



Honing in on the Heart!’ Sermon Series

Sermon #15:

‘A Survey of Saul!’

Wednesday, May 15th, 2024

Last week in ‘Honing in on the Heart:

- Last week we wrapped up chapter 8 of 1st Samuel as we looked at 1st Samuel 8:10-22, with a message entitled ***‘Do we Really Know What’s best?’***
 - I asked the question: ***How does this passage show us that the Israelites really didn’t know what was best for them based on their constant act of insisting for a king?***
 - **Point 1: *Consider the Source. (V. 10)***
 - **Point 2: *Crisis will be Severe. (V. 11-18)***
 - **Point 3: *Conformity Spreads. (V. 19-22)***
 - Based on last Wednesday’s sermon, have we realized that we really don’t know best?

- ***No matter how much we think we know, it is truly best to follow God no matter what.***

- ***Tonight we will have a sort of ‘introduction’ message, as we look at Saul.***

‘A Survey of Saul!’

1st Samuel 9:1-2

Sermon in a Sentence:

In these verses we see a Survey of Saul by looking at how his descendents were listed, his distinct looks and double length were also mentioned by the author.

Intro:

- Tonight’s message will be different from most of the sermons we’ve had in our ‘Honing in on the Heart!’ series so far.
 - ***But, you may find it somewhat similar to the overview message we had to begin this series back on January 3rd.***
- In tonight’s scripture text, we will see Saul mentioned for the first time.
 - ***From now until chapter 31 of 1st Samuel, we will be studying Saul and his different actions as the first king to rule over Israel.***
 - ***We are going to see that he rises up from an unlikely spot, starts out strong, but disobeys God time and time again, and will become bitter.***

- **Since Saul is such a major part of 1st Samuel (and the history of Israel), I felt it was appropriate to spend 1 sermon in this series looking at who he was, and where he came from, so that we might have a better understanding of his significance in scripture as we continue in 1st Samuel.**

- Back in 1st Samuel 1:1, it opened up like this:
 - ‘There was a certain man’
- 1st Samuel 9:1 will start off with:
 - ‘There was a man’

- **This gives you and I the impression that this is the start of a new story within the historical narrative of 1st Samuel.**

- And in many ways, we will see the tide turn in 1st Samuel.
- **Although Samuel will not die at this point, he will slowly move out of the picture as Israel’s spiritual leader, and Saul will take center stage for a few chapters until He disobeys the Lord.**

- To have a good understanding of this book, we need to have a decent understanding of Paul.
 - **Scholar David E. Garland said ‘(He Saul), was a villain, tragic figure, flawed ruler, naive farm boy, degenerate madman, fate-driven pawn, and reluctant king.’**
 - **To me the side part about Saul is to see how progressively worse he allows his own sin to get in his life.**

- As the story goes on, Saul gets farther and farther away from God.

- In David E. Garland’s commentary on 1-2 Samuel, he shares an interesting chart (seen below) that gives us solid insight into how the narrative of Saul will unfold in the chapters to come:

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Act I, Scene 1.	Saul meets Samuel, Samuel then anoints him. (9:3-10:16)
Act II, Scene 1.	Saul meets Samuel, who now condemns him. (ch. 15)
Act III, Scene 1.	Saul meets Samuel, who now dooms him. (ch. 28)
Act I, Scene 2.	Success in battle, due to the power of the Lord. (ch. 11)
Act II, Scene 2.	Success in battle, due to the help of David. (Chs. 17-18)
Act III, Scene 2.	Saul commits suicide in battle. (ch. 31)
Act I, Scene 3.	Saul’s failure in front of Samuel and Jonathan (chs. 13-14)

Act II, Scene 3.	Saul's Failure, in front of David. (chs. 19-26)
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- *As you can probably already tell, Saul was quite the character.*
- **William P. Barker** in his book, *'everyone in the Bible'*, said this about Saul *'The moody benjaminite who was the first king of Israel, Saul was summoned to leadership against the Philistines by the prophet Samuel.'*
 - So, let's begin our survey on Saul tonight as we look at the first two verses in 1st Samuel 9. The introduction for Saul.

Read 1st Samuel 9:1-2

Question to Ask:

How do these two verses introduce us to one of the main characters of the historical narrative, that is, 1st Samuel?

Point 1: *Descendants Listed. (V. 1)*

- 'There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth.'
 - *Kish, Saul's Father, is given a very similar introduction here that Elkanah received at the beginning of 1st Samuel.*
 - 'There was a certain man of Ramathaim-zophim of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Elkanah the

son of Jeroham, son of Elihu, son of Tohu, son of Zuph, an Ephrathite.' 1st Samuel 1:1.

- *Later in 1st Samuel 17:12, David will be given a formal introduction like these, just a little bit more abbreviated.*
- To us, these might just look like a list of random names.
 - *But, to the original recipients of this historical narrative (the jews), this would have meant more to them than it does to us.*
 - I believe there are 2 things that we can pull from the text concerning these descendants that are listed.
- *The Pedigree of his Family. (V. 1a)*
 - 'There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite,'
 - **One of the main reasons I believe the writer of 1st Samuel lists the descendants of Saul, is to show that Saul did not become King due to his genealogy.**
 - This was a common practice at the time.
 - John Woodhouse said *'In terms of ancestry Kish was, like Elkanah, a nobody.'*
 - We aren't dealing with Israelite royalty here, just a simple family.

- ***Kish, Saul's Dad, is described here as a Benjaminite***
 - This family name (Benjaminite) was not a call to fame.
- ***The tribe of Benjamin was the smallest in Israel which is why Saul said this later on in this same chapter in verse 21:***
 - 'Saul answered, "Am I not a Benjaminite, from the least of the tribes of Israel? And is not my clan the humblest of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then have you spoken to me in this way?" 1 Samuel 9:21
- The only names from verse 1 that are mentioned anywhere else in the Bible is Saul's Grandfather, ***'Abiel'. In 1 Chronicles 11:32.***
 - 'Hurai of the brooks of Gaash, Abiel the Arbathite,' But, I don't believe this is referring to Saul's Grandfather, but rather a member of David's 3rd elite corps of guards that are called 'The Thirty'
- ***Either way, it's important that we see the first King of Israel came from a very humble family and a humble background.***
 - Maybe this is why some people liked Saul so much in the beginning in addition to his outward appearance.
- ***There is only one another man of the Benjamin tribe that has been mentioned here in 1st Samuel.***
 - The man of Benjamin who brought the news of Israel's defeat in battle and the capturing of the ark, in 1st Samuel 4:12.
- ***The Prosperity of his Farm. (V. 1b)***
 - 'a man of wealth.'
 - Depending on which translation you have, the second part of verse 1 is probably translated differently than the ESV.
 - ***We will break it down, but the writer is showing that although Saul came from the smallest tribe in Israel, it was a great family within that tribe.***
- ****Word Study****
 - The phrase '***A man of wealth***' comes from the Hebrew word(s) ***Chayil*** (a force, men or means of resources; can be translated to an army, wealth, virtue, valor and strength) ***חַיִל*** and ***Gibbor*** (powerful, warrior, tyrant, strong man, mighty) ***גִּבּוֹר***.
 - These two words when put together essentially mean 'a man of standing' or 'brave man'.
 - Here's how the ***NASB*** translates it:
 - 'a mighty man of [a]valor'
 - Here's how the ***NKJV*** translates it:

- ‘a mighty man of [a]power’
- Here’s how the **CSB** translates it:
 - ‘There was a prominent man’
 - *The CSB puts it at the beginning.*
- *In the Hebrew text it’s at the end of the sentence, and however you translate it, Kish was a wealthy and prominent man in the community. A strong and brave man.*
 - *The key to looking at this phrase in the Hebrew, is that nowhere in 1st Samuel is this same phrase used to describe Saul.*
- *These same two Hebrew words are put together to describe Boaz in Ruth 2:1, and Jeroboam the first in 1st Kings 11:28.*
 - So, while Saul came from good stock, he did not follow his father’s example.
 - This is a familiar theme we’ve seen in Samuel thus far.
- So far this evening, we’ve seen the descendants listed.
 - Next we see that Saul had distinct looks.

Point 2: Distinct Looks. (V. 2a)

- ‘And he had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he.’
- *If you remember back in 1st Samuel 8, it’s not God that decided they needed a king, it’s the people who insisted that they wanted a King.*

- *So, as we will see next week while God appointed them a King, it was not because God wanted to do so.*
 - Which is why God chose a king for them that would be grand in appearance and that they would boast in fleshly pride.
- Remember why they wanted one? 1st Samuel 8:20 shows us why: *‘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.’*
 - *Yet again, when you insist your way over God’s, you may get what you want, but it certainly won’t be what’s best for you.*
- *So, Saul was the people’s choice and desire, it’s important to know that it was God that selected Him and therefore, allowed this to happen.*
 - God was giving them something that they wanted.
- *So, what do we find in the first part of verse 2 that shows us why they would want someone like Saul to be their King?*
- **Name. (V. 2)**
 - ‘And he had a son whose name was Saul,’
 - *In understanding Saul’s name, it’s important that we look to the Hebrew.*
 - **Word Study**

- This particular word choice reminds us of Samuel's words in *1st Samuel 8:18*.
 - 'And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day.'
- *Saul was chosen by the people and God allowed for this to happen. Which shows us, based on what will happen later in 1st Samuel, that they asked for what they had received.*
- As far as his outward nature, I believe the following verses that we will study later in this series will describe that more in depth. I'll mention just a few tonight.

■ ***Saul was a Killer.***

- 'And Jonathan told David, "Saul my father seeks to kill you. Therefore be on your guard in the morning. Stay in a secret place and hide yourself.' 1st Samuel 19:2

■ ***Saul was Jealous.***

- 'But when Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him, **29** Saul was even more afraid of David. So Saul was David's enemy continually.' 1st Samuel 18:28-29

■ ***Saul sought evil spirits, through a witch, for guidance.***

- 'So Saul disguised himself and put on other garments and went, he and two men with him. And they came to the woman by night. And he said, "Divine for me by a spirit and bring up for me whomever I shall name to you." 1st Samuel 28:8

■ ***Saul was a disappointment.***

- 'And Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel.' 1st Samuel 15:35

■ ***Saul caused damage to the land of Israel way beyond his time as king.***

- 'Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year. And David sought the face of the LORD. And the LORD said, "There is bloodguilt on Saul and on his house, because he put the Gibeonites to death." 2nd Samuel 21:1

- *What Saul had inside, would show itself eventually to Samuel and to all the people of Israel soon enough.*
 - Tonight we've seen the Descendants listed, the distinct looks, now we see the double length.

Point 3: *Double Length. (V. 2b)*

- 'From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.'
- *The fact that the writer of Samuel even mentions this, may seem odd to you and me. But, it must have been pretty important because it's repeated in **1st Samuel 10:23-24.***
 - 'Then they ran and took him from there. And when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. **24** And Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? There is none like him among all the people." And all the people shouted, "Long live the king!"'
 - *Even at this time, it seems as if Samuel's vision is clouded. He joins in with the people in looking and admiring Saul's stature.*
 - *While human nature is very much still the same, it seems obvious that the people at this time cared more about physical appearance*

and stature of their King, than maybe we do today, which is astonishing to think.

- **John L. Mackay said 'He is just the sort of person to impress those who have asked for a King.'**
 - Physically, He was, but what about his spiritual state?
 - I think it's important to note that even when we study chapter 9 next week, we have no evidence of the state of Saul's spiritual condition.
 - W.W made this observation '*Saul's home was in Gibeah, which was about five miles from Ramah where Samuel lived, and yet Saul didn't even know what all Israel knew, that a man of God named Samuel lived in Ramah.*'
 - ***How could Saul live so close in proximity to Israel's spiritual leader and not even know about him?***
 - I think this gives us very early evidence that will play out in 1st Samuel. ***Saul did not care about the things of God.***
 - The lack of spiritual life that Saul seems to suggest here, can be contrasted by what was said of Joseph in ***Genesis 39:3.***
 - 'His master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD caused all that he did to succeed in his hands.'
 - *Christians in America today spend way too much time worrying about if someone fits the*

'physical' description, or has all the right 'experience' on the resume, or all the right 'degrees' and educational marks.

- *What we really need to be looking for, is this: is that person walking with the Lord and is it evident to fellow believers that God is using them.*
- Out of the entire nation of Israel, you would think that someone, other than Samuel, would slow down and say 'hey guys, don't you think this isn't a good idea? It takes a whole lot more than looks and height to be a good king.'
 - *Out of all the nation, it seems that no one spoke up.*
- *When are we as a society going to wake up and realize that it's not about the amount of followers that someone has, but the faith that they hold to.*
- *When are we going to wake up and realize that it's not about the clicks you get on facebook, but that Christ that lives in you.*
- *When are we going to wake up and realize that it's not about the outside of our bodies but Omega God who created them.*
- *When are we gonna realize that it doesn't matter how someone performs in a ball game, but it does matter how they perform in God's army.*

- *When are we going to wake up and realize that's in not about how much money you have, but about the Messiah that you proclaim.*

Conclusion:

- Over the coming months and into the next year, we will dive so much deeper into who Saul is.
 - *Tonight we've briefly surveyed saul and scanned through his life, but maybe even tonight you've caught a glimpse that although Saul had the outward appearance all together and people loved him, his heart is not where it needed to be.*
 - Honing in on the Heart is the title and purpose of our sermon series.
 - *Tonight we are just touching the surface in Saul's story, how do you need to have a heart check before God?*
 - How do you need to ask God to make you not so concerned with your outward appearance, that you neglect your heart before Him.
 - *The people of Israel were blinded by Saul's looks and his physical length, that they didn't realize his heart would turn to bitterness before it was all said and done.*
 - We saw that tonight in our passage by looking at:
 - **Point 1: Descendents Listed.**
 - *(V. 1)*

- **Point 2:** *Distinct Looks.* (V. 2a)
- **Point 3:** *Double Length.* (V. 2b)