

Stop chasing Donkeys! – Saul

1 Sam 9:1-2

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.

2 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. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.

Background – Samuel was getting older and while he was upright and a man of God, his sons were the complete opposite.

1 Sam 8:1-3

1 When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel.

2 The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. 3 Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice.

1. Faith is not hereditary but is dependent on the individual.

Thank God for this because it means no body has an unfair advantage simply because of their birth and secondly, our salvation does not hinge on our parents' poor choices.

This means that me being a believer in Jesus will not automatically pass on to my children. They have to have a personal encounter with Jesus themselves and accept Him as their Savior. The Christian is always one generation away from extinction. We never hear about Samuel's sons after this chapter!

And because of Samuel's sons, the people of Israel demanded a King. Granted they also were rejecting God as King by asking for a human King. They were trading-in. Rejecting the Rolls Royce for a

pathetic jalopy of a car, but the jalopy has shiny red paint! Looked better than anything they had ever seen! And God prompts Samuel to tell the Israelites the ramifications of asking for a King; what it would mean to their economy and lifestyle. The King would take their best produce, take away the people's sons for his army and the daughters for his domestic help, and would also require new taxes to support his enterprise. The people agreed to all these things without an any thought. Why? Because they had never experienced God. They only saw the Rolls Royce from the outside. Never even rode in it, never felt the luxury of the interior, how the seats cradle you, how quiet and peaceful it was on the inside. They were looking at their neighbor's beat up pile of rust and wanted one just like it with a shiny paint job. And so God gave them what they thought would satisfy them.

And so we are brought to chapter 9, where we are introduced to Saul, the soon to be the new 'Israel's Idol' winner.

The first description we have of Saul is his physical attributes. Handsome, more handsome, tall and taller than others. In other words, he was noticeable. While Saul's family wealth is mentioned and Saul's own good physical attributes are mentioned, God is silent on the condition of his heart. Perhaps there was nothing worth saying about the spiritual condition of Saul's heart.

Saul's heart was blank and the God of the universe was about to give Saul an opportunity to get a 'new heart'.

Now, to cut a long story short, Saul's father sends him on a donkey chase. Literally. The family's donkeys had wandered off and it was Saul's job to go retrieve them. God is orchestrating a meeting with Saul using his 'pre-existing conditions'. Donkeys were and still are in parts of the world what we call 'beasts of burden'. Donkeys are used to transport people and merchandise. In this instance, God is using the loss of donkeys as an excuse to get Samuel to have an

encounter with Saul. Something that Saul is totally unaware of, but God has already revealed this to Samuel.

So Saul and a couple of servants set out on this donkey chase, passing through few towns till Saul realizes that they have come far from their beginnings. He rightly assumed that his father would start getting worried and therefore they need to abandon their pursuit and head on back home. And it just so happened that they were approaching the town where Samuel was coming out of. **What a divine appointment.**

But (the servant) said to him, "Behold, there is a man of God in this city, and he is a man who is held in honor; all that he says comes true. So now let us go there. Perhaps he can tell us the way we should go." - **1 Samuel 9:6**

What is telling here is that Saul, being the **leader** of the group was not aware of any 'man of God' in the vicinity, and this 'man of God' was none other than Samuel. Hence, to put it more bluntly, being 'in the know' or having his eyes/ears perk up for the God of Israel was not one top of the list for Saul, like it was for his servant.

So they went up to the city. As they were entering the city, they saw Samuel coming out toward them on his way up to the high place. 17 When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD told him, "Here is the man of whom I spoke to you! He it is who shall restrain/reign over my people." 18 Then Saul approached Samuel in the gate and said, "Tell me where is the house of the seer?" 19 Samuel answered Saul, "I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for today you shall eat with me, and in the morning I will let you go and will tell you all that is on your mind. - **1 Samuel 9:14; 17-19**

So Saul made Samuel's acquaintance and was quite surprised that Samuel would take an interest in him. Saul humbly declares that his family is the smallest in the bigger picture of his tribe of Benjamin. To his credit Saul was modest and humble, even though in reality,

his father was a very wealthy man according to the verses we just read previously.

Don't forget Saul didn't even recognize Samuel. But Samuel was already aware of who Saul was and what it is the God wanted to do for Saul's life. Perhaps we can relate to this.

Physically rich but spiritually bankrupt. Ripe for God to show Himself powerful in the situation.

Dear brother/sister, perhaps your current circumstances have you in such a blank spot or spiritually bankrupt condition. Have you considered that God is very near. Are we ready to meet Him? Are ready to recognize His working in our life? Whatever our problem might be today, financial, loss of loved one, family troubles, health issues, God is the master conductor. It is never too late to give ourselves into His hand and see what He can make out of the mess of our lives.

Or maybe you are in the Samuel season on life where you are being used by God to impact some Saul that God is brining across your path.

Either way the question is are we willing to allow God to work in and through our lives.

2. God will meet us in the midst of whatever circumstance we are in, do we recognize Him?

24end So Saul ate with Samuel that day. 25 And when they came down from the high place into the city, a bed was spread for Saul on the roof, and he lay down to sleep. 26 Then at the break of dawn Samuel called to Saul on the roof, "Up, that I may send you on your way." So Saul arose, and both he and Samuel went out into the street. 27 As they were going down to the outskirts of the city, Samuel said to Saul, "Tell the servant to pass on before us, and

when he has passed on, stop here yourself for a while, that I may make known to you the **word of God.**" - **1 Samuel 9:24-27**

My dear friend, meeting with God doesn't always involve a super holy moment, or a super emotionally high moment, or even a very public moment. Most importantly, God meets us when we are ready. Saul was ready. The ground was prepared, the seed is about to be sown...the Word of the Lord is now going to be revealed to Saul.

Samuel anoints Saul, tells him that God has made him ruler of all Israel and as a sign of the authenticity of the Word of God, prophesies 3 things over Saul.

2 When you depart from me today, you will meet two men by Rachel's tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah, and they will say to you, 'The donkeys that you went to seek are found, and now your father has ceased to care about the donkeys and is anxious about you, saying, "**What shall I do about my son?**"' 3 Then you shall go on from there farther and come to the oak of Tabor. Three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you there, one carrying **three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a skin of wine.** 4 And they will greet you and give you two loaves of bread, which you shall accept from their hand. 5 After that you shall come to Gibeath-elohim, where there is a garrison of the Philistines. And there, as soon as you come to the city, you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre before them, prophesying. 6 Then the **Spirit of the LORD will rush upon you,** and you will prophesy with them and be **turned into another man.**
- **1 Samuel 10:2-6**

First prophecy, our Heavenly Father is saying the same thing, "What about my son? What about my daughter? When are they

coming home? Our Heavenly Father is waiting for us to turn to Him. Like the prodigal father, waiting for us to turn from our pigpen of an existence to enjoy all that He has in store for us. Are we ready to return to our Father?

Second prophesy was about 3 men going to sacrifice to God at Bethel. Bethel means 'House of God'. I say this is great divine planing. So we saw a Father and now we see the Father's house. And there is a sacrifice involved and then there is bread and wine, mentioned. There is only one person I can think of in all scripture to whom sacrifice, bread and wine, all 3 things mentioned here can be applied without fail. Jesus our sacrifice, His body and blood given for us, by which we can approach the Father in His house! And then it gets better, the Holy Spirit is poured out on Saul, as the last sign of prophecy!

Jesus rose from the dead and walked with Cleopas and his friend on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24. Cleopas and the other disciple did not recognize Jesus. And this becomes important later. Jesus walking with them explains to them all that Moses and the prophets had to say about the Messiah. Then later that evening what happened at the table?

30 When he (Jesus) was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them.31 And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. 32 They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" 33 And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, 34 saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" 35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. - **Luke 24:30-35**

Jesus was known to them in the Breaking of the Bread! Dear Friend, we can only know Jesus when we accept His broken body for us and His shed blood for us. The Bible promises us the Holy Spirit to all those to accept this sacrifice. And that has not changed even from Saul's time!

That's why the writer to the Hebrews encourages us with these words:

Hebrews 4:16 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

3. God is revealed to us only in the person of Jesus when are ready to accept His sacrifice for our sins

I hope we are in a position to receive mercy and find grace from God today. And if you are not yet ready, my prayer for you dear friend is that God would continue to work in your life to call out to you in your current situation and to orchestrate the 'donkey events' in your life to draw you to Himself.

Finally, what did Samuel promise Saul? What did Samuel say would happen after all the 3 signs were fulfilled? The Father's call, the sacrifice and the pouring of the Holy Spirit on Saul's life. At the end of all this what happens?

6 Then the Spirit of the LORD will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be **turned into another man.** - **1 Samuel 10:6**

Being turned into a new person is what the good news is all about. God does not want to leave us the same, does not want to leave us with just our circumstances as our point of reference. God has far

greater plans for you and me. He has an eternal plan for you and me. And the starting point for that is Jesus. We are to approach Him by faith in the Son of God.

If we die in our sin without accepting Jesus and then get to see Him judgement, we cant say at that time “ah yes, Jesus save me, thank you for dying on my behalf!” There is no Faith involved. Because at that point we are actually seeing Him. There is no provision for the blood of Jesus to be applied on us if we die without Jesus.

When we reject Him while we live, what we are saying in essence is “God, thanks for Jesus, but no thanks for you in my life, I got this and can figure everything out”. We think we are wise in being able to figure out our present and future life, but in fact we are fools. The Bible says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom.

When we realize that we have to face an eternity with or without God, fear about the future dawns on us. And that’s a good place to be in, because we ready to meet the God of our salvation.

Saul starts out on a good note, but starting a race is different from finishing well and winning! Simply starting doesn’t get us rewards. What does the Bible say?

Hebrews 12:1-2 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses (of faith), let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

So this ‘new man or new woman’ that God births when we accept Jesus, the so called ‘born again experience’ is just the beginning of the race!

Up till this point in our life, we weren't even sensitive to what God wanted us to do. We were our own masters, doing whatever we thought was right in our own eyes. We were chasing our own donkeys. Going from town to town, from one thing to another thinking we were doing the right thing!

Ephesians 2

1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sin 2 in which you **once walked** (*past tense*), following the course of this world (*sometimes we were simply keeping up with the Joneses, our friends and neighbors*), following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience (*other times, we were out right being led by demons!!*)

- 3 among whom we all once lived (*past tense*) in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind (*feeding every thought, or appetite or desire; hedonists; taking pleasure in nothing but ourself; we were our own masters*), and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

In other words, Paul is saying there are only two kinds of people, those who are spiritually dead but physically alive, destined for destruction versus those who he is about to describe. We used to belong to the first group just described here.

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our sins or trespasses, made us alive

New birth or being made new Spiritually is something God performs. We cannot pass this on to our children, we cannot buy this New birth in the market and we cannot create it through our wisdom.

5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ-by grace you have been saved- 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

(This is again past tense...after we are saved, He has already raised us out of this Earth and earthly life and has seated us with Him in Heaven in and through Christ Jesus, doesn't say He is GOING to raise us or that He is GOING to make us sit, We are ALREADY seated with Him...or are we?

We are supposed to be ALREADY Seated with Him, not still chasing our donkeys!!).

7 so that in the coming ages *(Here is the Future Tense and what AGE is He talking about, not this Carbon life form age, He is talking about the time of the NEW Heavens and NEW earth...that would be a Different Age)*

he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus *(what riches? Something we cant even fathom, eye has not seen nor any ear heard of the wonderful things prepared for those who love Him)* . 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

(Our salvation is entirely His work; since it's a gift, we simply have to receive it by faith and that is the extent of our doing ...it is simply extending out our beggar's hands to receive Salvation from God).

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. - **Ephesians 2:1-10**

(We ARE...present tense..not we were or going to be...meaning that this work of God is ongoing; it can only be ongoing in Christ Jesus. If we continue to abide in Christ, meaning abide in His Word,

be able to hear what He has to say for every aspect of the remainder of our life...we cannot go back to re-do our life, but we can from this point forward allow God to work in us..allow Him to prune us and cultivate us for what? GOOD WORKS.

Up till this point Paul had nothing good to say about our old life..he called our previous works...dead, demonic and hedonistic or self gratifying or self satisfying. But the New Man and New Woman are continuously being Worked on and created in Christ for Good Works which God has already made a list of!! God has prepared before hand, even before the earth was created, God had a list of whatever He wanted us to do in Christ Jesus. Paul asks us to WALK in good works. Why would Paul use the word Walk rather than use the word 'Do good works'?

The Bible answers that in Revelation 14:13, where John talks about those who die in Christ Jesus, their works/good deeds will actually follow them! We follow Christ looking at the author and finisher of our faith, and our works follow us! We are going from the temporary to the eternal, and our works in Christ Jesus are also following behind us. God wants our hard work to last all eternity. If we work hard for earthly gain, well that will last only as long as the earth lasts! It is better to find out from God what it is you are supposed to be doing in Christ and its never to late to find out.

That's why a believer in Jesus needs to spend time with God every morning before the start of the day to set the tone for the challenges that will be coming our way that day. God may not reveal to us His 5 year plans for our lives, but He sure will reveal to us what we need to hear every time we open His Word.

Practically speaking, is it better to go buy a fire extinguisher after your carpet catches on fire or is it better to be prepared by having one in the house already for such occasions?

Is it better to wait to go get gas till the car comes to an absolute halt because it ran out of gas, or is it better to keep some gas in the tank always?

Is it better to ask God to prepare you for life's daily challenges or to wait till crisis hits and then we can go crying out to God?

4. God wants us to produce fruit that will last all eternity

May God help us fulfill all His plans for our life.