

## **“God Never Sleeps” – 1 Samuel 9:1-24**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

#### **A. Different Today – Bible Study**

#### **B. Background**

1. Samuel, the last Judge of Israel was old.
2. The elders of the 12 tribes urged him to appoint a king to rule the nation before he was gone.
3. Though Samuel resisted, God told him to do what they ask.
4. Chapter 9 tells how Samuel found them a king.

### **II. TEXT**

#### **A. Vs. 1-2**

**<sup>1</sup>There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. <sup>2</sup>And he had a choice and handsome son whose name was Saul. There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.**

1. The tribe of Benjamin was located in the center of Israel.
2. Several generations before, the Benjamites had been in a civil war with the other tribes & had almost been wiped out.
3. By *this* time, they'd recovered their good standing among the other tribes.
4. The Benjamites were known as excellent fighters & Kish had a reputation of being one of the best of the best.
5. His son Saul was the perfect pick to carry on the family name.
6. He was not only supremely competent, he was easy on the eyes; “tall-dark-& handsome.”
  - a. He was the kind of man other men would follow & the women said, “Oo-la-la!”
  - b. He was a tall Mel Gibson as William Wallace in *Braveheart*, only even *more* manly.

#### **B. Vs. 3-5**

**<sup>3</sup>Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. And Kish said to his son Saul, “Please take one of the servants with you, and arise, go and look for the donkeys.” <sup>4</sup>So he passed through the mountains of Ephraim and through the land of Shalisha, but they did not find *them*. Then they passed through the land of Shaalim, and *they were not there*. Then he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they did not find *them*. <sup>5</sup>When they had come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him, “Come, let us return, lest my father cease *caring* about the donkeys and become worried about us.”**

1. Donkeys were used by the wealthy to haul goods.

2. Kish's went missing one day. So he sent his son & a servant to look for them.
3. Their route took them back & forth across the hills & valleys of central Israel.
  - a. Nearly everyone traveled by foot, the average distance was 25 miles a day.
  - b. Young men like these 2 could cover as much as 35 miles.
  - c. Later we learn they searched for 3 days, so they would have been able to cover a lot of ground.
4. As they neared the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> day, Saul knew his father would be growing more concerned about *their* safety than the donkeys.

### C. Vs. 6-10

**6**And he [v. 8—the servant] said to him, “Look now, *there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honorable man; all that he says surely comes to pass. So let us go there; perhaps he can show us the way that we should go.*”

1. The servant was referring to Samuel who lived at there at Ramah.
2. He suggested they stop and see if Samuel could tell them were to find the donkeys.
3. In earlier chapters we've seen how Samuel's *reputation* had spread throughout all Israel.
4. Notice how this servant describes him: He is a *man of God*; honorable, with a sure word.
  - a. That wouldn't be a bad choice for an epitaph; for what to put on one's headstone.
  - b. Here lies so & so – Man/Woman of God: Virtuous & True.
5. What are you a man/woman *of*?
  - a. Samuel was a man *of God* because his *relationship with God* is what **defined** him.
    - 1) It's what gave him his identity & sense of purpose.
    - 2) He lived to *please* God, not himself or others –
    - 3) That's why he was *virtuous & spoke the truth*.
  - b. What's *your* reputation?
  - c. What word would they pick to describe you?
  - d. If that question is *disturbing*; if the words that come to mind *trouble* you,
  - e. Know that *it's not too late* to or beyond the power of God to edit your spiritual resume & heal your reputation.

**7**Then Saul said to his servant, “But look, *if we go, what shall we bring the man? For the bread in our vessels is all gone, and there is no present to bring to the man of God. What do we have?*”

6. It was *customary* when visiting a notable person to bring a gift.
7. Because this visit to Samuel was unforeseen, Saul didn't think they had anything to offer.
8. After 3 days, even their provision of bread was getting thin.

**8**And the servant answered Saul again and said, “Look, I have here at hand one-fourth of a shekel of silver. I will give *that* to the man of God, to tell us our way.”

9. The servant had brought along a few ounces of silver – probably as a back-up

in case they ran out of food & needed to buy some.

10. That would make a fitting gift to give Samuel, who could then tell them where to locate Kish's donkeys.

11. Now we get a little language lesson . . .

**<sup>9</sup>(Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he spoke thus: "Come, let us go to the seer"; for he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer.)**

12. It's believed by conservative scholars that these chs. of 1 Samuel were written by Samuel himself.

- a. Another writer, probably the prophet Nathan, picked it up later.
- b. That later writer added a word of clarification here.
- c. The old name for a prophet was 'seer.'
  - 1) They were called this because it's **how** they received the Word of God.
  - 2) They had visions & were given special revelation by the Spirit of God.
- d. Seers became known as 'prophets' during the time of the kings.
- e. "Prophet" referred to their **office**, their **role** of speaking for God.
- f. So 'Prophet' was their **calling** as God's spokesman, 'Seer' meant **how** God spoke to them.

**<sup>10</sup>Then Saul said to his servant, "Well said; come, let us go." So they went to the city where the man of God was.**

13. Saul was all set to find out if the seer could point them in the right direction to find his father's donkeys.

#### **D. Vs. 11-13**

**<sup>11</sup>As they went up the hill to the city, they met some young women going out to draw water, and said to them, "Is the seer here?" <sup>12</sup>And they answered them and said, "Yes, there he is, just ahead of you. Hurry now; for today he came to this city, because there is a sacrifice of the people today on the high place. <sup>13</sup>As soon as you come into the city, you will surely find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. For the people will not eat until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterward those who are invited will eat. Now therefore, go up, for about this time you will find him."**

1. That they were drawing water means it was early evening & approaching time for the evening meal.
2. When Saul asked if Samuel was in town, they said he was just ahead of them.
3. If they hurried they'd find him on his way to where a sacrifice was being offered.
  - a. Because the Philistines had destroyed Shiloh & the tabernacle, there was no central place for worship in Israel.
  - b. Instead, **each** community built an altar on a local hilltop.
  - c. These served as a meeting place for the people to worship God.
  - d. Near the altar, they often build a large hall where they could gather to share a sacred meal.
4. That's what was happening that evening at Ramah.
  - a. Samuel had returned to his hometown from one of his many circuits, on the

- day of a special feast.
- b. The people were waiting for him to come & give his blessing; then the feast would commence.
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5. It's based on this story that the Jews of Jesus' day had developed the habit of praying a prayer of thanksgiving & blessing before eating.
    - a. Because the first Christians were Jews, the practice passed over into the Church & is the basis of saying grace at meals.
    - b. Though saying grace is a *routine* – it doesn't *have* to decline into just an empty ritual, any more than eating dinner every day is an empty ritual.
    - c. We eat because our body needs the nourishment
    - d. We pray because our spirits do too.
    - e. The key is that just as we need healthy food, we also need to turn our hearts to the Lord in sincere communion with Him.
    - f. A quick, "God's neat – Let's Eat" isn't what the Spirit has in mind by *real prayer*.

**E. Vs. 14-17**

**<sup>14</sup>So they went up to the city. As they were coming into the city, there was Samuel, coming out toward them on his way up to the high place.**

**<sup>15</sup>Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear the day before Saul came, saying, <sup>16</sup>"Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him commander over My people Israel, that he may save My people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have looked upon My people, because their cry has come to Me." <sup>17</sup>So when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, "There he is, the man of whom I spoke to you. This one shall reign over My people."**

1. As Samuel was walking by the city gate on his way to the high place, he saw Saul & his servant.
  2. God immediately spoke to him that this was the man He'd chosen as the ruler of Israel.
  3. The day before, God had told Samuel that 24 hours later he'd meet the future king.
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4. These verses yield an key insight into *how* God works at *important moments* & *crucial turning points* in our lives.
    - a. The selection of a king for Israel was a momentous change with far-reaching consequences.
    - b. And it was something Samuel dreaded.
  5. So God *prepared* him a day ahead of time for the fateful meeting with Saul.
    - a. He built up Samuel's *expectations*.
    - b. He fanned the flame of hope to calm Sam's concerns, by speaking of the great deliverance the new king would bring.
  6. And then when Samuel laid his eyes on Saul, the Spirit said, "There he is!"
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7. Those who've walked with the Lord for a while know that spiritual growth is less like a smooth, even ramp as it is a set of stairs.
    - a. We go along for a season without much apparent growth,

- b. Then we come to a moment of crisis where we take a major step up in our spiritual experience.
  - c. That's followed by another plateau, another level period,
  - d. It's easy to assume that nothing's happening during the plateaus;
    - 1) that it's just the crises,
    - 2) the times when we move into a deeper *knowledge of & intimacy with* the Lord that *count* in terms of our walk.
  - e. But we only *get* to the next step up by *traveling the length* of the plateau.
  - f. It's *there* we're learning the truths we'll need to see us take that next step up.
8. One of the signs we're about to take a major step up, is a sense of *expectancy*.
- a. The Spirit of God begins to stir us up. That stirring takes many forms.
  - b. It might be a *holy discontent* with the status quo, an *openness to new things*.
  - c. It might be a *deep longing*, like a hunger of the soul for more of God.
  - d. For some it's a *warning* about failing to respond in faith *when* the opportunity comes.
9. However the Spirit stirs us for change – the key is that we respond by *preparing our hearts*.
- a. When the moment comes, we must be alert to *recognize* it –
  - b. And have *already made the decision* to step out in faith, embracing the opportunity to go deeper with Christ.
10. Because God had foretold this meeting, Samuel had prepared.
11. And when Saul walked through the city gate, Samuel knew exactly what to do.

#### **F. Vs. 18-21**

**<sup>18</sup>Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, "Please tell me, where is the seer's house?" <sup>19</sup>Samuel answered Saul and said, "I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today; and tomorrow I will let you go and will tell you all that is in your heart.**

- 1. While Samuel recognized Saul right away, Saul had *no idea* who Samuel was.
- 2. What a difference in *spiritual perception*.
- 3. Notice how the 2 men *arrived* at this important meeting:
  - a. *Samuel* had been told by God about the encounter with Saul.
    - 1) In v. 15 it says God *spoke in Samuel's ear*. Literally, God "uncovered his ear";
    - 2) It's a phrase used to describe pulling aside a friend's head-covering to whisper a confidence in his/her ear.
    - 3) It speaks of close, personal communication.
  - b. *Saul* came to this meeting because of some stray donkeys.
    - a. The whole thing began 3 days before when a thought sprang into their minds to head for the hills.
    - b. Saul covered miles searching for them & ended up passing by Samuel's hometown,
    - c. Just as he was going to pull the plug & go home, his servant *just happened* to remember someone who might be able to help them.

- f. And it just so happened that servant had brought along enough silver for a gift.
4. While Saul's spiritual perception was nil, that didn't hinder God from leading him.
    - a. You see, it was God Who planted the thought in the donkeys to skedaddle.
    - b. It was God who prompted the servant to take along the silver.
    - c. It was God who kept those donkeys out of Saul's sight so he'd pass by Ramah.
    - d. And it was God that jogged the servant's memory that Samuel lived there.
  5. It's obvious how God led *Samuel* to his meeting with Saul; it tells us – God told him.
  6. What we need to see is that God was *just as active* in leading Saul there.
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7. In the very same way, God is at work in all of our lives to bring us to those divine appointments that will see us made into the men & women we were created to be.
    - a. *Right now* as we sit here this Sunday, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, God is *in* tomorrow, & Tuesday, & Wednesday, the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, & 6<sup>th</sup> – getting them ready for us.
    - b. He's at work *right now* in Ventura, Camarillo, Ojai, Santa Barbara, Goleta, LA, San Diego, where ever we'll be on those days – & He's setting things up.
    - c. Whatever is needed to bring you to the right place at the right time so God's will can be accomplished in your life –He's making sure gets done.
  8. We can have utmost confidence of this because Romans 8:28-29 says:
 

**28We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. 29For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, . . .**
  9. Our God never fails in the plans He has for us.
    - a. He never tires, He never gets weary or takes a nap.
    - b. Psalm 121:4 says that He who keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.
  10. God doesn't just have the "big picture" – He's got all the *details* covered too.
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11. To prove Samuel was indeed the prophet of God, he told Saul . . .
 

**20But as for your donkeys that were lost three days ago, do not be anxious about them, for they have been found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on you and on all your father's house?"**
  12. All Israel knew of Samuel's mission to find a king.
  13. He makes it clear Saul is the one they've been looking for. His family is the royal dynasty that shall reign.
  - 21**And Saul answered and said, "Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak like this to me?"**
  14. This *isn't* false humility; he's sincere—he means *every* word of it.
  15. The Benjamites had been decimated by civil war several generations before.
    - a. In his tribe, his family wasn't reckoned among the leaders.
    - b. They were well-to-do & had a good reputation as warriors, but Kish wasn't

notable.

16. Kings come from noble stock – not from commoners like Saul’s family.

17. So he says, “You talkin’ ta’ me? You must be mistakin’ me for someone else.”

### **G. Vs. 22-24**

**22**Now Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the hall, and had them sit in the place of honor among those who were invited; there were about thirty persons. **23**And Samuel said to the cook, “Bring the portion which I gave you, of which I said to you, ‘Set it apart.’” **24**So the cook took up the thigh with its upper part and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, “Here it is, what was kept back. It was set apart for you. Eat; for until this time it has been kept for you, since I said I invited the people.” So Saul ate with Samuel that day.

1. Knowing he’d meet the future king of Israel that day, Samuel had given instructions that the choicest portion of the sacrifice be held in reserve & served to the one he directed.
2. Samuel saw Saul’s humble response in v. 21 as *commendable*; a *recommendation* rather than a disqualification for the throne.
3. At this point, there’s no ambition or arrogance in Saul.
  - a. When Samuel said he was the desire of all Israel, Saul didn’t reply, “Well, finally! It’s about time someone recognized my greatness & fitness to rule over everyone else!”
  - b. On the contrary, he was *surprised* by the attention & felt unqualified.
4. Samuel brushed aside Saul’s *reluctance*, knowing it was in fact *evidence* of his qualification to lead.

## **III. CONCLUSION**

### **A. Samuel Liked Saul**

1. Later we’ll see that despite Samuel’s sadness at Israel’s demand for a king, he really liked Saul.
2. In the beginning, Saul seemed to have only good qualities.
  - a. He *looked* every inch like a king. His *attitude* was right.
  - b. He got off to a great start – it looked like it was all going to work out.
3. But it didn’t last & Saul ended up being *every bit the disappointment* Samuel had warned about.
4. *Even then*, Samuel was *heartbroken* over Saul’s failure to reach his potential.
5. God will have to come & tell Samuel to *stop mourning* over Saul’s fall from grace.
6. Saul *started* well, *real well*.
7. But it’s not how you *start* that matters – it’s how you *finish*.
8. The Apostle Paul understood this well – & filled his letters with expressions of his desire to end well.
  - a. In his farewell speech to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20 he said he was determined to finish his course with joy, not regret.
  - b. In 1 Cor 9 he spoke of his concern about being disqualified before reaching the end. [24-27]
  - c. In Philippians 3:13-14 he wrote -

**Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**

- d. In his last letter, written just days before his execution, he's able to say [2 Tim 4:7]

**I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.**

### ***B. Faithful to the End***

1. We're well aware of the leaders, like Saul, who fall.
2. It seems it's only those who **blow up** who make the news.
3. You don't hear many stories about the humble servants who spend 50/60 or more years in faithful service of the Lord then go home to their eternal reward **without ever dishonoring God.**
4. Let's not fail to honor those faithful ones, **like Samuel**, who end as well as they began.
5. I'm so thankful for Pastor Chuck who's never wavered in over 40 years; who's never been the object of scandal – & **continues** to be a marvelous example of faith & godliness.
6. I end with this story about Billy Graham who's 86 years old, & has left a marvelous testimony of godliness behind him.
  - a. In January 2000, leaders in Charlotte, NC, invited Graham to a luncheon in his honor.
  - b. Billy hesitated to accept because he struggles with Parkinson's disease.
  - c. The Charlotte leaders said, "We don't expect a major address. Just come and let us honor you." So he agreed.
  - d. After many wonderful things were said about him, Dr. Graham stepped to the rostrum, looked at the crowd, and said, "I'm reminded of Albert Einstein, the great physicist who this month has been honored by Time magazine as the Man of the Century. Einstein was once traveling by train from Princeton when the conductor came down the aisle, punching tickets. When he came to Einstein, Einstein reached in his vest pocket. He couldn't find his ticket, so he reached in his trouser pockets. It wasn't there, so he looked in his briefcase but couldn't find it. Then he looked in the seat beside him. He still couldn't find it.
    - 1) The conductor said, 'Dr. Einstein, I know who you are. We all know who you are. I'm sure you bought a ticket. Don't worry about it.'
    - 2) Einstein nodded appreciatively. The conductor continued down the aisle punching tickets. As he was ready to move to the next car, he turned around and saw the great physicist down on his hands and knees looking under his seat for his ticket.
    - 3) The conductor rushed back and said, 'Dr. Einstein, don't worry, I know who you are. No problem. You don't need a ticket. I'm sure you bought one.'
    - 4) Einstein looked at him and said, 'Young man, I too, know who I am. What I **don't know** is where I'm going.'"



- e. After the laughter died down, Billy continued, “See the suit I'm wearing? It's a brand new suit. My wife, my children, and my grandchildren are telling me I've gotten a little slovenly in my old age. I used to be a bit more fastidious. So I went out and bought a new suit for this luncheon and *one more occasion*. You know what that occasion is? This is the suit in which I'll be buried. But when you hear I'm dead, I don't want you to remember the suit I'm wearing. I want you to remember this: I not only know who I am – I also know where I'm going.”
7. Let's make sure *we* are numbered among those who finish well.