

## Message #21

## I Samuel 9:1-14

Years ago, when we lived in Idaho, I took a guy on a hunt in Wyoming. We were deep in the mountains about 8-9 miles from our camp hunting Elk. This particular night we decided to hunt until we had about ½ hour of light left and then started riding back to camp. As we started down the trail from the high mountain meadows, a bridle broke. Apparently, the horse had rubbed his face on a tree while we were hunting and the Chicago screw holding the bridle together was gone. Fortunately, in my pack I always carried parachute cord. So I got off the horse, cut some cord and fixed the bridle. This whole situation took about 5 minutes. I climbed back on my horse and started out and as I came around a bend, there came an elk, which I harvested. That broken bridle breaking was the key to perfect timing in harvesting that elk. I always believed that was the sovereignty of God.

I am totally convinced that God sovereignly works in what appears to be some timing hassle. I have often wondered how many times backed up traffic has kept us from some accident. God sovereignly works out His will in time and often His will can be worked out in seemingly insignificant hassles.

Later in this very book David was given a job to go check up on his brothers and take them some food. He had no idea that this would lead to him becoming one of the most famous war heroes in the history of the world.

Whatever the hassle, whatever the responsibility, however menial or insignificant the task, we need to remember God is sovereign in settings like this and He does some of His greatest work in these very contexts.

This is an amazing passage of Scripture, which truly does display the amazing sovereignty of God in a person's life. **When this story begins, a relatively unknown Jewish boy is out looking for lost donkeys. When the story ends, he is king of Israel.**

Saul had absolutely no idea that his search for donkeys would end with him becoming the first king of Israel. When he was out looking for the donkeys, he never dreamed this hassle will make me King. But that is exactly what happens. What we see is this:

**GOD IS SOVEREIGNLY IN CONTROL OF EVERYTHING HAPPENING IN OUR LIFE AT ALL TIMES AND ALL EVENTS AND PEOPLE ARE USED TO ACCOMPLISH HIS SOVEREIGN WILL FOR OUR LIVES.**

Everything is controlled by God, the positive and the negative. Whatever is there in our world is there for a purpose and if we are faithful in what we have to do, we may be confident that God is working behind the scenes accomplishing, leading and directing us to accomplish His great sovereign will.

There are five main narrative facts brought out in this text:

**NARRATIVE FACT #1** – We learn facts about the physical status of Saul. **9:1-2**

There are two physical facts brought out in these verses:

**Physical Fact #1** - We learn the physical pedigree of Saul. **9:1**

Saul was the son of Kish, who was from the tribe of Benjamin. The way Kish got into this tribe was Kish was the son of Abiel, Abiel was the son of Zeror, Zeror was the son of Becorath, Becorath was the son of Aphiah, and Aphiah was the son of a Benjamite.

Since Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, it meant that he was from the smallest of tribes and there was no one in the line who is impressive in that tribe (9:21). Saul did come from a known and respected family, but basically it is a family of unknowns.

Now Kish was a “mighty man of valor.” This term is used to describe Boaz (Ruth 2:1), Jeroboam (I Kings 11:28) and David (I Sam. 16:18). The Hebrew implies that Kish was a powerful man of influence and wealth. We know he had servants and owned many donkeys (**9:3**). Probably he was a wealthy land owner and military leader. Saul came from a good home, but not necessarily an impressive group of spiritually-minded people.

You do not have to come from an impressive line of Christians to be a great servant and leader for God. Saul is proof of this principle.

**Physical Fact #2** - We learn the physical stature of Saul. **9:2**

Saul was tall and handsome. There was no one better looking and no one taller in all of Israel. He was the best looking man in Israel, physically speaking.

Now think about who you think today is the most handsome man alive. Saul was more handsome than any of them. He was the best looking man in the world.

He wasn't one of the best; he was the best. There was no man on earth better looking than Saul.

There will come one who will be much better looking spiritually and his name will be David (I Sam. 15:28).

Let's face it; if you are looking for a king and here is this tall, handsome man who comes from a relatively successful and wealthy family, he is the perfect political candidate.

We may remember that when Jesus was here, He had no form or comeliness. Chrysostom said that the Apostle Paul was 4 feet 5 inches tall and was bald. So really, physical beauty has very little to do with spiritual beauty.

There are many men and women who invest thousands of hours and thousands of dollars to try to become good-looking physically, but the real value is looking good spiritually. Saul lacks that.

**NARRATIVE FACT #2** – We learn facts about the assignment of Saul. **9:3**

Many times you will hear people talk about how smart donkeys are. In fact, I heard an outfitter say turn them loose and they will find their way home. Well, it didn't work with these donkeys. They wandered far away from home and could not find their way back. This was all part of the sovereign plan of God.

Donkeys were valuable property. They were not used for pets, but for travel, farm and field work. Donkeys were the trucks and tractors of that time period. Kish's donkeys were lost and so he gave Saul an assignment, which was take a servant and go look for them.

This would appear to be a horrible loss and accident, but it is all part of God's providential sovereignty. This is the thing we want to see. This is a pain in the neck assignment, but it was Saul's willingness to do this that leads to him becoming king. This is a simple, ordinary task and God is in it.

God is sovereignly involved in your ordinary business affairs. By staying faithful you may be certain you will accomplish God's perfect will no matter what your job. See it through, do it to your best abilities because you do not know what God is doing.

**NARRATIVE FACT #3** – We learn facts about the travel route of Saul. **9:4-5**

Some of the places named here are impossible to identify, but here is what we do know. Saul traveled for three days (9:20) in tough and rugged country and did not find the donkeys and he ended up in the land of Zuph (9:5).

We may recall that Zuph was the great-great-great-grandfather of Samuel (I Sam. 1:1). Zuph was apparently the general region or territory where Samuel had his home in Ramah (7:17).

Saul had worked hard to find these donkeys and now he was becoming concerned that his father would be worried about him, so he said they needed to return home so that his father would not be worried sick.

What we have here is this—Saul is poking around the mountainous hill country looking for lost donkeys. You would never think that this is how you will become King of Israel. God works in unusual and seemingly insignificant situations.

In all my years, I have never seen God greatly use a man who refuses to work. I have never seen God greatly use a man who stayed home and drew welfare checks or scammed social security. God is in the business of raising up and using people who do their work, no matter how seemingly insignificant.

Peter and John were fishermen. Paul was a tent maker. D. L. Moody was a shoe salesman. C. I. Scofield was an attorney. Billy Sunday was a baseball player. They were faithful at their jobs and God called them to do something else.

You may be going through some rocky times right now in which you feel as if you are insignificant. You need to remember God is there with you. You may be doing something that you don't think is too kingly or important. Well learn a critical lesson here; God is there with you and is sovereign in your life and He may be leading you to great things.

**NARRATIVE FACT #4 – We learn facts about the servant of Saul. 9:6-10**

The selection of Saul's servant was no coincidence. The servant had some real spiritual wits about him. He knew where Samuel lived and he knew about Samuel's ministry. Of all the servants, it was no coincidence that this was the one Saul chose to take donkey hunting.

According to **verse 6**, the servant suggested that there is a guy we ought to see in this city. The servant points out four realities about him:

**Reality #1** - He is a man of God. 9:6a

**Reality #2** - He lives in this city. 9:6b

**Reality #3** - He is a man of high honor. 9:6c

**Reality #4** - Everything he says comes true. 9:6d

He said let's go see him because he may tell us where these donkeys have gone.

It is interesting and important to see that it is the servant who has the idea of consulting a man of God, not Saul. This certainly teaches us that it wasn't Saul who had the real spiritual depth. It is also noteworthy to point out that neither the servant nor Saul has any notion that this is about a king for Israel. In their minds, this is all about lost donkeys.

When God is in the process of sovereignly directing our life, we probably won't initially know what He is doing. We will be just living life.

It was customary when one went to see a prophet of God to take him some gift. Sometimes the gift was modest (I Kings 14:3) and sometimes the gift was lavish (II Kings 8:8-9). Saul was from a wealthy home and he was concerned that he didn't have anything to give the prophet as a gift (9:7).

According to **verse 8**, the servant said that he had some silver that he would give as a gift to the prophet. Charles Ryrie said it was about 1/10<sup>th</sup> of an ounce. An ounce of silver is worth about \$17 today so 1/10<sup>th</sup> of an ounce is \$1.70.

During this time, when a person wanted to get an answer from God, the person would consult the man or prophet of God. A prophet was originally called a "seer" by heathens. The secular world called a prophet a seer. Since Saul uses this word for Samuel in **verse 11**, it is clear that he is not the most spiritually minded of men. The servant is calling Samuel a "man of God" and Saul is calling him a "seer."

Now the word “seer” means just what it implies. It refers to one who actually knows and sees things from God. A “**prophet**” is one who speaks for God and the “seer” is one who sees things from God.

**Verse 10** says that Saul agreed to go to Ramah and see the man of God. Now at this point, in Saul’s mind and also in the servant’s mind, this is all about finding lost donkeys.

**NARRATIVE FACT #5-** We learn facts about the search of Saul. **9:11-14**

**There is a shift in these verses from a search from finding donkeys to a search to find Samuel.**

According to **verse 11**, as they went to the city, they found some young girls who were getting water and they asked if the “seer” was here.

It is amazing to think about the times that God has used girls drawing water in an amazing part of His sovereign program with Israel. God used this very same scene in the life of Isaac and his wife Rebekah (Gen. 24:10-61); in the life of Jacob and his wife Rachel (Gen. 29:1-20); in the life of Moses and his wife Zipporah (Ex. 2:15-21) and now here in the life of Saul to help him find Samuel.

These girls drawing water, a seemingly insignificant job, are critical to the entire national program of God with Israel.

In **verse 12**, the girls told them that he was in the city (Ramah) because the people were there sacrificing their offering. It is clear that Samuel played a key role in this.

According to **verse 13**, the girls told them that they would find him getting ready to go up to the high place to eat the sacrifices. What this tells us is that he was functioning not only as a prophet, but a priest.

In **verse 14**, they headed into the city and met Samuel heading out to go up to the place of sacrifice.

A great place to discover the will of God is at the place of worship.

#### **PRACTICAL LESSONS:**

- 1) God sovereignly works in people’s lives in the context of seemingly small and insignificant assignments.**
- 2) If you are faithful in that which appears little, you are on your way to being entrusted with that which is big.**
- 3) God’s word is always communicated through God’s men.**
- 4) The timing of everything happening in your world is of God.**