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## 1 Samuel 10:17-27 “Hiding from Responsibility”

Intro. Have you ever gone to a restaurant, hung up your coat, and noticed a sign warning that the management is not responsible if it gets lost or stolen? Ever read the small print on your airplane ticket? The airline takes no responsibility for any delays or missed connections, and if your baggage is lost, they only have to pay an amount agreed upon at a convention they held in Warsaw in 1955. Park your car in some high-priced garage or lot, and a sign will tell you that management is not responsible for any items lost or stolen from your vehicle.<sup>1</sup>

Do those “Not responsible for...” disclaimers bother you? They do me. It seems no one takes responsibility for anything anymore. In our text today, we have read the story of a man who did not want to be responsible for leading his nation. Yet the call of God upon his life was very clear.

Saul illustrates a common problem. Many people do not want to accept responsibility. Many young men avoid marriage because they don’t want the responsibility of a wife and children. Many people refuse leadership in a church or other organization because they don’t want the responsibilities of leadership. Shall we then fill positions of leadership only with people who are pressured into it, or who are self-centered and ambitious?

The reason I am preaching this message today is because we will be filling positions of leadership within our church over the next 3 months. We are in the process of electing committee chairpersons, deacons, and organizational directors. And I hope that God will use the lessons of this text of Scripture to call the right people to accept leadership responsibility within our church. But what I say today will have application to many other realms of life.

So I hope you will listen carefully as we look at this text together. Now from this story, I have gleaned 4 important truths:

### I. WE SHOULD RECOGNIZE GOD’S AUTHORITY OVER OUR LIVES

This was the underlying issue of this whole story. Israel had asked for a king. Back in 1 Sam. 8:5 they said to the prophet Samuel, “Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” But they failed to keep in mind that God was their King. He ruled Israel through His written law, through the High Priest, and through prophets like Samuel. And even when God permitted an earthly King, we see from v.25 that the King was not to be an autonomous ruler, but submit to a written guideline from God, a constitution, if you will. One such body of “constitutional safeguards” is reflected in Deuteronomy 17:14-20. Pagan kings made their own laws and answered to no one. But the king of Israel was to be under law himself, especially God’s law.

Now there is a parallel between Israel and the Church. As God was King over Israel, even so Jesus is Lord and King of the true Church. He reigns from heaven over us through His written Word, the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14), and through the Bible preaching & teaching.

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<sup>1</sup> David E. Leininger, *Collected Sermons*, ChristianGlobe Networks, Inc., 2005.

Notice one reason why God should be our King, and why we should submit to His authority. It is because He is our Savior. Samuel said in v.18, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all kingdoms and from those who oppressed you.’” God was not only their Creator, but also their Savior. He had saved them from Egyptian bondage. He had given them victory over the pagan nations in Palestine, and had given them their land, and their cities. Surely Israel should have obeyed them out of gratitude.

Even so, we should yield our lives to Jesus Christ as Lord, for He is our Savior. He died to set us free from the penalty of sin, and from the power of sin over our lives. So if Christ calls upon you to do something for Him, shouldn’t you do it?

But Israel failed to remain under the sole authority of God as their King. Samuel said in v.19, “But you have today rejected your God, who Himself saved you from all your adversities and your tribulations; and you have said to Him, ‘No, set a king over us!’” The people’s request for a king was again condemned as a rejection of the Lord’s leadership. They wanted a king they could see. They did not want to live by faith, but by sight. They also wanted to be like the other nations. Regardless of their reason, they were wrong in demanding an earthly king.

Do we make the same mistake? Do we fail to submit to God’s authority? Do we reject God’s rule over our lives? Are we rejecting God by pushing Him aside and acknowledging someone or something else as our “king” or top priority? If so, let us repent of that sin. Oh, let me appeal to you to surrender you life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He is worthy of your total allegiance. And until you do, you will not have peace. You will not have God’s blessing. Will you say to the Lord Jesus right now, “Lord, you are my King. I will do whatever you want me to do.”

Now once we accept God’s authority over our lives, then:

## II. WE SHOULD DISCOVER GOD’S WILL FOR OUR LIVES

Since Israel rejected God as King, God decided to give them what they asked for. By the way, that is so often true to this very day. If you refuse to accept God’s perfect will, He will often give you what you want. Then in time you will realize that you have made a mistake. You will learn the hard way that God’s will is best. So God opened the first Burger King. He said, “Have it your way.” That meant that someone would have to be king. But He did not allow *them* to choose their own king. The new king must be God’s choice.

So Samuel called upon Israel to assemble at Mizpah, not to choose a king, but so that God’s choice would be publicly revealed. We see from v.1 that Samuel already knew whom God had chosen, and had already anointed him. But he knew that there were some who would not accept his word for it. So he wanted God’s choice to be revealed in such a way that most all would agree that God had clearly revealed His will. But how would Israel discover God’s choice? We find the answer beginning in the last of v.19, “Now therefore, present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your clans.” Once that was done, some method was used to narrow the selection down. Perhaps the High Priest used the Urim and Thummim<sup>2</sup> to simply indicate “Yes” or “No” as each tribe was presented. I think it’s more likely that Samuel or the High Priest cast lots.<sup>3</sup> For example, the names of all the 12 tribes could have been put in some

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<sup>2</sup> Ex. 28:20; Num. 27:21; 1 Sam. 22:10; 1 Sam. 28:6; and 1 Sam. 30:8.

<sup>3</sup> Following the battle of Ai, Achan was discovered by lot (Joshua 7:16). Other examples of casting lot are in the Book of Jonah in which the mariners found the guilty Jonah, and the example in the Book of Acts, in which the

container, or into someone's lap, and then one tribe was chosen. So in v.20 we read, "And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen." This must have been a surprise. The tribe of Rueben, the firstborn, was not chosen. Based on prophecy, some might have expected the tribe of Judah to be chosen. Instead, Benjamin was chosen! He was the youngest son of Jacob. His tribe was the least of all the tribes. Next, the selection was narrowed further. V.21 says, "When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was chosen. And Saul the son of Kish was chosen." Perhaps at that point all the names of the men of the family of Matri were written down, put in some container, and then Saul's name was chosen by divine providence.

Why was Saul chosen? I doubt he was chosen because of his spiritual qualifications. As the story unfolds, Saul was not a godly man. Saul was chosen simply because he was the very type of the national ideal of a hero-king. Both here and in chapter 9:2 his stature and good looks were the only qualities mentioned. He was in the crowd like a tree among the shrubs. God knew that what Israel wanted was a fighter with physical strength, plenty of bone and muscle to save them from the mighty Philistines. They did not care about moral, intellectual or spiritual qualities. So why did God give them what they wanted? He wanted them to learn the hard way that spiritual qualities are far more important in God's kingdom than physical qualities. And yet to this very day even Christian people still vote for political and even spiritual leaders based on how big or good looking they are! If a presidential candidate is significantly shorter, or has significantly less hair than the other candidate, then 9 times out of 10 he will loose!

So Saul was in a sense the people's ideal of a king. Nevertheless, it became very clear that God had chosen Saul to lead Israel. That was God's will, and so God's call was upon his life was to be king.

If Jesus is Lord of our lives, then we need to discover His will for our lives. The part of His will that is applicable to all Christians is found in His written Word, the Bible. But questions like who to marry, what career you should pursue, where you should live must be answered in other ways. I can't recommend casting lots. Sure, you could take a flower and start pulling the petals, "She loves me; she loves me not," and then decide if God wants you to marry that girl! But I wouldn't recommend it. I believe God will lead you through the inner prompting of the Spirit, and through His providential control of circumstances. He can also use the advice of godly believers.

So getting back to our story, God clearly called Saul to be the first king of Israel. But did Saul obey God's call upon His life? The answer is no. And this leads to my third point:

### III. WE SHOULD ANSWER GOD'S CALL

God's choice had been declared. Saul was the man. When the lot fell upon him, every one expected he should answer to his name at the first call, but, instead of that, none of his friends could find him (v.21b). So in v.22 we read, "Therefore they inquired of the LORD further, 'Has the man come here yet?' And the LORD answered, 'There he is, hidden among the equipment.'" It is clear to me that he was deliberately hiding.

Why was Saul hiding? Some say that Saul was just being modest. That may have been one reason he was hiding. But consider this: He already knew back in chapter 8 that he was God's choice to be king. So I believe he was hiding because he was shrinking from the heavy

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apostles selected a successor to Judas (Acts 1:26). Also, Prov. 16:33 says, "The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is wholly from the Lord."

task that God was laying on him. He was not being summoned to a secure throne, but to “go out before us, and fight our battles.” So this great big fellow, Saul, acted just like a little child. He ran and hid, and they had to find him and bring him out. Perhaps he was hoping the choice would move on to someone else. But he should have stepped out in the open and acted like a king when his name was called. If he had been God-fearing and God-obeying and God-trusting, he would have cried as the prophet Isaiah, “Here am I, send me,” instead of skulking among the stuff.

There were probably other reasons as well. He may have felt inadequate. The enemy had great power. Saul did not see himself as a great military leader. He was from an insignificant family. He was not from a royal family. He had little education & knowledge of ruling a kingdom. What if he failed? But what God calls you to do, He enables you to do. As the apostle Paul thought of the daunting task of being a missionary, he said in 2 Cor. 3:4-5, “And who is sufficient for these things? Not that we are sufficient of ourselves . . . , but our sufficiency is from God.” If God calls you to be a king, you can become a great king. If God calls you to be a missionary or preacher, you can become a great missionary or preacher. If God calls you to become a deacon, He will enable you to become a great deacon.

I remember when I began to realize that God was calling me to preach. I resisted that call for about a year. I would say, “Lord, I can’t preach. I can’t even talk without stuttering.” But God showed me that “our sufficiency is from God.” Whatever God calls you to do, He will enable you to do if you will just trust Him.

Perhaps the main reason Saul was hiding was because he just didn’t want to accept the responsibility of being King. The King was to serve God, and serve the people. He would have so much work to do, so much responsibility, and have little time for himself. So for these reasons, people are reluctant to take on leadership responsibilities.

By the way, did you notice what Saul was hiding among? V.22 says he was hiding “among the equipment.” Since the context refers to a large gathering of people, it could refer to large vessels for holding things, such as food (9:7; 21:5). Or the word could refer to military equipment & supplies (14:1; 20:40; 21:8; 25:13; 30:24). Evidently the crowd of people put their supplies and equipment in one location. The point is he was hiding among things that have worldly value. So often the very people who should be working for God get absorbed and lost in all kinds of worldly things. Can you imagine God calling someone to teach a S.S. class, and yet he can’t be found at church. He is out making more money, or playing golf, or engaging in some other worldly endeavor.

We too have divine calls upon our lives, and too often we hide among the stuff, and try to avoid taking up more responsibility. Are you hiding from God’s call upon your life? Are you hiding from responsibility? Don’t let feelings of inadequacy keep you from answering God’s call. Trust God to supply what you need to fulfill your responsibility.

Last Sunday we had deacon nominations. As a result of that nomination process, up to 13 men will be asked to serve as a deacon. If you are called and asked to serve, you need to seriously consider if God is using the vote of the people & the deacons to call you to deacon service. But will you instead hide from God’s call upon your life? When the phone rings, and you see the caller I.D. reveal that the call is coming from a deacon, will you tell your wife not to answer it? Will you miss church the next several weeks, and no one will be able to find you?

The Nominating Committee will begin work soon. God can use them to reveal His will concerning a ministry in the church in which you should serve. Will you be hiding when they call?

There are many other times when people hide from responsibility. If you conceive a child, you have a responsibility to that child. If you're the mother you are to bring that child into the world. Don't use abortion to hide from your responsibility. And once that child is born, you are to provide & care for that child for the next 18-21 years. But too many men, and even some women, have run from their responsibility. Furthermore, the mother and father should be married, and stay married, and provide a loving, stable home for that child. That is so important for the child's security and well-being.

I've given some example of people who hide from responsibility. I'm thankful for those who have accepted responsibility. This weekend is Memorial Day. We remember those who did not run from their responsibility. They did not flee to Canada when their country called. They answered that call, and served their country in our armed forces. Some even made the ultimate sacrifice and died in battle. But they did not run or hide from responsibility.

Well, God's call upon Saul's life was reluctantly accepted. So Samuel revealed to Israel God's choice to serve as King. And there he was, a head taller than all the other men. He had all the outward appearance of grandeur that they could have wished for. He was good looking. He was the worldly ideal for a king. Now what happened next illustrates my last point:

#### IV. WE SHOULD SUPPORT THOSE WHO FOLLOW GOD'S CALL

One reason we have trouble getting people to fill positions of leadership is because they know that too often they will face criticism & complaints instead of support. But for the most part, Israel set a good example in this regard. In the last of v.24 we read that "all the people shouted and said, 'Long live the king!'"<sup>4</sup> Israel gave positive affirmation of their king. Furthermore, v.27 clearly implies that they presented presents to the new King. This was yet another show of support. Then we read in v.26 of another way some gave support to the new king, "and valiant men went with him..." They seem to be men of strength, valor, and courage; gallant men, who freely offered themselves to be his body guards or first military recruits. And notice why they went with Saul. According to v.26, these were men "whose hearts God had touched." If the heart bends at any time the right way, it is because God has touched it. Now that Saul was chosen by God, loyalty to God was shown by loyalty to Saul.

In contrast, not all in Israel supported their God-called leader. In v.27 we read, "But some rebels said, 'How can this man save us?'" He was not what they expected. Though Saul was a big man, he was from a small and insignificant family. They did not see how such a man could save the nation from their enemies. Criticism will always be directed toward those who lead because they are out in front. They failed to see that what mattered most was the fact that he was God's choice. As Paul later said in Romans 8:31, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" But since they rejected Saul, notice what v.27 goes on to say, "So they despised him, and brought him no presents." They regarded him with contempt, probably because he seemed to lack the qualifications he needed. And they showed their contempt for the new ruler by withholding their gifts which were customary on such occasions.

I believe this principle applies to us today. When God calls someone to serve as a pastor, or deacon, or staff leader in this church, then they should have your support. If they are willing to accept the responsibilities of leadership, then you should accept the responsibility of giving them your support. You can give support with your words, with your gifts, and with your service.

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<sup>4</sup> This was the first time this cry was uttered in the Bible. As you know, a similar statement is still used in modern England.

I also must give a word of advice to those who you who are willing to take on leadership responsibility. Yes, there will always be critics. While we should listen to constructive criticism given in the right way, we cannot be defeated & hindered from God's work by criticism. When Saul heard the criticism, he held his peace. He did not quit his new role just because he was criticized.

Do you realize that even those who have accomplished great things also had to endure harsh criticism? *The Book of Poisonous Quotes* by Colin Jarman records the following assessments: Tchaikovsky said of Handel, "Handel is only fourth rate. He is not even interesting." Anthony Trollop said of Charles Dickens, "Of Dickens' style it is impossible to speak praise." El Greco said of Michelangelo, "He was a good man but he did not know how to paint." If these artists listened to their critics, the world would be a poorer place.<sup>5</sup> Some might conclude that to avoid criticism, you should be nothing, do nothing, and say nothing. But guess what? Then you will be criticized for doing nothing!

The criticism of the people sounds very similar to the reaction of people to God's chosen King, the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a remnant that submits to Him, rejoices in Him, brings presents to Him, and follows Him wherever He goes. They are those whose hearts God has touched. But there are others who despise Him, who ask, "How shall this man save us?" They are offended in Him, stumble at His physical appearance & modesty.

Conclusion: What is your attitude toward Jesus? Is He lord of your life? Are you living in obedience to Him? Is He calling you to serve Him in some special way? Will you say, "Here am I, send me!" Or are you hiding or running from responsibility, and from God's call upon your life? I want to encourage you to stop hiding. Stop making excuses for why you are not serving God when He calls upon you through His church. Trust in His power. He will enable you to serve effectively. God will raise up people to support you, and stand with you, and help you. Will someone come forward today to surrender to a call to preach, or a call to missions? If you said "no" to deacon service last year, will you say "yes" if you are asked this year? If the Nominating Committee asks you to service, will you now be prepared to say "yes" to God's call upon your life?

Sources: Ronald A. Beers, ed., *Life Application Study Bible* (Tyndale House & Zondervan, 1991); James Burton Coffman Commentaries (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press); Stephen Felker, *Devotional & Explanatory Notes on the Entire Bible* (Col. Hghts, VA: Published by Author), 2006; John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old and New Testament* (accessed from *Online Bible* [CD-ROM]), 1760; Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible* (accessed from *Online Bible* [CD-ROM], 1706-1721); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 2 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1982); Ben F. Philbeck, Jr., *The Broadman Bible Commentary: 1-2 Samuel*, Vol. 3 (Nashville: Broadman, 1970); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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<sup>5</sup> *Preaching* (March-April, 2004), 74.