*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

May 31 – June 5

David: A Man after God’s Own Heart

**Monday, May 31 1 Samuel 8:1-22**

*“Give us a king”*

The passage presents us with a vivid picture of Israel’s longing for a human king and rebellion against the kingship of God. In rejecting God’s lordship, they forfeit its security and blessings and embrace instead a lesser model of God’s governance. As a paradigm for modern believers, Israel’s desires, demands, and failures offer us opportunities to examine our own faith. How often we reject God’s loving rule, opting instead for some compromise.

Israel’s demand for a king is sinful in its motive: they desire to be like all the other nations. Tired of being who they are, the Israelites attempt to cross over the divinely ordained boundaries in order to become something they were not created to be and are not supposed to be. Valuing respect and acceptance among her neighbors more than her current status as a specially formed community under God’s Lordship, protection, and provision, she will learn too late how truly blessed her God-given position is.

*You, Jesus, are my Lord and I seek no other. Amen.*

**Tuesday, June 1 1 Samuel 9:1 – 10:8**

*“Seeking donkeys, Saul finds a kingdom”*

Responding to Israel’s demand for a king, God chooses Saul to be her first king and blesses him will all that he needs to serve well. But it is also true that Saul is the people’s choice. God grants as their first king the man who in all Israel came nearest to fulfilling their idea of what a king should be – tall, rich, and good looking.

Saul and a servant set out to find a group of lost donkeys belonging to his father. Along the journey, Saul and Samuel meet for the first time. God informs Samuel that this young man is the one who will govern Israel. Samuel anoints Saul with oil, kisses him, and announces that God has anointed him as the leader over his people Israel. The transformation of Saul from an unassuming youth to the king-designate is certainly a drastic change for him personally, but it is also revolutionary for the nation. Such radical claims and actions as Samuel has taken will require dramatic confirmation. In order to meet these needs, Samuel prophesies three events that will happen to Saul on his return home. They will confirm his selection.

*You, Lord, are at work behind the scenes, bringing about your will. Amen.*

**Wednesday, June 2 1 Samuel 10:9-27**

*“Saul is crowned king”*

All three of the signs meant to confirm Saul’s anointing are fulfilled, but only the third sign is detailed in the text. The spirit of God comes on him and empowers him to join the prophets. This arouses the derision of the local inhabitants who apparently know him and his family well. Their rhetorical question, “Is Saul also among the prophets?” expects a negative answer. In this light, the question affirms Saul’s new spiritual gifts, not because he belongs naturally to the band of prophets but because he has been gifted by God to be the legitimate ruler of Israel.

Samuel calls for a national convocation at Mizpah where he reminds the people that God brought them out of Egypt and delivered them from its power. Now they have rejected God by demanding a king for all the wrong reasons. The people present themselves in successive order before Samuel so that the king may be designated by the casting of lots. But when Saul is selected, he is nowhere to be found. His hesitancy to take up the task reflects badly on Saul and does not bode well for the future.

*Your Spirit, Lord, enables me to do your will; may I do it without hesitation. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

May 31 – June 5

David: A Man after God’s Own Heart

**Thursday, June 3 1 Samuel 11:1-15**

*“Saul defeats the Ammonites”*

Saul has not yet acted as king. He has been anointed by oil and the Spirit of God. He has been publicly acclaimed and confirmed as king. Now, when he gets his first opportunity to function as king, he arrives from the fields looking every bit the farmer and hardly a reigning monarch. But he rises to the occasion and functions as king splendidly, becoming Israel’s savior. The chapter revolves around the theme of deliverance. Deliverance is the driving question of the elders of Jabesh Gilead at the beginning (verse 3), is the promise of the new king at the center (verse 9), and is the happy conclusion of the matter (verses 13).

This will be Saul’s one shining moment in history. Here he functions like the true leader God uses to bring salvation and peace to Israel. The key to Saul’s effectiveness may be seen in the event described in verse 6. When Saul hears of the Ammonite threat, he is touched by the Spirit of God and is moved into action by God’s initiative and in God’s timing. Sadly, this is not what we will read of Saul in the future.

*Only by your Spirit, Lord, will I successfully follow your will for me. Amen.*

**Friday, June 4 1 Samuel 12:1-25**

*“Then Samuel addressed all Israel”*

This chapter is commonly referred to as Samuel’s “farewell address.” While it is true that Samuel is bringing to a close his role as leader of Israel, his death is not recorded until 1 Samuel 28. He will continue to play an important part for some time to come, including the anointing of another king (David in chapter 16). Rather than a final speech, then, Samuel’s sermon before the national assembly is the final step in making Saul king. Samuel’s message contrasts his own faithfulness with the infidelity of Israel. They are responsible for having a king, and if that king proves to be a failure, it is their own causing.

But, it is not all bad news. There is a “second chance” for Israel. They have sinned, but God has incorporated their failure into his own plans. He is capable of overcoming their failure, of turning it into his means of salvation, and of giving them a new start. Each time Israel fails or begins a new venture, it seems God reestablishes his promises and recommits himself never to abandon them. He is their God, and they are his people.

*You are with me, Lord, in spite of my failures and shortcomings. Amen.*

**Saturday, June 5 1 Samuel 13:1-22**

*“You have not kept the command of God”*

The chapter contains the first of two confrontations between Saul and Samuel in which the prophet announces God’s rejection of Saul, first as father of an eternal royal dynasty (13:13-14) and then as king of Israel (15:23). What is Saul’s sin? It is his failure to keep the command of God. On the surface of the story, Saul’s offense is a failure to wait for Samuel’s arrival before consecrating the battle through sacrifice. But more generally, he is disobeying God’s instruction as given through Samuel. This, in turn, exposes Saul’s larger problem: he fails to accept the structure of authority established for him by God and his prophet Samuel. This is a pattern that will be repeated in chapter 15.

Thus, Saul’s guilt derives from his determination to usurp power rightly belonging only to God and his servant, Samuel. The text presents us with a portrait of Israel’s first king who has been given all the blessing and empowerment any of us could hope to receive from God. Yet when pressed on every side by the approaching Philistine army, Saul panics and disobeys God.

*I commit to obeying you, Lord, even when I’m under pressure. Amen.*