

(1 Samuel) God Guides the Unknowing

by David Guzik

David Guzik's sermon explores how God guides the unknowing through seemingly trivial circumstances, exemplified by Saul's journey to kingship.

Duration: 39:01

Scripture: 1 Samuel 9:7-12, 1 Samuel 9:17, 1 Samuel 9:26, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:28

Topics: "God's Guidance", "Faith Trust"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes how God can use ordinary and sometimes frustrating circumstances to guide us to where He wants us to be. He uses the example of Saul being led to the throne of Israel by lost donkeys. The preacher encourages the audience to trust in God's goodness and His ability to work all things together for good. He also highlights the importance of not being blind to the way God guides us through situations and circumstances in our lives. The sermon concludes with a story about Queen Victoria realizing her future as queen and the need for Saul to be a fit king for Israel.

Transcript

As we come to 1 Samuel chapter 9, we remember last week when we were together in chapter 8 that the people of Israel came before the Lord and demanded a king. They were tired of not being like all the other nations. They took a stand back and they said, well, the Edomites have a king and the Amorites have a king and the Philistines have a king.

We don't have a king. So they cried out to God and God said, listen, Samuel, don't take it personally, Samuel the prophet. They're not rejecting you, Samuel, they're rejecting me and they want a king after their own heart.

Now, in 1 Samuel chapter 9, it's about how God brought this king to Israel. I tell you what's so thrilling about getting in the word of God is I don't know when the last time is that you opened up a 3000 year old book and read it. And you might think, 3000 year old book, I mean, what are we studying? Some ancient parchment from Egypt or Babylonia or something? Friends, this is the eternal word of God and you're going to see how relevant it is to your life right here and now.

Let's just take a look. 1 Samuel chapter 9 beginning at verse 1 there. Was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bekaroth, the son of Aphia, a Benjaminite, a mighty man of power.

And he had a son whose name was Saul, a choice and handsome young man. 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.

So in verse 1 we're introduced to a man named Kish and he's a mighty man of power. He's a man of status and influence among the people of Israel. This man Kish, the man Kish had a son and his name was Saul.

Well, we know that this man Saul right away that he came from a family that was wealthy and had prestige. But that's not the only thing notable about this young man Saul. What else is said about him in verse 2? He's a choice and handsome young man.

Notable not only for his family background, but he was a good looking guy. As a matter of fact, it says there in verse 2 that there was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. Now this would give us a clue right here and now about what kind of man God is providing for a king for Israel.

God is getting what we like to call a king from central casting. A king that looks the part. I mean, this is a guy that's going to look great on the cover of Royalty magazine.

It's going to look great on the cover of People. He's going to be the kind of guy that everybody says, yeah, he looks like a king. Look at him.

Look at that profile. The square jaw. The wonderful, handsome, good looks.

He's tall. He's strong. Yes, that's the man who should be our king.

Friends, if being king over Israel was all about image, if being king over Israel was all about appearances, who looked the part, then Saul was the man. Let's just remember in the previous chapter, the people of Israel just rejected the Lord God as being the king over Israel. Because they wanted a king just like all the surrounding nations had.

Friends, I want you to understand what they really wanted was the image of a king. Not so much the substance. Friends, God gave them the substance of a king.

He himself was the substance of a king. Did they need a mighty general to lead them out to battle? What, God couldn't do that job? Did they need somebody to give wisdom and political and economic affairs? What, the Lord God couldn't do that job? But what the Lord wouldn't do was appear on the cover of royalty magazine. What the Lord wouldn't do was appear on the gossip column so everybody could say, well, look, the daughter of the king is dating so and so.

Oh, isn't it wonderful we have a king? And look, and here's a crown and here's a throne. And oh, I love that robe and all this stuff. That's what the Lord wouldn't provide.

But that's what the people of Israel wanted. They wanted the image, not the substance. And so you know what God said? He said, fine, I'll give you a king who's all about image.

And has almost nothing of substance. By the way, the name Saul, do you know what it means? It means asked of God. And so Israel was asking God for a king.

And God says, here, here's the kind of king you're asking for. Because did you notice something in these first two verses? You know what's not mentioned in the first two verses? God. There's no mention of God.

Oh, and it's about the wealth of Saul's family. It's all about how good looking Saul was. It's all about how tall he was.

Is there any mention of God? Anything said about Saul's relationship with the Lord? No, nothing is said. Do you know why nothing is said? Because there was nothing to say. Saul reflected the spiritual state of the whole nation of Israel.

Oh, there might have been a spiritual image present. But the heart was far from where God wanted it to be. By the way, one more note in verse two before we go on to verse three.

Where it says from his shoulders upward, he was taller than any of the people. Don't take that to mean that Saul had an extremely long neck and head. It's just a figure of speech.

That means he was head and shoulders taller than anybody else. Verse three. Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost.

And Kish said to his son Saul, please take one of the servants with you and arise and go out and look for the donkeys. So he passed through the mountains of Ephraim and through the land of Shalisha. But he did not find them.

Then he passed through the land of Shalim, and they were not there. Then he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they did not find them. When they had come to the land of Zoth, Saul said to his servant who was with them, Come, let us return, lest my father cease caring about the donkeys and become worried about us.

Friends, I just want you to take a step back here and think for a minute. In a few verses, we're going to be introduced to the man who's going to be the first king over Israel. This is important business.

And how does God lead the first king of Israel to the throne? With some lost donkeys. A king is going to be led to the throne by lost donkeys. Friends, we have no idea how God can use the seemingly normal and sometimes annoying circumstances of life to lead us in exactly the position He wants us to be.

You know, you think about your week, and you think about all the things that went wrong. You know, why did I get a flat tire? Why did this happen? Why did that happen? Why did I have to wait in line? I hate waiting in lines and such. You know, I can wait for big things, but, you know, when I go to the store, when I go to Home Base and have to stand in line for about 20 minutes, oh, it gets me in the flesh.

But, you know, you think about all these things, all these annoyances, all these things happening, the lost donkeys here, this problem here, all those things. Friends, it's easy for us to get annoyed about them, but did you know that God is in control of even those circumstances? And His timing, His place, His movement there, His movement there, we can't perceive it, but the Lord may be arranging things just right so that we're right in the right place for a particular divine appointment that He has for us. You know, the Lord has a great big day timer in Heaven filled out with a schedule for you.

And sometimes He lets you look at it, and sometimes, well, yeah, you know, plan this and I plan that. But, you know, God has things entered into His schedule for you that you have no idea of, and He moves you

into position for those things, and we need to be open for that and not resent it. God will guide us through the circumstances of our lives.

But, of course, there's two mistakes people make regarding God's guidance through circumstances. One mistake is to think that every event of our life is heavy with meaning from God. Oh, that's a mistake some people make, isn't it? I woke up this morning, and there was no toothpaste in the tube.

Lord, what are you trying to say to me through that? Are you trying to say that there's going to be a time of emptiness in my life, and that there will be no provision, and that I need to prepare for it? Yes, Lord, is that your word to me through this empty toothpaste tube? And God's calling down from Heaven, no, it means you need to buy more toothpaste. Friends, we can exaggerate this idea that there is some great meaning through every circumstance. Now, we believe that nothing happens by accident, right? But that doesn't mean that every event of our life is necessarily heavy with meaning from God.

That's one mistake people make, is to think that. There's a second mistake, and maybe this second mistake is even more common, right? It's to walk through life blind to the way that God would guide us through circumstances. God doesn't want you to be blind.

God wants to use situations and circumstances in your life to speak to your heart and to give you guidance. And God will use situations to guide your life, just like He's using some lost donkeys to lead Saul to the throne of Israel. So we need to trust in God's goodness and His ability to make all things work together for good.

You know, this must have been frustrating for Saul. Did you notice that I read it in verses 4 and 5? It was, they did not find him. They were not there.

They did not find him. Friends, this was frustrating to Saul. Yes, God was working out His plan through lost donkeys in a way that Saul couldn't even imagine.

You know, I probably think too much about these kind of things, but as I'm reading this, I'm thinking about the donkeys. These were the smartest donkeys ever to walk the face of the earth. I mean, Saul wasn't dumb, although he doesn't exactly strike us as we read through the Scriptures.

He's not exactly the sharpest crayon in the box, if you know what I mean. But I mean, he wasn't dumb, and Saul knew how to find lost donkeys. You can imagine these donkeys got lost before, and Saul knew where to look, and Saul knew where these... And so he goes here, and he's following a logical plan.

I'm going to find these donkeys. I know how to do this. I've done it before.

These donkeys are smart. They're eluding him at every turn. He thought he would know where to find them, but he can't find them.

But you know why the donkeys were being one step ahead of Saul, don't you? It's because God was guiding those donkeys, because God had a purpose. Friends, those donkeys could have gone anywhere, but they went exactly where God wanted them to go. I find it amazing that those donkeys submitted themselves to the Lord God, and they did exactly what God wanted them to do.

A lot of times we talk about dumb animals. Well, let me tell you something. No animal has ever rebelled against God the way I have.

No animal has ever resisted His will the way I have in my life. I wish I could be as smart as a donkey and just do what God wants me to do sometimes. And that's exactly what these donkeys are doing.

And so Saul has no idea that he's being guided by God, but he's being guided all the way. God doesn't have to call down from heaven. Now I'm guiding you, my child.

Listen, whatever God's doing, moving in the circumstances of our life, we need to understand that God can move in some very beautiful, naturally supernatural ways. And so Saul's out on the search, and there he is, and he comes, look at verse 6, and he said to him, this is the reply of Saul's servant to him, and he said to him, look now, there is in the city a man of God, and he's an honorable man. All that he says surely comes to pass, so let us go there.

Perhaps he can show us the way that we should go. Now I think it's interesting to find the suggestion of Saul's servant. There they are, they're looking for the lost donkeys.

They can't find them anywhere. What's happening? What's going on? And then Saul's servant has a suggestion. Hey, look, I hear there's a prophet, a man of God in this town.

Maybe we can look him up and find him, and he can tell us where the lost donkeys are. Now I think this says something about the spiritual character of Saul and his servants. For some reason, it just doesn't strike me that these are the men who would seek out the prophet of God for any spiritual reason.

You know, show us how we can get right with God. Show me how I can deal with this problem in my life. Show me how I can draw closer to the Lord, prophet.

But instead, they'll go, hey, we lost the donkeys. Can you tell us where they are? These aren't men of great spiritual sensitivity. But it also shows me something else about the prophet.

Of course, I'll give you a little head start here. They're talking about the prophet Samuel. And do you see how they speak of Samuel in verse 6? Did you notice that? Their words are a great credit to Samuel.

His reputation was well known. They say of Samuel in verse 6 that he's a man of God, that he's an honorable man, and that all he says surely comes to pass. Friends, could people say that about you? Let me put it to you this way.

When you're at work, when you're in a situation around your social group, or at your work, or wherever you are, wherever you're with other people, and when people have a sense that they need a man or a woman of God, would anybody think of calling on you? Would they say, you know what, there's this problem in my life. My mom is really ill and I need to pray with somebody and I don't know. Can somebody do something? Would they say, oh yeah, I should talk to them.

They're a man of God. They're a woman of God. I should speak with them.

Or they'd be shocked to find out that you consider yourself a Christian. You see the reputation that Samuel had? This is a wonderful thing. So they go on here, verse 7. Then Saul said to his servant, But look, if we go, what shall we bring the man? For the bread in our vessels is all gone, and there's no present we have to bring the man of God.

What do we have? And the servant answered Saul again and said, Look, I have here at hand one-fourth of a shekel of silver. I will give that to the man of God to tell us our way. Formerly in Israel, when a man went

to inquire of God, he spoke thus, Come, let us go to the seer.

For he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer. Then Saul said to his servant, Well said. Come, let us go.

So they went to the city where the man of God was. Now, please notice this. Don't think for a minute that Samuel had some kind of fee for giving spiritual advice.

You know, it's a fourth of a shekel of silver to find a lost donkey, to find a lost ox. It's a half a shekel. And if you need to find something else, and if you need to find the keys to your car, that's a whole shekel.

Don't think for a minute that Samuel had some kind of fee scale like that. Samuel wasn't of that kind of heart. It's just these men feel that they couldn't go to a man as esteemed and as respected as Samuel without some kind of offering, without some kind of gift.

And it's just a matter in their hearts, not in Samuel's heart. And so they say, Well, let's go. Let's go bring this to him.

And so they, well, they hope he's in the city. In verse 11, as they went up the hill to the city, they met some young women going out to draw water. And they said to them, Is the seer here? And they answered them.

By the way, I love reading some of the traditions of the Jewish rabbis. They point out here, and it's, again, just the traditions of the Jewish rabbis. They say that the young women wanted to talk with Saul because he was so handsome.

They said, Well, we'll talk with him about this. And verse 12, they answered them and said, Yes, there he is just ahead of you. Hurry now, for today he came to this city, because there's a sacrifice of people today on the high place.

As soon as you come into the city, you will surely find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. For the people will not eat until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice. Afterward, those who are invited will eat.

Now, therefore, go up. For about this time, you will find him. So they went up to the city.

And as they were coming into the city, there was Samuel coming out toward them on his way up to the high place. Well, isn't this an amazing coincidence? The donkeys are lost. Let's go to this place.

They're chasing the donkeys all around the countryside. But they find themselves in one city at one time, at one place. Let's go see the prophet.

They meet with these girls. Who knows how long they detain them? And then they go on. And we'll go up and we'll meet Samuel.

And it just so happens, just today, Samuel came into the city. And it just so happens that just as they're going in, Samuel's going. What an amazing coincidence.

Praise the luck, right? Friends, you know, luck had nothing to do with it. This is God. This is God moving behind the scenes.

Moving in the circumstances. Now, we're going to find something out in the following verses that I think really bears our attention. God is moving through the circumstances.

Saul doesn't have a clue. Samuel knows exactly what's going on. I'm here to tell you right now, my friends, God is moving in the circumstances of your life.

You may not have a clue about it, but God is still moving. Or you may know. Yes, I see what the Lord is doing.

I have an understanding. I don't know the whole thing from beginning to end, but I have some kind of understanding of what the Lord may be doing in my life right now. You may be kind of in the position of Samuel with some knowledge of what the Lord is doing.

You may be in the position of Saul and not have a clue. But God is still moving. Do you know that God loves you? Has a glorious plan for what he wants to do in your life.

And God's heart is that you would just surrender your heart to him and submit to that plan and just flow with what the Lord wants to do. I think every one of us in this room, we'd take a step back and say we have spent enough time in our life resisting what God wants us to do. And where has it gotten us? Nowhere.

It's time just to say, Lord, how do you want to move in my life? Whether I can see it or whether I can't see it, I just want to flow right in the center of your will. Well, as I said, Saul didn't have a clue, but Samuel did. Notice here verse 15.

Now the Lord had told Samuel in his ear the day before Saul came, Let me just point something out. Where it says the Lord told Samuel in his ear, that doesn't necessarily mean that the Lord spoke to Samuel in an audible voice. That phrase is a Hebrew figure of speech.

Literally the word means to draw back a headdress. You know, in that day they would wear head coverings and such. Even the men would wear that kind of scarf that you see, you know, Arab type people wearing in the old movies today and such.

They would wear that kind of thing. And literally what the word means is to pull back that head covering so that somebody can whisper in your ear. The idea is that the Lord said this to Samuel secretly.

He didn't say it to anybody else. He didn't say it to Saul, but he spoke this secretly to Samuel. If you notice here verse 16, this is what the Lord said, 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.

God was giving the prophet Samuel very specific guidance about future events. Here's the man, Samuel. I'm not going to tell you his name, but I'll tell you what tribe he's from.

I'll tell you what time you're going to meet him. And I'll tell you what the destiny that I have for this man is. I think there's something wonderful about this, my friends.

It's not just that there's a God in heaven that knows the future. Do you really understand that? The Lord knows what's going to happen to you tomorrow, the next day. God knows.

And it's all gone through his hands first. Nothing is going to come to your life except that the Lord has managed it, that the Lord has taken care of it first. And I know what some of you are thinking.

You're thinking, well then, I think God's been falling down on the job because if you know what happened to me this last week, you could say, Lord, how could you allow that to come to me? Friends, it's because you don't have a big enough vision for what the Lord is doing. I can imagine Saul saying the same thing. Yeah, if God really loved me, how come he let these donkeys get lost? How come he won't allow me to find these donkeys? Doesn't he know how I hate to chase donkeys around the countryside? Lord, this is terrible.

If you really love me, you wouldn't have done this. God, I don't understand this. You see, my friends, God had a beautiful plan for what he was working on.

And I'm not saying that God's plan for you is easy. I'm not saying that God's plan for you is comfortable, but it's good. God has a future and a hope for you, and he's shaping it and he's molding it.

And God knows the future, but that's not the only thing that the Lord is telling us here in verse 16, that God knew what was happening tomorrow. I think that the reaction of Samuel is very notable. Samuel did not feel that he had to shape what was going to happen tomorrow.

Samuel didn't say, oh, a guy from Benjamin. I'm going to go out and look for guys from the tribe of Benjamin tomorrow. Samuel didn't say, oh, well, then I'm going to make sure I'm in this time and at this place tomorrow.

I'm going to make sure I'm in the marketplace this time tomorrow, so then the Lord can lead that person to me. Yeah, I know what to do. And Samuel said, great, Lord, if you're going to do it, then you're going to do it.

And he didn't have to make it happen. I believe that there's probably people here right now that you feel that God has given you some promise, some hope for the future. There's something that you cherish in your heart that God will do or that God has promised to you about the future, and you struggle about it because it seems so far away and it caused a lot of pain in your heart because you think, Lord, I don't know, you promised this to me, but I don't see how it could ever happen.

And what's going on? I just ask you to resist the temptation that Samuel resisted so well to try to make it happen in your own flesh. Let the Lord do it. And that's exactly what the Lord did.

Take a look at verse 17. And when Samuel saw Saul, the Lord said to him, there he is, the man of whom I spoke to you. This one shall reign over my people.

How that must have thrilled Samuel when he heard about this. When I get to heaven and get a chance to talk to Samuel, I'm going to ask him, how did you feel right at that moment? Were you like, that's the man. Look at what a good looking guy.

He's tall. He's strong. That guy's going to look great on the cover of royalty magazine.

Is that what Samuel was thinking? Or was Samuel thinking, oh, great, a king from central casting. This is exactly what the nation needs. Is that what he's thinking? I don't know.

But Samuel took a look at Saul and the Lord spoke to him in his heart. He said, this is the guy that this is the one who is going to be that king. And God speaking to Samuel one day was confirmed the next day.

And it goes on into verse 18, where it says, then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate and said, please tell me where's the seer's house. I love this. Again, Saul doesn't exactly come off into the scriptures to us as a brilliant man.

And he's kind of walking up, kind of dumb and happy. Hey, buddy, tell me where the prophet is. I think Samuel's saying, oh, great.

You know, this is the guy, Lord. This is the guy. Verse 19, and Samuel answered Saul and said, I am the seer.

Again, I can't. I need to find out. I need to find out when I get to heaven.

How Samuel said this. Was it, I am the seer. You know, very nobly.

You know, I am the man. Was it kind of annoyed? Hey, I'm the seer. What you look at? What do you think? I am the gardener.

I don't know how he said it, but he said, I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place where you shall eat with me today. And tomorrow I will let you go and tell you all that is in your heart.

But as for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, do not be anxious about them, for they have been found. Right then, Saul's jaw dropped to the ground. I didn't tell him anything about the donkeys.

What? You tell me they're found? And then I know it's Saul's thinking. And I didn't even give him the shackle. This is great.

I got it, you know, before I could give him anything. He told me what I wanted to know. But then he says, meet with me and I need you to look at the last line of verse 20.

And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on you and on all your father's house? So you and I say, well, what's he saying there? I'll tell you exactly what he's saying. And I know that Saul got the picture. Friends, what was it that Israel was desiring? A king.

You are going to fulfill the desire of Israel. That's what Samuel was telling Saul. You're the man.

You're going to be the king. I think that Saul must have thought, what's going on here? I don't understand. And look at his objection here in verse 21.

And Saul answered and said, am I not a Benjaminite of the smallest of the tribes of Israel and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak like this to me? I think there's something good and there's something bad about what Saul said here in response. The bad thing was he wasn't being exactly truthful. When he says that his family is the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin, is he being honest? No, no.

His father was a wealthy and an influential man. His family was not the least of the families of Benjamin. Kind of poor-mouthing himself.

On the other hand, there's something good in what Saul says here. Did you notice it at the end of verse 21? Why then do you speak like this to me? Friends, this shows that Saul had a humble heart before God. If Saul had a proud heart, his reaction probably would have been something like this.

You know, I've been waiting for somebody to notice the potential I have. I'm tall. I'm good looking.

I'm leadership type. It's about time someone else around here noticed it. Thank you, Prophet Samuel.

Now, let's get to work on leading this nation. Now, you know, Saul's reaction was just like the reaction of Moses. Just like the reaction of Jeremiah.

Just like the reaction of Isaiah when they were all called to what God wanted them to do. Who am I? Why me? Why would you choose someone like me? And I think part of the reason why God chose Saul at this time and this place was because he had a humble heart. But, friends, what's amazing about it is that though Saul had a humble heart now, he didn't stay humble.

As the years went on, as he was king, and with all the pomp and the circumstance and the attention and the glory, his heart became proud and distanced from God. And I think about that. What, Lord, didn't you know that? Yeah, he's humble now, but couldn't you see that he wouldn't stay humble? Why did you choose Saul? Well, friends, I think this brings to us a big question in our minds.

Why, Lord? Why do you choose one man to be raised up and keep another man low? Why do you put one woman in a place of more prominence and put another woman down in a lower place? Why? Why does God do this? Sometimes we think. I know why. It's because the guy that's lifted up, he's more spiritual.

He's more godly. He walks more right with God. He's better than someone else is.

Or maybe he's more talented. He's more usable. Or maybe he has more faith than someone else.

You know what, friends? It's not necessarily so. God has raised up many to prominence who were less deserving than others. That's probably one of the biggest mistakes we can make, is to think that we can figure out in our minds why God raises one up and why God keeps another down in a lower place.

All I can say is that many of these reasons are bound up in the unsearchable wisdom of God. I just would caution you about one thing. Don't ever assume that just because God is using a man, just because God is using a woman, don't assume that they deserve it.

Don't assume it's because they're particularly spiritual. In my days, I've had the opportunity to talk to some people who have been able to work with people of nationwide prominence in the Christian scene. I would tell you their names.

Oh yeah, I know him. He's on TV. Oh yeah, I know him.

He's at this. And you talk to these people about the spiritual character and lives of these greatly prominent people, and they're not particularly godly people often. You scratch your head and say, Why, Lord? Why would you lift them up? Why would you just knock them down? God has his purpose.

God has his plan. And a lot of times, we can't see it. Well, friends, I don't know why exactly God picked Saul, but I will tell you one reason why.

It's because that's the kind of leader that the nation of Israel really wanted. When it came right down to it, Israel wanted a leader that was all about image, not about substance. And friends, I can't go much further without making the very obvious point.

When we take a look at our own nation, at our own land, and when we're embarrassed sometimes or often about the leadership that we have, we have to stand back and wonder if God is not giving our nation the kind of leadership that the nation as a whole really wants, really desires, really approves of. How much more it should make us just humble ourselves before God and ask that he would bless us with wise and good and godly leaders. Well, going on now, verse 22.

Then Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the hall and had them sit in a place of honor among those who were invited. There were about 30 persons. You see, every seating arrangement in a dinner in that culture would have a very specific seating arrangement.

And there was actually a hierarchy, you know. There was a position of greatest honor and second greatest honor and third greatest and all the way down to the person who had the least amount of honor there at the dinner. And you know where Saul was sitting? In the position of greatest honor.

Wow, that was some compliment. Verse 23. And Samuel said to the cook, Bring the portion which I gave you of which I said you set it apart.

So the cook took up the thigh with its upper part and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, Here it is. What was kept back, it was set apart for you.

Eat. Until this time, it's been kept for you since I said I invited the people. So Saul ate with Samuel that day.

Samuel is exalting Saul, putting him in the choice seat, giving him the choice portion of that meal. And at every sort of ceremonial official meal, there would be a portion of food. You know, the nice cut of meat.

And that would always be given to the person that the host wanted to honor the most. And Samuel was the host. And he's saying, I want to honor you, Saul.

And you can bet, I think that Samuel had his eye on Saul. He said, I want to see how he reacts when he's honored. I'm going to test him.

I'm going to honor him. I want to see how he reacts. Does he take it too seriously? Does he let it go to his head? You know, friends, it's very revealing to see what kind of man or woman a person is when they have some success or some honor given to them in life.

A lot of times we think that adversity brings out the real character of a person. Oftentimes not, my friends. I would say oftentimes success and prosperity brings out the real character of a person.

Put them in an exalted place and see how they react. Put them in a place of honor and see how they handle it. Does it go to their head? Do they become haughty and proud? You can bet Samuel had his eye on Saul this whole dinner.

And then verse 25, when they had come down from the high place into the city, Samuel spoke with Saul on the top of the house. I wish I could have listened to that conversation. I wonder if it went something like this.

Samuel saying, look, Saul, I'm going to be straight with you. You've got a lot going for you. You've got the image.

You're a humble man and you have the support of the people. But Saul, let me tell you something. You're a king right now and the people of Israel are seeking a king for ungodly reasons.

The heart of the nation is not right. And the only way you can ever really make it successfully as a king is to give your heart to serving the Lord, to submit to God as your king. Unless you do that, you'll never be a fit king for this nation.

Saul, this is serious, Samuel would say. And I don't know, I don't know if Saul had the kind of spiritual sensitivity to really know. I wonder if it would be kind of like it is when we talk to our kids sometimes.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And you just know it's blah, blah, blah, blah, blah in their ears. Friend Samuel had a very serious talk with Saul.

He was impressing on his heart the need to be a good king. Queen Victoria reigned over Great Britain for 64 years. But before she ever came to the throne, when she was just 11 years old, there was a moment when she realized that she was going to be queen.

Her nanny or her governess was there teaching her the lessons in school. You know, and there they were teaching the lessons, you know. And they were teaching about the kings and the queens of Great Britain.

Here they are, here's the kings and the queens of England. And they started way back with William the Conqueror and they're going down the lessons. And here they are, and they get down to the very bottom.

And, well, look, well, there's my mom and dad, Queen Victoria sees. And then the little princess sees, there's my name next. At the moment she understood that she was going to be the next monarch over these people, she burst into tears.

Started crying and crying like only an 11-year-old girl can. She then pulled herself together and she looked very determined at her governess. And then she said, I will be good.

You know, that's what Samuel was doing for Saul right here. He was giving Saul the opportunity to say with his heart, I will be good. God is calling me to something important, something great, and I will fulfill that purpose.

So the chapter ends, verse 26, They arose early, and it was about the dawning of the day that Samuel called to Saul on the top of the house, saying, Get up, that I may send you on your way. And Saul arose and both of them went outside, he and Samuel. Now as they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Tell the servant to go on ahead of us.

And he went on. But you stand here a while that I may announce to you the word of God. Friends, we're on the threshold together.

And the next time we're together here in 1 Samuel, you're going to see the Lord speak to Saul and anoint Saul as king over the nation. The word of God is going to come to Saul and proclaim him to be the king over the land. Let's not forget how Saul came to this place.

It was through an amazing set of circumstances that God brought Saul to this exact place. Lost donkeys from one city to the next. And it just so happens that he comes in and Samuel's in the city at the same time.

And it just so happens that he's walking in the city, Samuel's walking out. It just so happens and it just so happens. And nothing just so happened with this situation, did it? God was moving.

God was guiding. Now, I think when some of us think of the great hand of God as it moves over the affairs and the dealings in our lives. Sometimes you think, you know what? That's great.

I can move with this. Saul wasn't paying attention to the Lord at all. He was just doing his own thing.

He wasn't thinking about God at all. And God found him and put him in a place. And you might leave here this morning thinking, you know what? That's just what I'm going to do with my life.

I won't think about the Lord at all. I'll just do my thing. And you know what? When God wants me, he knows where to find me.

He's got my number. You know, if he wants me to run across prophet of God and just... In other words, I don't have to worry about getting in the flow of God's plan. When he wants me, he'll just find me.

Friends, you know that's wrong and it's wrong for two reasons. First of all, it's wrong because God has commanded us to seek him with all of our hearts. And secondly, it's wrong because it doesn't appreciate how God wants us to be a part of his plan.

Let's say you've got a great battle going to happen between two big armies. And everybody knows that the success of the battle turns on the skill and the wisdom of the general. He's the one who has to put the troops in the right position to know when to attack and when to counterattack and when to do all the things.

And the whole battle rests on the skill of the general. What do you think a private in that army can say? Hey, listen, the battle depends on the general, not on me. I don't have to fight.

Of course not. Now, friends, I'm here to tell you that it all depends on our commander. Jesus Christ is our commander and we're just soldiers and he's the general.

But it means that he looks at each one of us square in the eye and says, I want you to work with me. I want you to know the privilege of being a part of my plan. Not because I need you, but because I want you to work with me.

That's the great benefit of surrendering our hearts to the Lord and moving in that way. It's a big order. We better pray and ask God to do that kind of work in our hearts.

Let's pray together. Father, we come before you now in the name of Jesus. And Lord, I know that there's nobody here this morning who's here by accident.

You've had a purpose. You've had a plan. And every person being here today.

Lord, I trust that for some people, it's been an encouragement. What they've heard. I've heard.

Lord, I trust that for some people, it's been a sort of a caution in their lives. What they've heard here today. But Lord, we want to be able to trust in your plan for our lives.

And to have a sense that we're going to flow with that plan and not ignore. And move with it every step of the way. Lord God, we love you.

We praise you. We ask that you'd move in a mighty way in our lives. We just want to submit ourselves before you this morning and say you be the general and we'll be the soldiers and help us to serve you and to fight for you every step of the way.

Help us to move with your plan, Lord. And be blessed by it. We ask this Lord in Jesus name.

Amen.

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