

Whom the Lord Calls He Qualifies

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January 16, 2008

I've been studying 1 Samuel about the rise and fall of King Saul. It's interesting to note that in 1 Samuel 9:2 Saul is described as "a choice young man, and a goodly; and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he." He was large in stature -- a full head and shoulders taller than anyone else in Israel.

So picture with me for a moment this strapping young man, a good, humble person. The prophet Samuel tells him he will be the first king of Israel. God will "give him another heart" (1 Sam 10:9) and will turn him "into another man" (1 Sam. 10:6). Great things start happening in Saul's life. On his way back to his house, he meets a company of prophets and is able to prophesy along with them.

When it comes the day of his coronation, they call for Saul's family to come forward; but Saul is so humble that they can't find him anywhere. Samuel inquires of the Lord about Saul's whereabouts, and the Lord answers, "Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff" (1 Sam. 10:21-22). They find him and make him come forward. The coronation begins.

Some of the people don't think Saul is good enough to be their king. They question how a young man with no more confidence than to hide at his own coronation could possibly be brave enough to lead them into battle. But 1 Samuel 10:27 says that Saul, "held his peace" or ignored his critics.

After his coronation, Saul returns to his home and continues to work in the fields. He doesn't immediately rise to pomp and circumstance. He doesn't suddenly become a murderer. That will come later when he's "no longer little in his own sight" (1 Samuel 15:17).

While working in his field, a group of people come to him saying they are being threatened by the Ammonites. "The Spirit of God comes upon Saul" at the hearing of this and he leaves to help them (1 Samuel 11:6).

With God on his side Saul rescues the Ammonites. The people are ready to retaliate against Saul's critics, "Who is he that questioned 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Bring the men, that we may put them to death." But Saul says, "There shall not a man be put to death this day; for today the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel."

In the beginning, Saul gives the glory to God, but eventually he starts to see his successes as his alone. His God becomes "Samuel's God." He eventually becomes a

proud, arrogant man tormented by evil spirits who will not wait upon the Lord, will not obey God's commands, and seeks to usurp the priesthood authority of Samuel.

But this lesson isn't about Saul's downfall -- other than as a warning to all of us that Satan does "desire to have you that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31). He especially loves to ensnare those who are chosen to do great things. It must give him a sick thrill to know he's taken down a once good and humble person. He must gloat when someone with such great potential becomes a useless, vile and twisted instrument.

But let's set that aside for a moment. What I really want to examine from this story is Saul's initial calling as king and how we can apply that to ourselves.

1) First, note that Saul didn't seek out the kingdom. He didn't work in his fields day and night dreaming of becoming King of Israel. He didn't choose it, God chose him. Just as God chose Saul for a work, he has chosen you for one. It probably isn't something you would think of on your own. It may seem so everyday and ordinary that you do not comprehend the magnitude of its influence, or it may be something big and overwhelming.

2) After choosing Saul, God gave him a vision of who he could be -- through the words of the prophet Samuel and possibly through his own moments of prophesy (1 Samuel 10:11). If you continue to seek the Lord, and pray for guidance, God will give you a vision of what you can become and do with His help.

3) God changed Saul's heart, made him into another man - made him capable of being a great king. If the vision seems too great or if the requirements to fulfill the call seem too daunting, remember God always qualifies whom He calls. You are not alone. God can change you into someone capable of the task.

4) Saul's initial reaction was to hide from his calling. He still felt inadequate; still felt the overwhelming nature of the task at hand. He was humble enough to realize he wasn't capable on his own. Our first instinct when given a vision of great things is to feel our own inadequacies and run from the opportunity. "Can't someone else do this better than I can?" is often a typical response. Humility is a good thing when it forces you to seek the Lord's help, but don't hide! There's a difference between humility and fear.

5) Saul didn't let the naysayers get to him. He ignored their jeering. When you start along God's appointed path for you, there will be critics. Ignore them!

6) Saul went about his everyday tasks, working in the fields (1 Samuel 11:5). Most of the time, we have to keep on doing our daily tasks. Few of us can quit our jobs and

serve the Lord full time. The hard part for most of us is retaining our vision while the everyday tasks of life continue. I believe God wants it this way because it is only amidst potential distractions that we learn balance and that we must always keep our eyes on Him.

7) Saul humbly gave credit to God when he succeeded in vanquishing the Ammonites and would not allow those who had doubted him to be punished. As successes start to come, as the pieces start to fall into place, always remember to give God the glory. Remain humble and compassionate.

8) Remember Saul's fall. Remember to avoid pride and impatience like the plague. Live your life in constant gratitude to God. Listen to His guidance, follow it explicitly and to the letter, and always remember to wait upon the Lord. His timing is always best.

Saul's life is a wonderful yet tragic representation of what we can become with God at the center of our lives, and just how low we can fall when we take our eyes off the Master. Gratitude and acknowledgement to God is our lifeline which connects us to God. With Him on our side nothing is impossible. May we follow the good characteristics of Saul and learn from his mistakes is my prayer for each of us today.