

1 Samuel 10:1-16 – “Samuel Anoints Saul”

(Pew Bible Page: 232)

Intro: Last week we saw God chose Saul to be the first king of Israel, knowing full well that Saul was a “Natural Man,” rather than a “Spiritual Man.” God did this because His people insisted on having “a king like all the other nations.” All the nations surrounding Israel had kings that were merely Natural Men, so God gave His people what they asked for: A Natural Man – a man with an unbelieving heart, in other words. This raises two questions: 1) God may have chosen Saul, but will Saul choose to comply? After all, God works through persuasion, not compulsion. Would Saul go along with God’s call to become king? 2) Because Saul’s eventual failure as king was part of God’s plan, what does that signify? Did God “set Saul up for failure”? Did God deny Saul any necessary gift? Was God “stacking the deck” with Saul? In other words, was God in any way responsible for Saul’s failure? Tonight’s passage will begin to answer these questions.

Proposition: God persuaded Saul to become king and promised Saul all that he needed to succeed.

Billboard:	(v.1)	Proclamation
	(vv.2-8)	Affirmation
	(vv.9-16)	Confirmation

(v.1) Proclamation – God instructed Samuel to anoint Saul as King, and Samuel faithfully complied: **1 Samuel 10:1** - *1 Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him and said, “Has not the LORD anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies. And this shall be the sign to you that the LORD has anointed you to be prince over his heritage.* What was the meaning of anointing? To be “anointed” with oil in the Old Testament was to be marked as someone chosen by God to fulfill a special role or purpose. God had instructed Samuel to anoint Saul as King, and Samuel faithfully followed God’s instruction. Notice how carefully Samuel explained to Saul the meaning of what he was doing. **1 Samuel 9:26–10:1** - *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.”* Samuel told Saul before anointing him that he intended to “make known to you the word of God.” He did this by applying the anointing oil to Saul, then carefully explaining to Saul the meaning of the sign he had given: *1 Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on his head and kissed him and said, “Has not the LORD anointed you to be prince over his people Israel? And you shall reign over the people of the LORD and you will save them from the hand of their surrounding enemies. And this shall be the sign to you that the Lord has anointed you to be the prince over his heritage.* Samuel’s anointing of Saul was a sign – a wordless communication symbolizing that Saul from that moment forward was designated by God to perform a special work. But the wordless proclamation of anointing was not sufficient in this case. Samuel also gave Saul a plain, verbal explanation of God’s will for Saul. That proclamation came through God’s words, uttered through God’s servant Samuel. This is of huge importance because faith is based on trusting and obeying what God has said, and it is obvious from this verse that God’s meaning was not hidden from Saul in any way. Through the sign and the proclamation, Saul was being told exactly what God intended for him.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] Saul received a plain sense explanation of God’s will for his life in the sign and in Samuel’s proclamation of God’s will.

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[ILLUSTRATION] I remember my first “on the job” day as a new missionary in Paraguay. I had answered God’s call to become Business Manager for the Paraguay field. Gwen and I had worked for three years to gain the support necessary to serve, and we had sought out additional preparation so that we’d be ready for the job. Imagine my surprise when the first question from my team leader that first day was, “What do you imagine you’ll be doing?” It was a good question, and there was plenty for me to do as it turned out. But I must confess that my first thought was, “If you don’t know, what chance have I got?” A note of uncertainty is not conducive to a steadfast commitment in one’s calling.

[APPLICATION] God did not leave Saul in doubt about what He was calling him to do. God’s plan was very definite, and to Saul must have sounded very strange and unappealing. As we’ve seen, Saul doesn’t seem to be a natural leader of men at this point in his life. If it wasn’t for his servant’s intervention, Saul wouldn’t have been listening to Samuel that morning. God made plain to Saul what he was asking him to do, as God makes plain to all men what He asks them to do to be saved. God’s will is not hidden. He is a direct communicator about all things that matter in this life and the next. The question is, will we listen to what He is saying, and follow His plan for our life?

(vv.2-8) Affirmation – God proclaimed His intention for Saul, but would Saul accept God’s plan? To make doubly certain His intention for Saul and persuade Saul to go along, God promised Saul three signs of affirmation that day. God often uses sign to strengthen weak faith. Strong faith rests in the Word of God alone and would have accepted God’s proclamation in verse one without hesitation. Weak faith needs to be bolstered and God understands how to persuade the weak when necessary. There are two strengthening elements in the use of signs or prophecies. The first is the most obvious: When something is prophesied by God to occur and then happens, one can be certain that God is the One who brought the event to pass. God would persuade Saul to follow His plan through having all three of the prophesied signs come to pass that day. Secondly, signs speak to a significance of something greater than the event itself. Again, God would point Saul toward three promises of help He would give Saul when Saul obeyed God’s call to be king over His people.¹ Let’s begin with the first sign: **1 Samuel 10:2 – 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?”’* Samuel prophesied that Saul would encounter two men near Rachel’s tomb who would confirm as true Samuel’s word of the previous day that the lost donkeys had been found, and that these men would even use the very same words Saul had spoken to his servant, “My father will be saying, ‘What shall I do about my son?’” God would confirm to Saul that He was the one speaking to him by bringing this to pass, and God would do more through this sign. This sign was also a promise from God. “I will speak to you through my servant Samuel. You can count on my counsel through the words of my servant.” The second sign is prophesied in **1 Samuel 10:3–4 - 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.* Again, when God brought this to pass later that day, Saul would know for certain that God was the one speaking to him. This sign also has a further meaning. The three men going up to Bethel were on their way to worship God at that “high place” (remember, Shiloh and the tabernacle have been destroyed by the Philistines). The gifts they were taking with them were sacred offerings intended for worship. By giving two of the loaves of bread to Saul, God was saying, “I promise to supply all your needs from the

¹ Warren Wiersbe is the source of the promises in the three signs.

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abundance that belongs to me.” The third prophesied sign is found in **1 Samuel 10:5-6 - 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.* This is the most surprising sign of all and when it came to pass later that day it even caused those who saw it to wonder what it meant. Saul would meet a band of prophets coming from the “high place” near his hometown, and the Spirit of the Lord would “rush upon” him, causing Saul to join them in prophesying. This, God promised, would turn Saul into another man. The meaning of this sign is another promise to Saul: God would send Saul His Spirit, enabling him to fulfill the duties that God had charged him to carry out. Samuel was so certain that Saul would be persuaded by these signs that he gave Saul instructions to carry out once he had been persuaded: **1 Samuel 10:7-8 - 7** *Now when these signs meet you, do what your hand finds to do, for God is with you. 8 Then go down before me to Gilgal. And behold, I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do.* Samuel’s instructions for Saul’s future ministry were direct: “When you know God is with you, do what you ought to do.” Samuel also added a second word to this which apparently looked forward to Saul’s eventual failure: **8** *Then go down before me to Gilgal. And behold, I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do.* This was an instruction given to test Saul’s obedience and was not fulfilled until chapter 13:8ff, and as we’ll see when we study that passage, it was a test that Saul failed. These three signs of affirmation were given to assure Saul that God would provide all he needed for success as king: God would speak to him through Samuel; God would supply all Saul’s needs from His abundance; God would send His Spirit to Saul to give him power to fulfill his mission. All Saul need do was trust and obey God to succeed. The point is clear: If Saul ultimately failed, the fault would be entirely Saul’s, not Gods. God was not “setting Saul up for failure.”

[DOCTRINAL POINT] God gave Saul three signs of affirmation that contained promises of all the help he would need to succeed as king.

[ILLUSTRATION] Weak faith needs affirmation to give it strength. We find this principle repeatedly in Scripture. Remember Gideon and his famous fleece. Reflect on the Book of Hebrews’ insistence that God’s covenants were given to support wavering faith in God’s promises (cf. Hebrews 6:18). Faith ought to need nothing more than the naked promise of God to rest on, but God knows our weakness and graciously gives us signs to strengthen our faith.

[APPLICATION] Saul’s faith was an example of what John Calvin called “temporary faith” meaning faith that springs up like grass for a moment, but later fades away to nothing. Jesus also spoke of such faith in His parable of the soils. The second kind of soil Jesus described this way: **Mark 4:5-6 - 5** *Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. 6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away.* Some men have only this temporary kind of faith, but the example of Saul in this passage and the parable of Jesus in Matthew 4 shows us that God invites these kinds of men to enter the depths of deeper belief – belief that can change a man’s destiny. God’s affirmations are His invitations to go deeper with God. They are also God’s means of holding men accountable. Saul can never say that God did not speak to him personally. Nor can he claim that God did not provide by grace all that he needed for success. God speaks and He is always sincere in His proclamations. When we trust and obey God, we set ourselves up for success.

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(vv.9-13) Confirmation – God gave Saul every gift he would need to be a success as king. All these signs were fulfilled that very day: **1 Samuel 10:9 - 9** *When he turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart. And all these signs came to pass that day.* It is important for us not to confuse what is being said when we are told, “*When he turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart.*” We are not to bring a New Testament understanding to this, thinking that Saul experienced “regeneration” or conversion.² For New Testament Christians, that is indeed what happens, but it was not so in the Old Testament. All that is meant by this is that Saul experienced a change of attitude, a willingness to go along with God’s plan. Wiersbe says, “The young farmer would now think and act like a leader.” When the signs came to pass later that day, God’s work of persuasion was complete. Saul was willing. The text skips briefly over the first two signs’ fulfillment, saying only, “*And all these signs came to pass that day.*” We are given more insight into the fulfillment of the third sign in **1 Samuel 10:10–13 - 10** *When they came to Gibeah, behold, a group of prophets met him, and the Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he prophesied among them. 11 And when all who knew him previously saw how he prophesied with the prophets, the people said to one another, “What has come over the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?” 12 And a man of the place answered, “And who is their father?” Therefore it became a proverb, “Is Saul also among the prophets?” 13 When he had finished prophesying, he came to the high place.* As prophesied, the Spirit of God “rushed on” Saul and he began to prophesy along with the band of prophets coming down from the “high place.”³ What is meant by this? Keil and Delitzsch tell us that “*prophesy*” here means, “An ecstatic utterance of religious feelings to the praise of God.” Saul apparently broke out in song, or ecstatic verbal praise to God when the Spirit “*rush upon*” him. This happened in the neighborhood of Saul’s home, and the reaction of his neighbors to this event is telling: **1 Samuel 10:11–13 - 11** *And when all who knew him previously saw how he prophesied with the prophets, the people said to one another, “What has come over the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?” 12 And a man of the place answered, “And who is their father?” Therefore it became a proverb, “Is Saul also among the prophets?” 13 When he had finished prophesying, he came to the high place.* Saul’s neighbors simply could not believe that Saul was having “a religious moment.” It was so out of character for Saul that it became proverbial for something unexpectedly out of character. Their reaction was, “What? Do you mean to tell me that *Saul* is now among the prophets?” The comment, “*And who is their father,*” basically means, “What leader among the prophets thought *this* was a good idea?” Acceptance of Saul as king would be met with similar skepticism as we’ll see in verse 27 of this chapter, but that’s for another day. The point is that through these signs Saul was persuaded to accept God’s plan, and that those who knew Saul best were not at all certain that this was genuine given Saul’s background.

[DOCTINAL POINT] Through His proclamation and affirmation, God confirmed to Saul His will and persuaded Saul to accept the kingship.

[ILLUSTRATION] Saul willingly entered the part God assigned him to play in the drama of redemption. God withheld nothing from Saul that Saul would need to succeed as king. All Saul needed to succeed was to trust and obey God. Does this remind you of Adam and Eve in the garden? Like Adam, Saul was given all he needed for his success. Like Adam, all Saul had to do was to obey. Like Adam, Saul ultimately became a failure, and that failure was not God’s fault; it was entirely Saul’s. God is pointing us forward to Jesus through all of this. The only king who never fails is King Jesus.

² Wiersbe; Keil & Delitzsch.

³ But this does not signify conversion since the Spirit can use even the unconverted (cf.28:6-7; Mt. 7:21-23).

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[APPLICATION] Which king are you trusting? There are only two kings men can put their trust in. We either trust Adam or we trust Jesus. When we trust Adam we obey the desires of our fallen nature, letting sin overrule what we know to be right. We make our own gods; gods that have eyes but cannot see and ears that cannot hear. To put our trust in man’s wisdom rather than God’s is a recipe for disaster. When we put our trust in God, His Word overrules the desires of *“this body of death”* resulting in a skillfully lived life for God’s glory. Only two kings. Which are you trusting?

Conclusion: Israel wanted *“a king like all the other nations,”* and that is what she got! May God grant that we, as New Testament Christians, do not settle for less than God in grace offers us.