The first King of Israel was clearly God’s Choice. He was chosen, by God, to be King. He was ordained by God. He was intended, by God, to be the first King. He was meant to be the ruler. History should remember King Saul as one of the top leaders of the Bible. He was the first person to be King over God’s Chosen people. He was one of only 3 people to lead the whole Nation. He was the first of the Big 3 Kings, Saul, David, and Solomon. All of which ruled for 40 years each.

Unfortunately for King Saul, his tenure as King was mired by controversy and poor priorities. He was distracted and selfish. As a leader, he was unpredictable. As a King, he lacked vision. As a father, he was manipulative. As a person, he was unstable.

Saul is proof that being chosen by God does not guarantee success. King Saul’s life also reminds us that it is possible to squander great potential, even with the favor of God. His life should be a warning to us all. We should beware of our personal proclivities; the grace and mercy we receive from the Lord produce unique results. Juxtaposed to the kind of results King Saul produced with his life.

The Early Years

Consider I Samuel chapter 9:1-14

To be clear, Saul came from a proud family. His family had servants, livestock, and land. As a son, he was trusted by his father and was given responsibility. His life comes into focus as his father sends him on a business trip to locate some valuable assets. His journey seems eventful and longer than expected. He is clearly determined to complete the assignment.

Consider I Samuel 9:15-17

The story takes on a twist, as God leads Saul into a setup with the Prophet Samuel. That encounter would set and direct the rest of Saul’s life. We should not overlook the sovereignty of God in this encounter.

Consider I Samuel 9:18-27 and this life lesson. Life lessons 1-3 are in the introduction.

Life Lesson #4. Some so-called chance encounters are God’s way of introducing us to key people who will be vital to our future. No one networks like God!

The Purpose of Purpose

Consider I Samuel 10:6-8

From the moment Saul was told his purpose, his life changed. He had a purpose! He had a destiny. And his point of being was bigger than him. It did not take him long to begin setting up his newly founded kingship.

It is notable that Saul does not seem to be a devout person or a military-minded person. Nor does he seem to apply himself to spiritual matters and guidance. Unlike David and Solomon, Saul does NOT seem to grasp the purpose of his calling. He does not seem to see his kingship as a calling, but as an opportunity. God had made him a different man, but it was obviously not appreciated.

Life Lesson #5. Whenever God opens opportunity to us, we should ask Him “Why me?” The answer to that question will keep us humble and provide important guidance.

Obedience is better

By chapter 11, Saul is clearly established as King. Consider I Samuel 11:12-15

By chapter 13, Saul, still early in his reign, makes a huge mistake. Consider I Samuel 13:1-13.

I Samuel 13:13 is a difficult passage to understand. At a glance, it seems that the penalty was rather harsh. It would appear based on Samuel’s response that Saul knew exactly what he had done was in clear violation of his instructions.

Apparently, Saul did not wait the full 7 days. Apparently, Saul did not trust Samuel.

Again, Saul fails to follow instructions and Samuel is forced to deal with it.

Consider I Samuel 15:1-10, and I Samuel 15:22-23

Samuel gave Saul some advice that should resonate with us all. This means that it is better to do the right thing, than to get forgiveness for doing the wrong thing. Or, it is better to avoid sin, than to be able to be forgiven. It is better to avoid mistakes!

Life Lesson #6. Obedience is (still) better.

Another point to be appreciated comes from verse 23. Samuel compared the rebelliousness and stubbornness of Saul to witchcraft and sin.

Life Lesson #7. Rebellion and stubbornness can be very costly.

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