

God deals with the three matters on Saul's mind

Three things were on Saul's mind at the time of his being chosen as Israel's first king. There was his need to find the asses. Then there was Saul's material and financial need. Earlier in the story he had been concerned about having no silver with him^{□1} and his servant had apparently given away what he had^{□2}. Thirdly, there was the question whether Saul would have the ability and prowess to do the work of a king. These three matters are immediately cared for by God.

□1 9:7
□2 9:8

1. Saul's practical concerns

1. God shows Saul that he is able to take care of his practical concerns. Almost immediately something happens that shows Saul that God is well able to find the asses^{□1}. Saul meets someone who tells him the asses are found.

□1 10:2

2. Saul's material and physical well-being

2. God shows Saul that his material and physical well-being is also supervised by God. They meet men with abundant supplies of food and wine^{□1}, some of which will be given to Saul and will meet his needs^{□2}.

□1 10:3
□2 10:4

3. Saul's needs for him to be king

3. God shows that his Spirit is able to give unusual powers and that he will be given whatever he needs for him to be king. He is to go on a little further and will meet a group of prophets - men trained by Samuel in ministry and in charismatic worship^{□1}. When he meets them the Spirit will come upon Saul and he will be caught up in spiritual ecstasy and praise (which is what 'prophesy' means here)^{□2}. These three signs will show him that all his needs and concerns will be met. He can do whatever is in his heart. He will not need special guidance all the time but will need to get on with whatever tasks present themselves for his attention^{□3}. Soon Samuel will give him further guidance^{□4}.

□1 10:5
□2 10:6
□3 10:7
□4 10:8

• *Saul is empowered by the Holy Spirit*

Immediately after this word of advice from Samuel, Saul becomes a 'new man'. Saul is already a believing man. What is happening here is not his 'conversion' but his being empowered by the Holy Spirit to do the work of a king in accordance with God's call^{□1}. The three promised assurances come to pass immediately^{□2}. One of them is described in detail^{□3}.

□1 10:9
□2 10:9
□3 10:10-12

Signs of God-given maturity

The new king is a spiritual young man at the beginning and immediately shows some signs of God-given maturity and wisdom.

1. Saul's control of his tongue

1. He has learned to control his tongue^{□1}. He soon goes back to report to his uncle. It would be natural for him to boast of his new call but he has the wisdom not to do so.

□1 10:13-16

2. Saul's wisdom to simply let God work

2. He has the wisdom to let his call work out without manipulation. He simply lets God's programme take its course. Samuel calls the people to Mizpeh^{□1}, reminds them of their sinful insistence on having their own way^{□2}, and calls them to a meeting in which a king will be found for them^{□3}. By a process of casting lots, the tribe of Benjamin is chosen as the tribe which will provide the king, then the family of the Matrites, and eventually the lot focuses on Saul. He has done nothing to promote himself and has actually taken positive steps not to be around during this time^{□4}. Further prayer and seeking the Lord is needed to find him^{□5}.

□1 10:17
□2 10:18-19a
□3 10:19b
□4 10:20-21
□5 10:22

• *Saul does not manipulate the situation*

All of this means that Saul has continued letting God work out his future for him and has taken no steps to manipulate himself into the position of being king. God has done it all for him.

• So in the final decision God's calling is clear

Yet when the final decision has become clear, it is obvious that Saul is appropriate for the task God has called him to. He has the stature and the bearing that is appropriate for a king¹. His position is clear from God and is confirmed by the people². Saul need never have any doubts about the matter. It is God who has put him into the position of being king.

1 10:23
2 10:24

3. From the start, Saul needed a forgiving spirit

3. **From the very beginning he faces the need of a forgiving spirit.** Samuel instructs the people¹. Everyone goes back home from Mizpah and the kingship has been peacefully settled². Bodyguards and supporters accompany Saul³. However, a few troublemakers violently disliked Saul and his being king. Saul had the wisdom and spirituality to treat them in a peaceable way⁴.

1 10:25a
2 10:25b
3 10:26
4 10:27

• An opportunity for Saul to get revenge on his opponents

Soon the opportunity to get his revenge on the troublemakers presented itself. Nahash the Ammonite started mustering his forces ready to attack Jabesh-Gilead¹. The people were ready to surrender². Nahash agrees on condition that the people become incapacitated for any kind of rebellion and that Israelis disgraced by its inability to do anything about it³. The people ask for time⁴ and begin looking for help⁵. Saul gets to hear about it⁶ and is empowered by the Spirit⁷. He gathers the nation together boldly⁸, tells the people of Jabesh-Gilead what to do⁹, and the next day the Ammonites are thoroughly defeated¹⁰. It is this victory that demonstrates irrefutably the God-given calling and ability of the new king, and so Saul is in a position to take revenge on those who had disparaged him¹¹. But he again confirms that he has a forgiving spirit¹². All of this demonstrates Saul's calling, and his kingship is confirmed yet again¹³.

1 11:1
2 11:1b
3 11:2
4 11:3
5 11:4
6 11:5
7 11:6
8 11:7-8
9 11:9-10
10 11:11
11 11:12
12 11:13
13 11:14-15

• God gives the nation victory

• Then Saul demonstrates forgiveness

4. Saul's good beginning required persistence

4. **The good beginning required persistence if it was to lead to full blessing for Saul.** God rewarded his forgiving attitudes by giving him a further confirmation of his calling, without his having to act in violence or in self-vindication. Saul has begun well. When in later chapters we find Saul becoming full of violence and hostility towards David, we must not forget that he began well. The day was to come when his disobedience ruined his life. But reward and ministry can be lost. John said 'Look to yourselves so that we do not lose what you have worked for but may win a full reward'¹. It is he that endures to the end who is kept safe and receives the reward for having served God.

1 2 John 8

• He that endures to the end is kept safe and receives the reward

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