

WD June 3, 2024

“Why Don’t We Have Better Government?”

Election cycles come and go but the results always feel the same. A lot of money spent. A lot of lobbying is exercised. A lot of campaign promises end up like the palm branches of Palm Sunday, laying in the dirt, trampled by personal ambition and the insatiable need to be in power. A lot of ads and debates turn into as interruptions and gotchas during every Presidential season especially. We say we are tired of it all, but we, the voters, keep ending up with the same results.

The daily flush of news wears me out. I can’t hardly watch it on most days. We know just how much elected officials can quickly mess things up for us but we continue to vote hoping for a better outcome, but it’s only getting worse—farther from the Lord, more corrosive, cynical, and bias towards a secular state. The worst part about it are all the Christians in office who see themselves as champions of godly principles. Sadly, they too end up serving themselves and serving their own agendas to stay in power at the expense of Truth and morality. Even more troubling is the slippery slope that is deliberately and actively putting the crosshairs on any church who still champions the Word of God. So, why don’t we have better government?

I think the answer is revealed to us in the character of King Saul. Oh, like any who enter office, Saul began strong, and with very godly intentions. 1 Samuel 10 mentions how Saul received the Holy Spirit and prophesied with other prophets. At First, Saul looks the part just like a fresh and exciting candidate in a campaign add. In verse 23-24 the people are very taken by his outward appearance. Saul is described as “a head taller than the rest.” Well, he looks the part of a great king, prophesying and tall. “That’s good enough for me!” say the Israelites.

But let’s remind ourselves that asking for a king in the first place was a rejection of God as their king. Yet, all the tribes present themselves and subject themselves to this Saul as king. 1 Samuel 13:1 tells us that Saul would be 30 years old when he became king and reign for forty-two years. In time we the reader of 1 Samuel would soon discover Saul as typical of any other in office holder. He is arrogant and cowardly going which ever way the wind blows; according to the polling of the people instead of following the Word of God.

1 Samuel 13 everything begins to reveal itself. The Lord commands Saul to destroy the Philistines in 1 Samuel 13. If we keep reading, we discover that Saul was told by Samuel to wait for the prophet to arrive first before offering sacrifices to God and before initiating a battle with the Philistines. He didn’t listen. He became impatient with Samuel’s timing (The Lord’s timing) and plowed ahead with the sacrifice without Samuel. When Samuel shows up Saul gives a lame explanation for why he didn’t wait.

Saul replied, “When I saw that the men were scattering (in fear of the Philistines), and that you did not come at the set time (It’s your fault Samuel for taking too long), and that the Philistines were assembling at Mikdash (I was becoming afraid and thought my way was better), ¹² I thought, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal (I was afraid of losing the battle), and I have not sought the LORD’s favor.’ So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering (I took the matter into my own hands and on a time I am comfortable with. I am king after all.)”

Vs 13 Samuel responds. ¹³ “You have done a foolish thing (a very short sighted),” Samuel said. “You have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you (Justify your actions all you want. Your actions are not in alignment with the Word of the Lord that was given to you); if you had, he would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. ¹⁴ But now your kingdom will not endure (Someone else will become king instead of your son); the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people, because you have not kept the LORD’s command (because you were a coward and did not trust the Lord).” Saul you blew it!

Chapter 15 isn’t much better. The Lord gives the command to wipe out the Amalekites. The instructions were clear. However, Saul stopped short of finishing the job because the soldiers wanted the spoils. Saul gave in to the polls. The public opinion of the soldiers was that God was being too hasty and wasteful of all the spoils. When Samuel confronts him, Saul sort of confesses but half-heartedly. “The people spared the best of the sheep and oxen to make a sacrifice to the Yahweh” (1 Samuel 15:15). That’s a lie of course. In truth everyone wanted to go home with the loot. Saul’s actions are called “evil” in the eyes of the Lord in vs. 19.

Vs 22-23 are even worse.

But Samuel replied:

“Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices
as much as in obeying the Lord?

To obey is better than sacrifice,
and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

²³ For rebellion is like the sin of divination,
and arrogance like the evil of idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the Lord,
he has rejected you as king.”

David would eventually come along. Jealousy would enter into Saul’s heart and an evil spirit would occupy the place that once held the Holy Spirit. Saul would try many times to kill David jealous of David’s popularity over his own and because Saul didn’t want to lose his position as king. Saul didn’t like the opinion polls that would eventually praise David and cast a shadow over Saul. Saul would eventually die on the battlefield and in so doing he would destroy his own family in the process.

Why don’t we have better government? Because as we learn from Saul eventually offices are eroded by the character of the ungodly. Selfishness gets it the way. The best of intentions are covered in excuses. Jesus says, by their fruits all people are known. A grape vine will not produce figs. The fruits always reveal what’s really commanding a person’s heart. And when the things are done in disobedience to the Word of the Lord evil things result. This is why we have national debt at the levels we have them. Officials fill bills full of “pork” that favors donors and ultimately to gain support for more time in office. And when the goal is reelection the best interest of the people they represent are held hostage to personal ambitions held by the office holder. Long-term stability of our nation is sacrificed on the altar of personal ambition as well. We all know this. And one or two decent people that are faithful and honest don’t get much done because the evil fruits of others smother them.

The answer is a genuine repentance by we the voters. Undoing the policies for example that cause harm to preborn life and the aged, policies that actually cut spending, or even putting term limits on officials will be a good place to start. Repentance would require humility even of the highest offices. Repentance would require a recognition that even kings and presidents will ultimately answer to the Lord. Philippians 2 reminds us that all will bow before Jesus and acknowledge Jesus as Lord to the glory of God. For those of us who feel that we are not represented, take heart because we are firmly represented by our Lord Jesus.

The answer is also in actually listening to and following the Word. Voting is good but even more significant is obedience to the Lord. Take the lesson from Samuel. This means not just loving what serves our own interest but seeking the interest of others. Again, from Philippians 2:3 we hear, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.” Obedience means loving Jesus first. It means trusting the Lord’s timing and way of doing things, something Saul never really understood.

Finally, it means standing up for what is important in our own lives and being a godly example to the next generation. Since the culture is shaped by who influences it most, it only seems right to be that influence to our children, to our neighbors, and to coworkers. If we expect someone else to seek the Lord, we need to be seeking the Lord in our own behavior and action. The Lord always considers such discipling to be worthwhile because of whom we serve. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says as much when it says, “Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” If we want to make a difference in our country we will do well to make a difference in the circles we live in first. God’s grace by example is never wasted. The goal is to influence a heart for Christ and thereby influence a vote for godly government.

May the Lord bless us to be godly examples. May the Lord build trust in Jesus. May the Lord bless us to be wise in His Holy Spirit, repentant, and fruit bearers for the sake of our nation.