



The call of Saul

1 Samuel 9:15-21; 9:27 - 10:1

1Sam 15:1-11, 22-23; 18:6-12; 26:13-21; 28:7-20; 2Sam 1:17-27

The call of God came to Saul as he was fulfilling his family duty, i.e. finding his father's asses. This brought him into contact with Samuel, led to his anointing as the first king of Israel and opened a future of immense possibilities.

Often the call of God comes when we are carrying out our normal duties e.g.

- Amos - *But the Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'* Amos 7:15
- Moses - *Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law ... the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush ... God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"* Exodus 3:1-4
- Andrew and Peter - *As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."* Mark 1:16-17
- Levi - *As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.* Mark 2:14

It is not always in a spectacular or dramatic way that God's call comes. Let us continue to fulfil our daily tasks and it may be there that God's call will come.

We cannot always understand why what appears to be a real call is frustrated. Saul began with tremendous promise. He was numbered among the ecstatic prophets upon whom the Spirit came (1 Samuel 11:1-11; 14:47). Courageous and modest (1 Samuel 10:20ff), he helped to prepare the way for the distinguished reign of David, welding together the undisciplined and untrained Israelites into a fairly effective fighting force. The call of God to a man of this kind has immense possibilities. How disappointing that Saul failed.

Saul's failure can be explained at least in part as envy of David (1 Samuel 18:7). Smouldering in his heart and flaming up into hatred and a kind of moody madness until Saul scarcely acted like a

responsible person when he threw his spear at David (1 Samuel 18:11). Found out in one of his attempts on David's life, he confessed he was a fool but hardly repented of his folly (1 Samuel 26:21), consulting with the witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28:7ff) and finally and tragically taking his own life (1 Samuel 31:4). We must not forget too the tensions with Samuel as well as the fear of David taking the throne from him. Saul is shown to be headstrong, impetuous and rebellious (1 Samuel 13:9ff; 1 Samuel 15:1ff).

It would seem there are always possibilities of repelling the gracious action of God's Spirit, though we may not always be fully able to understand how it happens. The defection of Judas, Jesus' disciple, will always remain an enigma. Jesus saw it as a real possibility in the parable of the Sower (Mark 4:16ff) and in the sin without forgiveness (Mark 3:29ff). Paul himself always feared the possibility of being a castaway - *No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize 1 Cor 9:27*. It is impossible, declares the writer to the Hebrews, to renew those to repentance who, having become Christians, fall away (Heb 6:1ff). The book of the Acts gives us the strange case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5).

It is always possible to frustrate the gracious purpose of salvation, repel God's Spirit, and, adopting a way of folly, to persist to our own hurt and the hurt of others.

Discussion

- Compare the call of Saul to the call of
 - i. Abraham
 - ii. Nehemiah
 - iii. Gideon

State any similarities and differences.

- Describe how Saul reacted in a different way from that of Abraham towards others.