

Grace for Rebels

1 Samuel 9-10

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November 9, 2025

INTRODUCTION

Good morning, church.

Last week we walked through 1 Samuel 8 and saw Israel make a tragic choice. They rejected God as their king and demanded a human king like all the nations around them. We saw Samuel's warnings about what this king would do - how he would take and take and take from them. We saw God reluctantly agree to their demand. And we ended by looking to Jesus, the true King we desperately need.

But this morning I want you to see something we need to understand more deeply. What exactly did Israel reject? What was the real issue?

It wasn't just that they wanted a king. God had actually planned to give them a king eventually - we saw that in Deuteronomy 17 last week. The problem wasn't the idea of a king. The problem was why they wanted one and what kind of king they wanted.

Look at what God says in 1 Samuel 8:7:

"And the LORD said to Samuel, 'Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.'"

Did you catch that? "They have rejected me from being KING over them." This wasn't just general rebellion. This was a constitutional crisis. This was about who has the right to rule.

Israel already had a king - Yahweh, the God who delivered them from Egypt, who fought their battles, who gave them the promised land. But they wanted a different kind of king. They wanted:

- A king they could see instead of one they had to trust
- A king who would look impressive like the nations around them
- A king they could control instead of one who demanded their obedience

In other words, they rejected God's rule, God's authority, God's right to govern their lives.

This rejection of God's rule - this isn't just ancient history. This is happening all around us right now. In fact, this is the defining issue of our cultural moment.

At the Cultural Level:

Look at Western society today. We've systematically rejected Christian moral frameworks that guided our civilization for centuries. We used to acknowledge, at least nominally, that there were divine standards for right and wrong. Now we've declared moral autonomy - "You do you. I'll do me. There is no absolute truth."

Our culture has decided it wants God to be a consultant rather than a king. We'll ask for his input when we feel like it. We'll invoke his blessing when it's convenient. But we refuse to acknowledge his right to rule over our lives, our laws, our society.

Look at the "spiritual but not religious" movement. Millions of people say, "I believe in God, I'm just not into organized religion." Translation: "I want God's benefits - peace, meaning, purpose, maybe even heaven - but I don't want God's authority. I don't want commandments. I don't want to submit to his lordship."

That's exactly what Israel did. "Give us the benefits of having God on our side, but we'll determine how things run."

At the Corporate Level - The Church:

But church, we can't just point fingers at the culture. This rejection of God's rule is happening inside the church too.

There are churches - maybe not ours, but churches we know about - that have rejected biblical authority in favor of cultural accommodation. When God's Word says one thing and the culture says another, they choose the culture. They want to be liked. They want to be relevant. They want full pews and positive reviews.

So they reject God's rule over sexuality, over marriage, over gender, over what it means to be human. They say, "That was written for a different time. We know better now. God wouldn't really want us to believe that today."

That's rejecting God's rule at the corporate level. Movements that want God's blessings without God's lordship. Societies - even Christian societies, churches - that reject divine law in favor of autonomous human reason.

We think we're enlightened. We think we're progressive. But we're doing exactly what Israel did - rejecting the King who made us and saved us.

At the Individual Level - Your Life and Mine:

And now let me bring this home. Because the real question isn't what's happening out there in the culture or even in other churches. The question is: What's happening in here, in your heart?

Where are you saying to God, "I want to run my own life"? You're rejecting God's authority over your personal decisions:

- Your career path - "I'll decide what job to take, what field to pursue. God can bless my choices, but I'm making them."
- Your relationships - "I'll decide who to date, who to marry, who to be friends with. This is my life."
- Your finances - "I'll decide how to spend my money, how much to give, what to buy. I earned it."

That's rejecting God's rule at the individual level.

Or maybe you're saying, "I'll decide my own morality." You're rejecting God's ethical rule:

- "Sure, the Bible says that about sexual purity, but this is different. My situation is unique."
- "Yeah, I know God's Word says to forgive, but you don't know what they did to me. I have a right to be bitter."
- "I understand the Bible talks about generosity, but I've got bills to pay. God understands."

We become our own moral authority. We reject God's rule over our ethics.

Or maybe, if we're really honest, we're saying, "I know better than God." You're rejecting God's wisdom and sovereignty:

- "God's timing is too slow. I need this now. I'll force it to happen."
- "God's way seems outdated. I'll find a modern solution."
- "God's plan doesn't make sense to me. I'll figure out my own path."

That's the ultimate rejection of God's rule - declaring ourselves wiser than the all-knowing God.

But here's what's remarkable: Even when Israel rejected God's rule over them, God didn't stop ruling. He didn't abandon them. He didn't say, "Fine, you're on your own."

Instead, God graciously provided exactly what they needed - even though they had rejected his authority.

This morning we're going to see this beautiful, surprising truth:

God graciously provides what we need even when we reject his rule.

"Graciously" - that word is crucial this morning. This isn't just a story about God providing despite rejection. It's about God graciously providing - with unmerited favor, with compassion, with love that rebels don't deserve.

We're going to see three ways God's grace works:

- Grace selects when rejection deserves abandonment
- Grace transforms when rebellion deserves judgment
- Grace confirms publicly what sin tried to destroy

If you've ever rejected God's authority... if you've ever said "I'll do it my way"... if you've ever pushed God aside to run your own life... this message is for you.

Because today we are going to see that our rejection doesn't have the last word.

God's grace does. **NARRATIVE RETELLING (5 minutes)**

Let me tell you what happens in 1 Samuel 9-10. This is a remarkable story about how God graciously responds to Israel's rejection.

The Selection (1 Samuel 9:15-20)

The day before Saul arrives in town, God speaks to Samuel. Listen to this:

"Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed to Samuel: 'Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have seen my people, because their cry has come to me.'"

Notice - Israel is still in rebellion. They haven't repented. They haven't apologized. And yet God is already at work, already planning, already preparing to provide.

The next day, Saul shows up looking for his father's lost donkeys. He has no idea what's about to happen. He's just a young man from Benjamin, the smallest tribe, from a clan that means nothing.

And when Samuel sees him, God says: "Here is the man of whom I spoke to you! He it is who shall restrain my people."

Samuel takes Saul to a feast, gives him the place of honor, and tells him: "For whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for you and for all your father's house?"

Saul is stunned. He responds: "Am I not a Benjaminite, from the least of the tribes of Israel? And is not my clan the humblest of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin?"

But Samuel has spoken. God has chosen. Despite Israel's rejection of God's kingship, God is sovereignly selecting their leader.

The Transformation (1 Samuel 10:1-13)

The next morning, Samuel takes Saul aside privately. And then something extraordinary happens.

Samuel takes a flask of oil and pours it on Saul's head. He kisses him and says: "Has not the LORD anointed you to be prince over his people Israel?"

Then Samuel tells Saul that three signs will confirm this calling. But the most important one is this - verse 6:

"Then the Spirit of the LORD will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man."

Changed into another man. Transformed. Empowered by God's Spirit.

And it happens exactly as Samuel said. Verse 9: "When he turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart."

Verse 10: "And the Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he prophesied among them."

Despite Israel demanding autonomy, God pours out his transforming Spirit. Despite their rejection of his authority, God exercises his power to change and equip.

The Confirmation (1 Samuel 10:17-24)

Now Samuel calls all Israel together at Mizpah for a public assembly. And before he reveals the king, Samuel does something crucial. Verse 18-19:

"And he said to the people of Israel, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you." But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses, and you have said to him, "Set a king over us."'"

Their sin is exposed publicly. Everyone knows: They rejected God.

What should happen next? If this were about justice, they'd be abandoned. But watch grace work.

Verse 19 continues: "Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your thousands."

Even after naming their rebellion, God says, "Present yourselves before the LORD."

Then the lot is cast. Benjamin is chosen. The clan of Matri is chosen. Saul son of Kish is chosen.

But they can't find him - he's hiding among the baggage. They bring him out. He stands head and shoulders above everyone else.

And Samuel declares: "Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? There is none like him among all the people."

And all the people shout: "Long live the king!"

Despite their rejection, God graciously provides. Not because they deserved it. Not because they earned it. But because grace is who God is.

So we've seen the story. Israel rejected God's rule. And God graciously provided a king anyway.

But how? How does God graciously provide what we need even when we reject his rule?

Let me show you three ways from this text . . .

1. First, God's grace sovereignly selects when our rejection deserves abandonment.

Let me show you what I mean. Look at 1 Samuel 9:15-16. The day before Saul arrives in town, God speaks to Samuel. Listen to this:

"Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed to Samuel: 'Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over my people Israel. He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have seen my people, because their cry has come to me.'"

Notice the timing here. Verse 15 says this revelation came to Samuel "the day before Saul came." God was already at work, already planning, already preparing to provide - even while Israel was still in their state of rebellion. They hadn't repented. They hadn't apologized. They were still demanding a king like the nations.

And yet God was already selecting their leader.

That's grace. Not "God waits until they deserve it." Not "God makes them earn it." Not even "God requires remorse first." Just: God provides.

Now look at what God says in verse 16: "Tomorrow about this time I will send to you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over my people Israel."

Two grace notes here:

First: "I will send" - Despite their rejection of God's authority to rule, God takes initiative. Grace always does. They rejected him. He could have said, "You want to be autonomous? Fine. Figure it out yourselves." But no - "I will send."

That's grace - God initiating provision for those who rejected him.

Second: "My people" - Despite their unfaithfulness, God maintains covenant relationship. They're still "my people." Not "those rebels." Not "the ones who rejected me." "My people."

That's grace - God maintaining relationship with the unfaithful.

And notice verse 16 continues: "He shall save my people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have seen my people, because their cry has come to me."

Here's the stunning grace: God sees their distress. God hears their cry. Even though their distress is partly the result of their own rejection of him, God responds with compassion, not contempt.

They got into this mess by rejecting God's rule. They're facing the Philistine threat partly because they didn't trust God to deliver them. And yet - "I have seen... their cry has come to me."

That's grace - God responding with compassion to needs created by rebellion.

Now jump down to 10:20-21 where Saul is chosen by lot. Here's what's remarkable about this public selection: God uses the lot - a public, transparent process that eliminates human manipulation. Why? To show that this is God's gracious choice, not human politics.

Benjamin was chosen - smallest tribe. Matri was chosen - least significant clan. Saul was chosen - from humble background.

Grace doesn't choose based on merit. Grace chooses based on... grace.

Church, do you see it? What Israel did, we do. What Israel said, we say. We might use different words, but we're rejecting the same King.

But Here's the Grace:

And yet - here's the stunning grace of this passage - even when we reject God's rule at every level, cultural, corporate, and individual, God graciously selects. God sovereignly directs our lives even when we've rejected his direction.

When you rejected his guidance about that decision? God was still orchestrating circumstances.

When churches reject biblical authority? God is still working to preserve his true church.

When culture rejects Christian morality? God is still sovereign over nations and history.

Grace means:

- He orchestrates circumstances even when we didn't ask
- He places people in our path even when we didn't pray
- He opens and closes doors even when we didn't seek his will
- He works all things for good even when we didn't trust him to

Think about a decision you made without God - maybe a career move, a relationship choice, a financial decision. You rejected his input. You went your own way.

But God's grace was still at work. Maybe he prevented certain outcomes. Maybe he redirected through closed doors. Maybe he sent people to influence you. Maybe he worked through your own stubbornness to accomplish his purposes.

You rejected his rule. But his grace kept selecting, kept directing, kept working.

Why? Not because you deserved it. Not because you earned it. Not because you were faithful.

Because grace is who God is. His nature is to provide for rebels. His character is to select when rejection deserves abandonment.

That's the first way God graciously provides - through selection motivated by grace, not merit.

How does God graciously provide what we need even when we reject his rule?

2. Second, God's grace transforms when our rebellion deserves judgment.

Israel rejected God's rule. They demanded their own way. They deserved judgment. Think about it - rejecting the King of the universe? Telling God "we don't want you ruling us"? That's cosmic treason.

What would justice demand? "Fine. I'll withdraw my Spirit. I'll leave you to your own devices. You want autonomy? Here's complete autonomy - no divine help, no supernatural intervention, no transforming power."

But watch what grace does instead. The next morning, Samuel takes Saul aside privately. And something extraordinary happens.

Look at 1 Samuel 10:1. Samuel anoints Saul with oil - a sacred act reserved for those set apart for God's service. And then Samuel says something stunning: "Has not the LORD anointed you to be prince over his people Israel?"

Whose anointing is this? The LORD's. Not Samuel's idea. Not Israel's achievement. The LORD anoints.

That's grace - God sanctifying what rebellion could have forfeited.

Now look at verse 6:

"Then the Spirit of the LORD will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man."

Here's where grace becomes overwhelming. The very thing Israel rejected - God's active rule in their lives - is the very thing God pours out through his Spirit.

They said, "We don't want you ruling through judges and prophets. We want visible human leadership."

God says, "I'll give you a king - but my Spirit will rush upon him. My power will transform him. My presence will work through him."

They rejected his rule. Grace gives them his presence.

That's grace - God giving his transforming presence to those who rejected his governing authority.

And notice - it's not just symbolic. Verse 9 says, "When he turned his back to leave Samuel, God gave him another heart." Verse 10: "The Spirit of God rushed upon him, and he prophesied among them."

Real transformation. Actual change. Supernatural empowerment.

Why would God do this? Not because they deserved it. Not because they repented. Not because they proved themselves worthy.

Grace transforms because that's what grace does.

Think about this: God could have given them a king without the Spirit. Just a human leader with human abilities facing human problems. "You want to be like the nations? Here's a king exactly like the nations have - purely human, no divine help."

That would have been justice - giving them exactly what they asked for with exactly the limitations they chose.

But grace gives more than requested and better than deserved. Grace says: "I'll give you a king, but I'll transform him by my Spirit so that even in your rebellion, my purposes are accomplished and my glory is displayed."

Application:

Here's what God is saying to Israel through this: "You rejected my rule and asked for a human king. Fine. But understand this: whatever this king accomplishes will be by MY power, not his own. Whatever deliverance comes will be MY deliverance through him, not his deliverance apart from me."

The Spirit coming upon Saul in power is God's way of saying: I'm still the source of strength. I'm still the one who delivers. I'm still the power behind the throne.

When we reject God's rule and try to find security in other things - jobs, relationships, money, our own abilities - God graciously provides those things, but only his power makes them effective.

That job you got without consulting God? If it prospers, it's because God empowered it, not because you're so capable.

That relationship you pursued on your own terms? If it works, it's because God's grace sustains it, not because you chose perfectly.

That plan you made without prayer? If it succeeds, it's because God's power accomplished it, not because your planning was flawless.

Even when we reject his rule, God graciously provides - and then powerfully works through what he's provided to accomplish his purposes.

We can't escape his authority. Even what we achieve in rebellion, we achieve only by his power.

Maybe you made a decision without God - started a business, entered a relationship, moved to a new city. You didn't pray. You didn't seek counsel. You rejected his input and just did what you wanted.

Justice would say: "You're on your own. You rejected my guidance, so you get no divine help."

But grace says: Even in that situation created by your autonomy, God's Spirit still works. He transforms:

- Your selfish motives into opportunities for his glory
- Your foolish decisions into platforms for his wisdom
- Your rebellious plans into stories of his redemption

You rejected his authority over that area. But his grace transforms that area anyway - not because you deserved help, but because grace transforms even what rebellion breaks.

That's the second way God graciously provides - through transformation that judgment could have destroyed.

How does God graciously provide what we need even when we reject his rule?

Third, God's grace confirms publicly what our rebellion tries to deny privately.

This is where grace becomes most visible. Samuel calls all Israel to Mizpah for a national assembly. And before he reveals who the king is, he does something crucial. Look at 10:18-19:

"And he said to the people of Israel, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you." But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses, and you have said to him, "Set a king over us."'"

Samuel names their sin explicitly: "You have rejected your God."

This is the moment of public shame. Everyone knows what they did. Their rebellion is out in the open. They rejected God.

What should happen next? If this were a story about justice, the next verse would be: "Therefore, you're on your own. Find your own king. God is done with you."

But watch what grace does. Verse 19 continues: "Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your thousands."

Even after publicly naming their rebellion, God says "present yourselves before the LORD."

Not "present yourselves before your shame."

Not "present yourselves before your consequences."

"Present yourselves before the LORD."

That's grace - maintaining relationship even after exposing rebellion.

And then verses 20-21: The lot is cast. Benjamin. Matri. Saul son of Kish.

Here's the stunning thing: God chooses Saul by lot - a public, verifiable, undeniable method. Everyone watching knows: this is not human manipulation. This is divine selection.

Why does grace work this way - publicly and undeniably?

Because grace doesn't just want to provide privately. Grace wants everyone to know that provision comes despite unworthiness, not because of merit.

If God had just told Samuel, "Anoint Saul quietly and send him out to lead," people might have thought:

- "Well, maybe Saul earned it"
- "Maybe Benjamin deserved this"
- "Maybe we weren't that bad after all"

But the lot eliminates all that. The lot says:

- Not Judah (the royal tribe)
- Not a powerful clan
- Not an obvious choice
- Just grace. Pure grace. Unmerited favor.

Verse 23: "Then they ran and took him from there. And when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward."

He stands tall. Visible. Undeniable. And Samuel says in verse 24: "Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? There is none like him among all the people."

"Whom the LORD has chosen." Not "whom Israel deserved." Not "whom they earned." Not "whom their repentance merited."

"Whom the LORD has chosen."

That's grace - God's choice overriding human merit.

And the people respond: "Long live the king!"

Here's what's remarkable about this public celebration: They're celebrating God's grace to them, not their own worthiness. They just had their rebellion publicly exposed. And now they're publicly celebrating God's gracious provision despite that rebellion.

That's what grace does - it turns shame into celebration. It transforms scenes of exposed rebellion into moments of public praise.

Application:

Church, we live in an age that celebrates self-made success. We praise people who "pulled themselves up by their bootstraps." We honor those who "earned it." We admire those who "deserved their success."

But that's not how God's kingdom works.

In God's kingdom, grace is public. Everyone needs to see:

- This wasn't earned
- This wasn't deserved
- This wasn't achieved
- This was given

Think about your salvation. Did you earn it? Did you achieve it? Did you make yourself worthy?

No. Grace chose you. And that choice wasn't private and hidden - it was meant to be publicly visible.

You were baptized publicly. You confess Christ publicly. You take communion publicly. Why? Because grace doesn't hide. Grace wants everyone to see that God provides for rebels.

Or think about areas of your life where God has blessed you:

- That marriage restoration you didn't deserve
- That job opportunity you weren't qualified for
- That healing you couldn't earn

- That second chance you didn't merit

Justice would have hidden those. "Don't let anyone know you failed. Don't admit you blew it. Pretend you earned what you have."

But grace makes provision public. Grace says: "Let everyone see that I provide for rebels. Let it be undeniable that this is unmerited favor. Let the world know that I save those who rejected me."

Why does grace work this way?

Because public grace produces public worship. When people see God providing for those who rejected him, they don't praise the recipients - they praise the Provider.

That's why your testimony matters. That's why you shouldn't hide your past. That's why it's okay to admit you didn't deserve what God gave you.

Because when grace is public, God gets the glory.

"Long live the king!" they shouted. Not because Saul was impressive. Not because Israel was worthy. Because God's grace was undeniable.

That's the third way God graciously provides - through public confirmation that makes grace undeniable and produces worship.

CONCLUSION: Gospel Focus and Personal Assessment (4 minutes)

Church, this morning we've seen how God graciously provides what we need even when we reject his rule.

God's grace selects - choosing to provide when rejection deserved abandonment

God's grace transforms - pouring out power when rebellion deserved judgment

God's grace confirms - making provision public when sin could have brought shame

Every step of this story is saturated with grace.

But we haven't yet talked about the ultimate display of grace. Because while God graciously provided Saul for Israel, God graciously provided Jesus for us.

Israel rejected God's rule. We rejected God's Son.

Israel deserved abandonment. We deserved hell.

Israel got a king anyway. We got a Savior anyway.

But here's where it gets even more amazing:

Saul eventually failed. David eventually sinned. Every human king eventually disappointed.

But Jesus never fails. Jesus perfectly submitted to the Father's rule. Jesus accomplished the Father's purposes. Jesus reigns forever.

And the grace that provided Saul to rebels who deserved nothing is the same grace that provided Jesus to sinners who deserved death.

Romans 5:8: "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

While we were rejecting his rule. While we were rebelling against his authority. While we were pushing him away.

Christ died for us.

That's grace. Ultimate, saving, eternal grace.

So this morning, let me ask you some personal assessment questions:

First: Where are you rejecting God's rule right now?

- At the cultural level - are you absorbing society's rejection of biblical authority? Are you more shaped by the culture than by Scripture?
- At the corporate level - are you part of a church that honors God's Word, or one that accommodates cultural pressure?
- At the individual level - what area of your life are you saying "I'll handle this myself"? What decision are you making without consulting him? What part of your heart are you keeping from his authority?

Second: Can you see God's grace at work despite your rejection?

- How has God been sovereignly directing even when you didn't ask?
- How has God been transforming situations you created in rebellion?
- How has God been demonstrating his authority even when you rejected it?

Third: Will you stop fighting and surrender?

Grace is still at work in your life. Grace is still selecting - God is working in your circumstances even now. Grace is still transforming - God's Spirit is moving in your life even now. Grace is still confirming - God is making his provision visible even now.

But don't just receive grace - respond to grace.

Stop running from God's rule. Stop fighting his authority. Stop rejecting his kingship.

Surrender to King Jesus - not because you have to, but because you've seen his grace and you want to.

That's what grace does - it melts resistance. It softens rebellion. It turns rejectors into worshipers.

Will you worship the God of grace this morning?

Let's pray.

Father, we confess that we're like Israel. We reject your rule. We demand our own way. We push you aside to run our own lives.

We see it in our culture - the systematic rejection of your authority. We see it in churches - the accommodation to the world. We see it in our own hearts - the areas we refuse to surrender.

But this morning we've seen your grace. Grace that selects when we deserve abandonment. Grace that transforms when we deserve judgment. Grace that confirms publicly what our sin tried to destroy.

Thank you for Jesus - the ultimate display of your grace. Thank you that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Help us this week to surrender. Help us to stop fighting your authority and start worshiping your grace.

In Jesus' name, Amen.