is to be the king of a theocratic kingdom.

When we come to God there are numerous things that God does in our life that ensures us of the presence of God going with us. This encourages us in our call and our response to God. It is part of the anointing. As with Saul, God gives another heart (V9). Where the Spirit of God was moving that was where Saul was to be found in those early days, so much so that they said.... *Is Saul also among the prophets V11.*

3. From triumph to tragedy:

Saul was selected by God, anointed by God, and called to be King under God's nation Israel. However, it is Saul's ability in battle that finally causes Israel to recognise him as King over them and the one that God has chosen.

1 Sam.11:15 So all the people went to Gilgal and there they made Saul king before the Lord in Gilgal.

The people wanted a leader who would guide them in and out of battle. Saul displaying that prowess in battle secured the people's trust.

The place that Saul was made King was also the place that he lost his kingdom and the ability for his family to rule over Israel. It was at Gilgal that Samuel told Saul that the kingdom would be given to another

1 Sam13:14...The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you."

What was it that Saul did that was so wrong? As we read the story we see that Israel is confronted by overwhelmingly superior forces and as Saul waits for Samuel to come and to offer the sacrifices which were to precede the battle he is confronted with his army deserting him **1 Sam.13:6**. He finds his army reduced to 300- incidentally, the same number that Gideon had to fight the Midianites! Confronted with the fear of having no troops left Saul takes matters into his own hands and makes a sacrifice, a burnt offering to the Lord. Immediately Samuel turns up and challenges Saul.

There are two things evident here in the life of Saul. He was insensitive to spiritual issues and certainly somewhat boldfaced in that he challenges Samuel's spiritual authority and therefore the Lord's authority by being disobedient. The result...is the loss of the kingdom. Why so severe? The issue is that God is the real King of Israel. Obedience to him must be paramount. Any sign of independence is an immediate disqualification for service. Saul started well but ended up shipwrecked through disobedience. This is the tragedy of Saul's life.

Conclusion:

On this occasion God gave Israel what they wanted although it certainly didn't turn out to be the best for them! When we think that we know what is best for us and seek to replace God with the world's system and copy what the world does we run the mistake of losing our way as far in God. God always knows what is best for us and at times whilst it may be difficult for us to understand God's ways and what He is doing...*obedience is better than sacrifice... 1 Sam 15:22*.

God didn't get it wrong in His choice of Saul. Saul got it wrong by thinking he could overstep his calling, be independent of God, do the work of a prophet and ultimately disobey God! The result...he lost his anointing and call as King. What we finally end up being rests with us and our obedience.

Questions

1. How did God see the people's desire of having a King to rule over them?
2. What does the fact of God giving into the demands of the people show us about the nature of God?
3. Who was to be the supreme commander over Israel?
4. What unique things do we see about God's call of Saul?
5. When God calls a person how does He ensure that a person knows what he is called to?
6. How did Saul fail in his call? What was the underlying reason for the failure? Did this ever change in Saul's life? Read 1 Sam.28:5