1 Samuel 10:17-27 “Hiding from Responsibility”

Intro. Have you ever gone to a restaurant, hung up your coat or umbrella, and noticed a sign warning that the management is not responsible if it gets lost or stolen? Have you ever read the small print on your airplane ticket? The airline takes no responsibility for any delays or missed connections, and if your baggage is lost, they only have to pay an amount agreed upon at a convention that was held in Warsaw in 1955. Park your car in some high-priced garage or lot, and a sign will tell you that management is not responsible for any items lost or stolen from your vehicle.

Do those “Not responsible for...” disclaimers bother you? They do me. It seems no one takes responsibility for anything anymore. In our text today, we have read the story of a man who did not want to be responsible for leading his nation. Yet the call of God upon his life was very clear.

Saul illustrates a common problem. Many people do not want to accept responsibility. Many young men avoid marriage because they don’t want the responsibility of a wife and children. Many people refuse leadership in a church or other organization because they don’t want the responsibilities of leadership. Shall we then fill positions of leadership only with people who are pressured into it, or who are self-centered and ambitious?

I am preaching this message today as part of my series in 1 Samuel. Yet it is a timely message because we are the process of electing deacons, church officers, teachers, committee chairpersons, and organizational directors. If you are asked to serve, will you be willing to say, “yes” to God, and to your church? Or will you be like Saul, and try to avoid accepting any responsibility for leadership? Well I hope that God will use the lessons of this text of Scripture to call the right people to accept leadership responsibility within our church. But what I say today will have application to many other realms of life.

So I hope you will listen carefully as we look at this text together. Now from this story, I have gleaned 4 important truths:

I. WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE GOD’S AUTHORITY OVER OUR LIVES

This was the underlying issue of this whole story. Though up to this time God was the only King in Israel, they asked Samuel for a king. Back in 1 Sam. 8:5 they said to the prophet Samuel, “Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” But they failed to keep in mind that God ruled Israel through His written law, through the High Priest, through Judges, and through prophets like Samuel. And even when God permitted an earthly King, we see from v.25 that the King was not to be an autonomous ruler, but submit to a written guideline from God.

Notice one reason why God should be our King, and why we should submit to His authority is because He is our Savior. Samuel said in v.18, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the

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hand of all kingdoms and from those who oppressed you.” God was not only their Creator, but also their Savior. He had saved them from Egyptian bondage. He had given them victory over the pagan nations in Palestine, and had given them their land, and their cities. Surely Israel should have obeyed them out of gratitude.

Even so, we should yield our lives to Jesus Christ as Lord. As God was King over Israel, even so Jesus is Lord and King of the true Church. He is the Head of the Church. He reigns from heaven over us through His written Word, the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14), and through the Bible preaching & teaching. He deserves our allegiance for He is our Savior. He died to set us free from the penalty of sin, and from the power of sin over our lives. He has been good to us. So if Christ calls upon you to do something for Him, shouldn’t you do it?

Yet Israel failed to remain under the sole authority of God as their King. Samuel said in v.19, “But you have today rejected your God, who Himself saved you from all your adversities and your tribulations; and you have said to Him, ‘No, set a king over us!’” The people’s request for a king was again condemned as a rejection of the Lord’s leadership. They wanted a king they could see. They did not want to live by faith, but by sight. They also wanted to be like the other nations. Regardless of their reason, they were wrong in demanding an earthly king.

Do we make the same mistake? Who is King of your life? Is self on the throne, or is God? Do we fail to submit to God’s authority? Do we reject God’s rule over our lives? Are we rejecting God by pushing Him aside and acknowledging someone as our “king” or something else as our top priority? If so, let us repent of that sin. Oh, let me appeal to you to surrender your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He is worthy of your total allegiance. And until you do, you will not have peace. You will not have God’s blessing. Things will not be right in your life until you surrender to the Lordship of Jesus. Why not say to the Lord Jesus right now, “Lord, you are my King. I will do whatever you want me to do.”

Now once we accept God’s authority over our lives, then:

II. WE SHOULD DISCOVER GOD’S WILL FOR OUR LIVES

Since Israel rejected God as King, God decided to give them what they asked for to accomplish His own purposes. By the way, that is so often true to this very day. If you refuse to accept God’s perfect will, He will often give you what you want. Then in time you will realize that you have made a mistake. You will learn the hard way that God’s will is best. So it was as if God opened the first Burger King. He said, “Have it your way.” That meant that someone would have to be king. But He did not allow them to choose their own king. The new king must be chosen by God, the true King.

So Samuel called upon Israel to assemble at Mizpah so that God’s choice would be publicly revealed. We see from v.1 that Samuel already knew whom God had chosen, and had already anointed him. But he knew that there were some who would not accept his word for it. So he wanted God’s choice to be revealed in such a way that most all would agree that God had clearly revealed His will. But how would Israel discover God’s choice? We find the answer beginning in the last of v.19, “Now therefore, present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your clans.” Once that was done, some method was used to narrow the selection down. Perhaps the High Priest used the Urim and Thummim 2 to simply indicate “Yes” or “No” as each

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2 Ex. 28:20; Num. 27:21; 1 Sam. 22:10; 1 Sam. 28:6; and 1 Sam. 30:8.
tribe was presented. I think it’s more likely that Samuel or the High Priest cast lots.\(^3\) For example, the names of all the 12 tribes could have been put in some container, or into someone’s lap, and then one tribe was chosen. So in v.20 we read, “And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen.” This must have been a surprise. The tribe of Rueben, the firstborn, was not chosen. Based on prophecy, some might have expected the tribe of Judah to be chosen. Instead, Benjamin was chosen! He was the youngest son of Jacob. His tribe was the least of all the tribes.\(^4\) Next, the selection was narrowed further. V.21 says, “When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was chosen. And Saul the son of Kish was chosen.” Perhaps at that point all the names of the men of the family of Matri were written down, put in some container, and then Saul’s name was chosen by divine providence. God clearly revealed His will. The point is that Samuel led the people to seek to discern God’s will concerning who should be king, & God revealed His will.

Why was Saul chosen? I doubt he was chosen because of his spiritual qualifications. As the story unfolds, Saul was not a godly man. Saul was chosen simply because he was the very type of hero-king they were seeking. Both here and in chapter 9:2 his stature and good looks were the only qualities mentioned. He was in the crowd like a tree among the shrubs. God knew that what Israel wanted was a fighter with physical strength, plenty of bone and muscle to save them from the mighty Philistines. They did not care about moral, intellectual or spiritual qualities.

So why did God give them what they wanted? He wanted them to learn the hard way that spiritual qualities are far more important in God’s kingdom than physical qualities. And yet to this very day even Christian people still vote for political and even spiritual leaders based on how big or good looking they are! If a presidential candidate is significantly shorter, or has significantly less hair than the other candidate, then 9 times out of 10 he will lose! God also gave them what they wanted so they would look back & realize that the kind of king they wanted was not best. God’s was setting the stage for David, a man after God’s own heart. When it comes to leadership among the people of God, spiritual qualifications are most important.

So Saul was in a sense the people’s ideal of a king, based on worldly standards. Nevertheless, it became very clear that God had chosen Saul to lead Israel. That was God’s will, and so God’s call was upon his life was to be king.

If Jesus is Lord of our lives, then we need to discover His will for our lives. The part of His will that is applicable to all Christians is found in His written Word, the Bible. You need to read it, study it, and hear it taught & preached. But questions like who to marry, what career or job you should pursue, where you should live must be answered in other ways. I can’t recommend casting lots. Sure, you could take a flower and start pulling the petals, “She loves me; she loves me not,” and then decide if God wants you to marry that girl! But I wouldn’t recommend it. I believe God will lead you through the inner prompting of the Spirit (Gal. 5:18; Rom. 8:14). He will lead you through His providential control of circumstances. We see an example of that here in chapter 8, as a lost donkey led Saul to Samuel. He can also use the advice

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\(^3\) Following the battle of Ai, Achan was discovered by lot (Joshua 7:16). Later in 1 Samuel 14:40-42 we see an example. Other examples of casting lot are in the Book of Jonah in which the mariners found the guilty Jonah, and the example in the Book of Acts, in which the apostles selected a successor to Judas (Acts 1:26). Also, Prov. 16:33 says, “The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is wholly from the Lord.” Arnold agrees that casting lots was most likely the method chosen (p.166).

\(^4\) In Numbers they were the smallest tribe except the half tribe of Manasseh (1:20-43). Then they were almost decimated by a civil war during the days of the judges (Judges 20).
of godly believers. So seek to determine God’s perfect will for your life. It is truly best. Romans 12:1-2 says that you are to “present your bodies a living sacrifice… that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Now once we discover God’s will for our lives, we should take the third step:

III. WE SHOULD ANSWER GOD’S CALL

God’s choice had been declared. Saul was the man. When the lot fell upon him, everyone expected he should answer to his name at the first call, but instead of that, none of his friends could find him (v.21b). So in v.22 we read, “Therefore they inquired of the LORD further, ‘Has the man come here yet?’ And the LORD answered, ‘There he is, hidden among the equipment.’” It is clear to me that he was deliberately hiding.

Why was Saul hiding? Some say that Saul was just being modest. Perhaps that was part of it. But consider this: He already knew back in chapter 8 that he was God’s choice to be king. In fact, he received three signs confirming his divine appointment (10:1-7), and was empowered by the Spirit of God.

So let me suggest the most likely reasons he was hiding:

1) I believe he was hiding because he was shrinking from the heavy task that God was laying on him. Saul was a reluctant ruler. He was not being summoned to a secure throne, but to go before the people, and fight battles. So this great big fellow, Saul, acted just like a little child. He ran and hid, and they had to find him and bring him out. Perhaps he was hoping that if he remained hidden, the choice would move on to someone else. But he should have stepped out in the open and acted like a king when his name was called. If he had been God-fearing and God-obeying and God-trusting, he would have cried as the prophet Isaiah, “Here am I, send me,” instead of skulking among the stuff.

2) He may have felt inadequate. The enemy had great power. Saul did not see himself has a great military leader. He was from an insignificant family. Royal blood did not flow in his veins. He had little education & knowledge of ruling a kingdom. What if he failed?

I remember when I began to realize that God was calling me to preach. I resisted that call, for almost a year. I would say, “Lord, I can’t preach. I can’t even talk without stuttering.” But God showed me that “our sufficiency is from God.” Whatever He called me to do, He would enable me to do if I would just trust Him.

Even so, what God calls you to do, He enables you to do. In the context Saul experience the Spirit of God coming upon him, even enabling him to prophecy. That was a foretaste of the fact that God would enable him to serve as King. The power comes from God. As the apostle Paul thought of the daunting task of being a missionary, he said in 2 Cor. 3:4-5, “And who is sufficient for these things? Not that we are sufficient of ourselves …, but our sufficiency is from God.” If God calls you to be a king, you can become a great king. If God calls you to be a missionary or preacher, you can become a great missionary or preacher. If God calls you to become a deacon, He will enable you to become a great deacon. If God calls you to some leadership responsibility in our church, you can count on Him to enable you.

3) Perhaps the main reason Saul was hiding was because he just didn’t want to accept the responsibility of being King. The King was to serve God, and serve the people. He would have so much work to do, so much responsibility, and have little time for himself. So he hoped that if he did not answer the call, they would choose someone else. Yet He forgot that God knows everything, & he couldn’t hide from God!
By the way, did you notice what Saul was hiding among? V.22 says he was hiding “among the equipment.” Since the context refers to a large gathering of people, it could refer to large vessels for holding things, such as food (9:7; 21:5). Or the word could refer to military equipment & supplies (14:1; 20:40; 21:8; 25:13; 30:24). Evidently the crowd of people put their supplies and equipment in one location. The point is he was hiding among things that have worldly value. So often the very people who should be working for God get absorbed and lost in all kinds of worldly things. Can you imagine God calling someone to teach a S.S. class, and yet he can’t be found at church. He is out making more money, or playing golf, or engaging in some other worldly endeavor.

Well, God’s call upon Saul’s life was reluctantly accepted. And there he was, a head taller than all the other men. He had all the outward appearance of grandeur that they could have wished for. He was good looking. He was the worldly ideal for a king. Now what happened next illustrates my last point:

A long time ago, Saul was hiding among the equipment. But when the phone rings, and you see the caller I.D. reveal that the call is coming from someone on the Nominating Committee, will you tell everyone not to answer it? Will you miss church the next several weeks, and no one will be able to find you?

Again, we are in the process of calling on people to serve as deacons, Sunday School teachers, committee chairmen, organizational directors, & so forth. If you are called and asked to serve, you need to seriously consider if God is calling you to serve. Don’t hide from God’s call upon your life? When the phone rings, and you see the caller I.D. reveal that the call is coming from someone on the Nominating Committee, will you tell everyone not to answer it? Will you miss church the next several weeks, and no one will be able to find you?

There are many other times when people hide from responsibility. If you conceive a child, you have a responsibility to that child. If you’re the mother you are to bring that child into the world. Don’t use abortion to hide from your responsibility. And once that child is born, you are to provide & care for that child for the next 18-21 years. Today is Father’s Day, & we commend those men who accepted their responsibility, & have been fathers to their children. But too many men, and even some women, have run from their responsibility. Furthermore, the mother and father should be married, and stay married, and provide a loving, stable home for that child. That is so important for the child’s security and well-being. So when God calls upon you to accept some responsibility, don’t run or hide from your responsibility.

I’ve given some examples of people who hide from responsibility. I’m thankful for those who have accepted responsibility. Today we have expressed our appreciation to Bobby Ziegenfuss for his faithful service. Several times his church asked him to serve on the Nominating Committee and he accepted the responsibility. He even served as Chairman several times. When we needed him to serve as a deacon, he accepted the responsibility. Last year we were short of having enough deacons, and Bobby was even willing to serve a 4th year even though his schedule at work was more demanding. You heard the other ways that Bobby has accepted responsibility in the Lord’s work.

I believe parents should prepare their children to be the type of grownups that accept responsibility. How do we do that? [Tell how].
IV. WE SHOULD SUPPORT THOSE WHO ANSWER GOD’S CALL

One reason we have trouble getting people to fill positions of leadership is because they know that too often they will face criticism & complaints instead of support. But for the most part, Israel set a good example in this regard. They gave positive affirmation to their king. First, they gave affirmation with their words. In the last of v.24 we read that “all the people shouted and said, ‘Long live the king!’” Furthermore, v.27 clearly implies that they presented presents to the new King. This was yet another show of support. Then we read in v.26 of another way some gave support to the new king, “and valiant men went with him....” They seemed to be men of strength, valor, and courage; gallant men, who freely offered themselves to be his body guards & first military recruits. And notice why they went with Saul. According to v.26, these were men “whose hearts God had touched.” If the heart bends at any time the right way, it is because God has touched it. Now that Saul was chosen by God, loyalty to God was shown by loyalty to Saul.

In contrast, not all in Israel supported their God-called leader. In v.27 we read, “But some rebels said, ‘How can this man save us?’” He was not what they expected. Though Saul was a big man, he was from a small and insignificant family. They did not see how such a man could save the nation from their enemies. Criticism will always be directed toward those who lead because they are out in front. They failed to see that what mattered most was the fact that he was God’s choice. As Paul later said in Romans 8:31, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” But since they rejected Saul, notice what v.27 goes on to say, “So they despised him, and brought him no presents.” They regarded him with contempt, probably because he seemed to lack confidence, & the qualifications they thought he should have. And they showed their contempt for the new ruler by withholding their gifts which were customary on such occasions.

I believe this principle applies to us today. When God calls someone to serve as a pastor, or deacon, or staff leader in this church, then they should have your support. If they are willing to accept the responsibilities of leadership, then you should accept the responsibility of giving them your support. You can give support with your words, with your gifts, and especially with your service. If you are not willing or able to lead, then at least support those who are willing & able. Give words of affirmation & support. Offer your services.

I also must give a word of advice to those who you who are willing to take on leadership responsibility. Yes, there will always be critics. While we should listen to constructive criticism given in the right way, we cannot be defeated & hindered from God’s work by criticism. When Saul heard the criticism, he held his peace. He did not quit his new role just because he was criticized.

Do you realize that even those who have accomplished great things also had to endure harsh criticism? *The Book of Poisonous Quotes* by Colin Jarman records the following assessments: Tchaikovsky said of Handel, “Handel is only fourth rate. He is not even interesting.” Anthony Trollop said of Charles Dickens, “Of Dickens’ style it is impossible to speak praise.” El Greco said of Michelangelo, “He was a good man but he did not know how to paint.” If these artists listened to their critics & quit, the world would be a poorer place. Some might conclude that to avoid criticism, you should be nothing, do nothing, and say nothing. But

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5 This was the first time this cry was uttered in the Bible. As you know, a similar statement is still used in modern England.
6 This is literally “sons of Belial,” i.e. worthless fellows. Eli’s sons were called such (2:12).
7 *Preaching* (March-April, 2004), 74 [Illus.#C-1224].
guess what? Then you will be criticized for doing nothing! Go ahead & stand up for God. Don’t let the critics keep you from doing what God calls you to do.

The criticism of the people sounds very similar to the reaction of people to God’s chosen King, the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a remnant that submits to Him, rejoices in Him, brings presents to Him, follows Him, and serves Him. They are those whose hearts God has touched. But there are others who despise Him, who ask, “How shall this man save us?” They are offended in Him, stumble at His physical appearance & modesty.

Conclusion: What is your attitude toward Jesus? Is He lord of your life? Are you living in obedience to Him? Is He calling you to serve Him in some special way? Will you say, “Here am I, send me!” Or are you hiding or running from responsibility, and from God’s call upon your life? I want to encourage you to stop hiding. Stop making excuses for why you are not serving God when He calls upon you through His church. Trust in His power. He will enable you to serve effectively. God will raise up people to support you, and stand with you, and help you. Will someone come forward today to surrender to a call to preach, or a call to missions? Will you serve as a deacon if approved by the pastors, deacons, & the church? If the Nominating Committee asks you to serve, will you now be prepared to say “yes” to God’s call upon your life?


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