

1 Samuel 9:25-10:27 - Serving Wicked Kings

One of the supreme joys of mine - and I say this as sarcastically as possible - is preaching or teaching on how we as Christians should view government and politicians in the middle of an election cycle. Added to that is that we've endured for weeks the most controversial judicial appointment in the history of our nation. So approaching this subject is like having mandatory eye surgery and deciding to not have any pain medication.

At the same time this is probably a helpful chapter to have in mind as we go into this time of year. Saul is a conflicted ruler. Even though he is the God-ordained king of Israel - God himself placed Saul in this role. Yet everything about him that we've seen so far, and everything that we will learn about him makes it clear he is sub-par as a king. Israel had to hold these 2 truths in the balance just like we have to hold these truths in the balance. On the one hand God has ordained the rulers we have. On the other, they are far from perfect.

This is where we are in 1 Samuel. The people of God have cried out for a king like all the other nations. They have rejected God as King over them. And yet God hasn't given up on the people. But he does give them exactly what they want. God sovereignly gives them the king they would have chosen for themselves. And we see within this chapter that Saul's reign as king is met with conflict almost immediately.

And what I want us to walk away with this morning is that all kings, all governing authorities, all governmental systems are systemically flawed and broken. They are broken because they are ran by sinful people. And it doesn't matter what the governmental system is, this is true across every culture and across every generation. Some systems are better than others. Some leaders are better than others. But the reality of sin still permeates all government. That's why politics causes us angst and turmoil - because sinful people lead sinful people.

And what that reality should do is continually remind us that there is a governmental system that will one day be established based on righteousness. And there is a King - the Lord Jesus - who will reign in righteousness forever and ever. There are many aspects about eternal life that we look forward to. But one of them - one we probably don't think about a lot - is that eternal life is life lived under a perfect governmental system and a perfect, sinless King.

It's an eternity without scandals. It's an eternity without compromise. An eternity without disappointment or need for revolution. An eternity without voting and voter pamphlets. There won't be any political signs littering the streets of gold. And there won't be any round-about.

It's also an eternity where **we** don't fight back against the laws of the king. Part of the problem we face isn't even that rulers are sinful, though they are. Part of the problem we face is that **we** are sinful and rebel against even authorities we like and agree with. We're sinful, they're sinful and so we await the eternal, visible reign of Jesus.

And this difficulty with government has been the story of the people of God since the very beginning of the Bible. Do you realize that the people of God have almost always lived under the rule of unbelieving, governmental authorities? And even those who were believers were often sinful in major ways.

Israel was in Egypt. They enjoyed Joseph's benevolent rule for a short while, but then they experienced 400 years of crushing slavery.

Israel was guided by Moses and Joshua but then was ruled by very compromised and wicked judges for 400 years.

Then came David and Solomon. Who, while good for the most part, were still sinful in their own right. And, actually, as a result of their sinfulness, Israel endured some 400 years of bad kings and bad leadership. There were a few bright spots, but not many.

Once Israel in the north and Judah in the south collapsed, the people of God were ruled by pagan Babylon, ruled by pagan Media-Persia, ruled by idolatrous Greece, ruled by idolatrous Rome. Our forefathers in the faith have rarely enjoyed a government of peace and prosperity and righteousness. And rarely have they been able to do anything about it.

Even after the Lord Jesus rose and ascended into heaven, there was persecution from Rome. Rome called Christians atheists because we only believe one God - imagine that. They killed us because we wouldn't worship Caesar even in the most half-hearted, menial ways like taking a pinch of flour and tossing into a fire. We serve only one God, we will worship only one God. And we will die for that one God before we bow to any other so-called god, because our God died for us.

Christians in the fourth century thought they caught a break with Constantine, who had a vision of the cross as the means by which he would conquer. That turned out to be an absolute train-wreck and for the most part any time the church is tethered to a government in any sort of way it ends in disaster.

Individual Christians can be in government - and they are a treasure when they are - but when the Church and the government come together in any sort of official capacity it's always the state who wins. Always.

America is not OT Israel, we are not a chosen nation to whom God has given covenant blessings. This is a great nation, but as Christians we remember with the apostle Peter that Christians are a nation inside of a nation. Peter says we are a "chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession" (1 Pe 2:9).

There's a lot going on in this chapter. There are a few rabbit trails I think are helpful to go down to understand the passage more. But at the end of the day this is a reminder that God sovereignly places rulers over us - even bad ones - and that we are still called to serve faithfully when he does.

1) God Sovereignly appoints every authority over us.

One of the things we see so clearly here is that Saul was God's man. There is no question about that. As much as he was a man like all the other nations and his greatest attributes were all physical and material, it was God who appointed him to this position. We actually see that in 3 ways throughout this section.

First, we see that in the Lord telling Samuel to go anoint Saul. God supernaturally revealed that this very individual was the one he had chosen. In the OT the ritual of anointing was symbolic of someone who had been chosen by God for a specific task. Usually it was a prophet who would do the anointing and they would anoint other prophets or kings. They would take a small amount of olive oil and pour it on the head of the person who was chosen. Anointing happened with kings and prophets as well as priests.

This ritual of anointing might seem a little unusual to us who aren't Jewish or used to how things worked in the OT. But actually anointing is very precious to us as followers of Jesus.

As Christians we worship the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is not Jesus' last name, it's his title. He is the Christ or the Messiah. Christ is the Greek word that means anointed, just as Messiah is the OT Hebrew word for anointed. So when we say we worship the Lord Jesus Christ, we are saying we worship the Lord Jesus, **the** Anointed One of God. He was chosen by God to lead us as prophet, priest and king.

And not only do we worship the Anointed One, but every believer is also anointed by the Holy Spirit. **1 John 2:20, 27** says that we have been anointed by the Holy Spirit:

"But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge...But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him."

Anointing is the sign that God has chosen us. This isn't some weird charismatic anointing where we speak in tongues and roll around. It's an anointing that every single person in Christ has. It's an anointing of the Spirit securing us in the truth and giving us the ability to discern error. In the NT it's an anointing of the Spirit, in the OT it was an anointing of oil.

The second way we know Saul is God's man is that God gives 3 signs that confirm his word. In the OT many times God would give signs to confirm the truthfulness of what he said. Samuel knew that God had chosen

Saul, but how would Saul know? Through these signs. He would meet some guys who would say the donkeys he was looking for were found. Then he would find 3 more guys who give Saul a loaf of bread. Then he would run into a group of prophets that he would eventually prophesy with.

Now, permit me to take a few minutes to talk about the Spirit here and Saul prophesying because I think this is pretty significant.

The work of the Holy Spirit is the subject of a lot of confusion among Christians. The Holy Spirit - who is God Almighty, one with the Father and Son - is probably the least understood of the members of the Trinity. But we do see a few things here about the Spirit that are worth taking note. First, it's God who supernaturally sends his Spirit on people. Saul didn't ask for the Spirit, he wasn't deserving of the Spirit. When the Spirit is given to someone, it is always God who supernaturally does that work. We see that in **John 6:63**: it is the Spirit who gives life - eternal life - the flesh is no help at all. When God saves someone it is entirely the work of the Spirit coming upon them to raise them to new life.

Second, we'll find out later that God takes the Holy Spirit away from Saul and gives him an evil spirit - a demon - to torment him. How is that possible? I thought if you had the Spirit inside of you you always had the Spirit? David, in **Psalms 51:11**, begs God not to take his Holy Spirit away from him as a result of his sin with Uriah and Bathsheba. How could God take the Spirit away?

This is the difference between the OC and the NC. In the OC, not every believer was filled with the Spirit. Usually it was just prophets and kings and priests who had the Spirit. And even then the Holy Spirit could come and go. Which is why the promises of God about the Spirit in the NC are so amazing. In the NC with Jesus, every single follower of Jesus receives the Spirit. Every single person is baptized into the Spirit of God and the Spirit is with us permanently. Permanent indwelling, permanent sealing. That was unheard of in the OT. No one had that promise. But in the NC we have that promise. Saul was blessed to have the Spirit come upon him.

The other thing worth noting is that the Spirit compelled him to prophesy. What does that mean? Usually when we think of prophesy we think of telling the future. Prophesy can include that, but it's not limited to that. Prophesy - especially throughout the OT - also includes warning people of judgment because sin.

But I don't think the Spirit of God came upon Saul to make him start talking about the future or even warning people of judgment. I think the Spirit of God came upon Saul and he started singing praises to God. **Look at 5-6**

Why does Samuel tell Saul the prophets have all these musical instruments? What does that have to do with prophesying? Here's what I think it has to do: I think prophesy is something of a big umbrella. It can mean to tell the future or preach judgement or have something revealed. But it can also mean to sing the praises of God in a Spirit-empowered way. I'll show you in a minute that singing and prophesying are sometimes directly linked.

But for now look at **19:18-24**. This is later on in Saul's reign where he is trying to kill David. And it's almost a mirror of what's happening here except that God causes Saul to prophesy - to sing God's praises - in a humiliating way. **Read 18-24**

So because this is almost identical to what we saw earlier, I think this is God's humorous judgment on Saul. Saul wants to kill David, so God sends his Spirit upon Saul and his minions to cause them to praise God instead. And rather than killing David, God causes Saul to strip down to his birthday suit singing his praises in front of all Israel. God humiliates the king.

Look at 1 Chron. 25:1-8. Here we have a direct connection between prophesying and music. Prophesying is not only the use of musical instruments but also singing. **Read 1-8**

So there is an aspect of prophesying that includes music. It's not just music, but it includes it. It's music that exalts God.

You remember in the book of Acts when people started speaking in tongues on the day of Pentecost? When they were speaking these other languages, what were they saying? What were they talking about in these foreign languages? **Acts 2:11** says they were speaking about the mighty works of God - they were praising God. And you remember the local Jewish folks are confused, they don't understand what's happening. And Peter explains the speaking in tongues with a verse from the book of Joel that talks about how in the NC people will be filled with the Spirit and prophesy. So there's this connection between prophesy and speaking in tongues and praising God.

It happens again in **Acts 10:46** with Cornelius' household. They're filled with the Spirit and they speak in tongues, extolling God. Praising him.

I think this is what Saul is doing back in **1 Samuel 10**. God's Spirit has come upon him and he's not going on and on about future events or God's judgment. He's singing praises to God along with the rest of the prophets. This is a foreshadowing of the work of the Spirit in true believers in the NC whose worship is all empowered by the same Spirit.

So we know Saul is God's king because Samuel was told to go anoint Saul. We know Saul is God's king because these 3 signs come to pass. We see a third sign in the casting of lots for Saul. **Read 20-22**

Each of these signs is designed to prove to different people that Saul is king. Samuel is told by God. Saul knows through the 3 signs. And all of Israel knows through the casting of lots.

Some people think lots were basically like dice and that it was some form of quasi-gambling that God sanctioned. Lots were not gambling. Gambling is trusting in chance when we know we should be doing responsible things with our money. Lots has nothing to do with money, and on the contrary is a way for people to defer an important decision to God. Sometimes it's used for God to supernaturally select someone.

Jonah was chosen by lot on the ship going to Tarshish because God called his sin out in front of the other sailors. But sometimes lots were used when the people of God had done everything they could to determine God's will but ultimately left it up to him. In Acts 1 the apostles decided they needed another apostle to take Judas' place. So they whittled all the followers of Jesus down to 2 very spiritual, godly men, who had been following Jesus with the other apostles and had seen the Lord Jesus raised. They had 2 very qualified guys - both of whom they believed could fill the position. But only one could take the place. So they cast lots and trusted **Prov. 16:33**: The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.

And here, out of all the tribes of Israel Benjamin is chosen. Out of all the clans of Benjamin, the Matrites are chosen. And of all the men among the Matrites, Saul was chosen. Imagine that. What luck. No, what sovereignty.

What's the reception here to God's king? It's not good.

Even Saul himself is portrayed as conflicted leader, isn't he? **Read 14-16**

That's unusual. You'd think he might mention, oh I don't know, that he's king of Israel. That was a big deal. But he doesn't mention that. Saul is a coward. We see that again when he's hiding among the baggage when the lot shows Israel that he is king. It's actually God who tells the people where he is, apparently he was hiding so well no one else knew where to find him.

And once he is presented to Israel, the reception is not warm to put it mildly. **Read 25-27**

There's no unanimous reception to Saul. These guys doubted even before he had even shown what kind of leader he was.

But here's what we need to remember: Saul was God's king. He was sovereignly chosen to lead Israel during this time. And any attack on Saul was an attack on God because God had put him there.

It's not just Saul that God puts in power, it's every ruler. Every authority.

Dan. 2:20-21: Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;

Rom. 13:1: Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

Every governing official, from our city council members, to the county clerk, to our senators, to our president, to the president of China - have all been instituted by God. Paul goes on to say that if you resist the authorities you resist who? God.

So what's the solution?

2) To live peacefully knowing we are part of a bigger kingdom.

Although Saul is the king most of the country wanted, 1 Samuel makes it clear he is not going to be a great leader. And even at his coronation people are already scoffing.

These men at the end are called worthless men. **Read 27**

On the one hand, if you've read **1 Samuel** before you might be thinking: well, they're kind of right. He kills some of them, but in the end they kill him. But the detractors aren't painted in a good light either. They are called worthless men. Literally, sons of worthlessness. That was what Eli's sons were called. Worthless.

Why are they worthless? Because they are deriding God's man. They are deriding and slandering the person God has placed in authority. **Turn to 1 Tim. 2** for a minute.

We need to be very careful about how we talk about those who God has put above us. And I include myself in that group. I fail here too. We can disagree with people, we can express that to others. But we need to be very careful about the words that come from us.

Here, I think Paul gives us a good corrective to the kinds of words that should be coming out of our mouths. **Read 1-4**

You know God really wants us to talk about our kings and rulers and elected officials? He wants us to talk about them in prayer. There are some slight distinctions we could make between supplication, prayers, petitions and so on, but the point is that we need to be lifting these people up in prayer.

And if you think that's a radical notion in our time, it was a radical notion in Paul's time. The ruler he wants lifted up in prayer is likely the king who ordered his execution. Who prays for government officials? Christians do. We should never be a threat to government. We should be those who are most in fervent prayer for our leaders. Even the ones who seem to be the biggest threat to us. What they need is salvation. They need Jesus.

So as we're looking to elections this fall and how it might change our state and our country. Make sure when someone asks you what you think about So and So, you can actually say: "I like their positions - or I don't like their positions - but I'm praying for them. I'd like to live a peaceful and quiet life here in godliness. But my true hope is in a Kingdom to come."

Pray