

## 1 Samuel 10:17-27 – “The Heart of the Problem”

(Pew Bible Page: 232-3)

**Intro:** The importance of public announcements about matters of state cannot be overstated. When something significant is afoot in a nation, those surrounding its leader spend countless hours making sure that the new policy or action being announced is carefully crafted, both in word and in symbol so that it will make the highest impression on the public. Tonight, we have before us the public proclamation of Saul as king. Samuel carefully crafted every action and word for the occasion, but when the critical moment arrived, Saul was nowhere to be seen. His omission is significant and gives us the key to Saul’s eventual failure as monarch. What was the heart of Saul’s problem? Was this same problem the heart of Israel’s problem as well? Let’s find out.

**Proposition:** Unbelief follows emotions rather than faith; belief rules over the heart by following God’s leadership.

Billboard:	(vv.17-19)	Rejection of God’s Rule
	(vv.20-24)	Rejection of God’s Selection
	(vv.25-27)	Rejection of God’s Covenant

Each section of our study follows a common pattern in that each section contains evidence of God’s faithfulness, and an indication of unfaithfulness on the part of at least some of His people. Tonight, we’ll work our way through each section, then make application before closing our time together.

(vv.17-19) Rejection of God’s Rule – Israel rejected God’s rule over them, insisting instead that God appoint a king to be their leader. In these verses, God speaking through Samuel pointed out the nation’s rejection of His personal rule over them. **1 Samuel 10:17–19 - 17** *Now Samuel called the people together to the LORD at Mizpah. Samuel called a public meeting of the nation and its tribal leaders so that he could fulfill God’s order to name a king. As we read this passage, we notice that every move Samuel makes is carefully choreographed. It is obvious to my mind at least, that nothing Samuel does is casual; all his words are carefully chosen for the public proclamation of God’s man to rule over the nation. When the people had assembled, Samuel began by rehearsing before the gathered assembly the proof of God’s trustworthiness as their leader in the past: **18** *And he said to the people of Israel, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.’ God’s leadership over His people had stood the test in the past. He had led them out of bondage in Egypt; had defeated all the kingdoms opposing them in the land He had given them. He had been faithful to raise up judges to defeat their oppressors, Midianites, Canaanites, Amorites, and Philistines. God had been faithful, so there was no need for His people to seek a king. Nevertheless, they did: **19** *But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses, and you have said to him, ‘Set a king over us.’ Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your thousands.”* Their seeking a king was a rejection of God’s rule over them. As we saw before, God went along with this, because He had ordained for them to have a king in His gracious plan for Jesus, Messiah, to come into the world. It wasn’t wrong for them**

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to have a king, but it was sin for them to demand a king from selfish motives. Their demand was an expression of their mistrust of God.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] God’s past faithfulness proved Him worthy to lead them, but the people rejected God’s leadership.

(vv.20-24) Rejection of God’s Selection – Samuel brought the people together to witness God’s present selection of Saul as king. He used a process for authenticating God’s choice that the people were familiar with. Israel knew from experience what the writer of **Proverbs 16:33** made explicit later in writing: - **33** *The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.* Samuel called the people to witness for themselves God’s choice of Saul as king: **1 Samuel 10:20–21 - 20** *Then Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. 21 He brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its clans, and the clan of the Matrites was taken by lot; and Saul the son of Kish was taken by lot.* The people saw for themselves that God had chosen Saul, but at that point something went wrong with Samuel’s carefully choreographed plan: *But when they sought him, he could not be found.* Saul was about to find out what Jonah later found out the hard way: You can run from God, but you can’t hide! Samuel consulted the Lord to see what had gone wrong: **1 Samuel 10:22–23 - 22** *So they inquired again of the LORD, “Is there a man still to come?” and the LORD said, “Behold, he has hidden himself among the baggage.” 23 Then they ran and took him from there. And when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward.* The people rejoiced in God’s present selection of Saul to be king, having witnessed with their own eyes God’s choice of Saul. And in their eyes, Saul was everything they could want: **1 Samuel 10:24 - 24** *And Samuel said to all the people, “Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? There is none like him among all the people.” And all the people shouted, “Long live the king!”* This was the moment Samuel had planned for, but there was a fly in the ointment! Why was Saul hiding? Was he hiding because he felt a proper sense of humility? Or, was his choice to hide himself due to another, more ignoble motive? I believe Warren Wiersbe gives us the answer: *“Was he hiding out of modesty or fear? Probably the latter, because true humility accepts God’s will while at the same time depending on God’s strength and wisdom.... Saul was a reluctant ruler who followed his emotions instead of his faith.”*<sup>1</sup> Saul knew very well that he was God’s selection to become king, but Saul rejected God’s selection. His experience with Samuel and the three signs given in the earlier part of this chapter were unmistakable. Furthermore, God’s choice of him by lot before the eyes of all the people doubly confirmed this to Saul. Saul knew God’s choice, but he chose to let his fear overwhelm such faith as he had been given.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] God’s present selection proved Saul worthy to lead Israel, but Saul’s fear overruled his faith.

(vv.25-27) Rejection of God’s Covenant – Samuel’s next move was designed to codify God’s choice to establish the monarchy. Samuel wrote a constitution, if you will, or a covenant looking to the future, describing the rights and duties of the king and the people. **1 Samuel**

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<sup>1</sup> Warren Wiersbe

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**10:25 - 25** *Then Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship, and he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the LORD.* This covenant looked to the future and was a promise of God’s leadership over His people through the king of His choice. Again, this is evidence of God’s faithfulness to the people. God’s history with His people proved Him faithful in the past. God’s selection of Saul by lot provided evidence of His faithfulness in the present. Now, Samuel’s covenant between the King and the people in a book laid before God attested to God’s intention to remain faithful to His people in the future. Three witnesses, one past, one present, and one looking to the future, attesting to the faithfulness of God. How were these witnesses received? The reception was decidedly mixed: *Then Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his home.* **1 Samuel 10:26–27 - 26** *Saul also went to his home at Gibeah, and with him went men of valor whose hearts God had touched.* **27** *But some worthless fellows said, “How can this man save us?” And they despised him and brought him no present. But he held his peace.* Some men “whose hearts God had touched” committed themselves to Saul heart and soul, following him home and becoming his servants. But others refused to commit themselves to the new king saying, “How can this man save us?” Clearly the same disease Saul suffered infected these people: They let their fear overwhelm faith. They should have been clear that God had chosen Saul to be king, having witnessed Saul’s selection by lot, but they refused to trust the choice they had witnessed God making. Fear overcame faith once again. And that’s not all. Saul also let fear overcome faith: Instead of defending God’s choice of himself when these men insulted him by refusing to bring a gift to their new king, the text tells us: *“But he held his peace.”* Why? Because Saul was afraid to confront them with their unbelief, for he too was unbelieving.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] God’s covenant promises future faithfulness, but those whose hearts are unmoved by God will not trust it.

[ILLUSTRATION] I once knew a man who had an absolute terror of dentists. This came from being taken as a boy to an uncaring dentist who refused to properly anesthetize him before filling a tooth. For the rest of his life, his fear of dentists kept him from receiving proper care. He chose to walk the floor in agonizing pain, rather than trust a good dentist who could have given him relief. Fear kept him from trusting someone who only had his best interest at heart.

[APPLICATION] That was Saul’s problem. That was Israel’s problem. And that is our problem today. The heart of man’s problem is that we chose to follow our fallen heart’s fears, lusts, and self-centeredness, rather than trusting the one who has proven His love for us in the past, the present, and the future. Sin’s damage has devastated the heart of man. We struggle continually with “*this body of death*,” as the Apostle Paul put it – our old fallen heart. James described our struggle in his epistle: **James 1:12–15 - 12** *Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.* **13** *Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.* **14** *But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.* **15** *Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.* This is a description with surgical precision of how sin does its terrible work of destruction. God reveals

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Himself to man, then tests each man to prove if he has genuine faith or not. Fear rises when we are tested. Lustful desires surge to the surface when we are tempted. Pride digs in when someone questions our competence, or criticizes our children, our judgment, our church, or our opinions. You name it! All manner of things can provoke our fallen hearts, tempting us to obey emotion rather than God’s Word. This is the struggle of every believer. Will our heart overrule God’s commands? Will we give in to anger, bitterness, fear, or greed, or will we follow God’s directions? The unbelieving heart constantly overwhelms God’s revelation of himself to humanity. Everyone everywhere knows that God is there, but only those “*whose hearts God [has] touched*” will overrule their fallen hearts and choose to obey God’s commands. Only those whose hearts have been redeemed, and whose minds are being transformed can have victory over the desires of the old fallen nature. It’s the heart, dear one. The struggle is between God’s truth and man’s desires. Only those who choose to obey God’s truth – who live by faith in other words – who choose to obey God’s words rather than their heart’s desires, certainly belong to God. Saul was exactly the kind of king Israel would appreciate because he like so many among God’s people, chose to follow his heart rather than His King. But that will never do for people like you and me. Our calling is to follow the King, rather than our hearts. And we have a peculiar advantage that Saul and his generation didn’t have. Because of Christ’s victory on Calvary, we have the indwelling Spirit of God to help us make the right choice. True, sometimes the old nature wins the battle for a moment, but it cannot ultimately win the war. The heart is the heart of the problem, as we’ll see further in the story of Saul.

**Conclusion:** With one exception which we’ll observe in our next study, this failing is going to dog Saul for the remainder of his reign. Saul never got over letting his heart overrule his head. Let us pray that we in our day do not make this same mistake. The renewed mind of the believer must overrule the old nature. That is our struggle; that is our calling. And we have the Holy Spirit to help us win the battle.