

October 27, 2013

Title: Samuel, Who Practiced Righteousness Through Faith

Scripture: Hebrews 11:32-33

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Hallelujah! May peace be with you. Let us now turn our attention to the Word of God, as we read from Hebrews 11, verses 32 through 33.

32 What more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets,

33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions. Amen.

Today's topic is "Samuel, Who Practiced Righteousness Through Faith."

In 1 Samuel 7:15, we find that Samuel served not only as a prophet but also as a leader of Israel, effectively ruling like a king throughout his life. However, in 1 Samuel 8:5, the elders of Israel gathered one day and said to Samuel, "You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have." Their request was grounded in a stark reality detailed in 1 Samuel 8:3, where it's revealed that Samuel's sons strayed from his righteous path by engaging in corruption, accepting bribes, and distorting justice. Given these circumstances, the elders' desire for a king was a logical response to the leadership vacuum they anticipated.

But in verse 6, we see that the prophet Samuel was displeased with the elders' request and brought the matter before the Lord. Samuel had been faithful before God in leading Israel until then. As a result, Israel had established itself as a nation. Also, in 1 Samuel 3:19, we see that God had answered all of Samuel's prayers, letting none of them fall to the ground. So, it seems that Samuel, who was not pleased with the elders' request, expected that God would be on his side this time as well when he brought the matter before Him.

This is God's response to Samuel. 1 Samuel 8:7, "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king." Samuel was surprised by God's response and wondered if he had misreported the state of affairs or if God had misunderstood what he was trying to say, so he reiterated the whole situation as before in verse 21. However, God's conclusion remained the same in verse 22: "Listen to them and give them a king." It seemed that God's tone became even firmer.

God acted this way because He took into account the sentiments of His people. Although omnipotent, God did not exercise His power arbitrarily when dealing with His people; instead, He considered their feelings and acted in accordance with them. Therefore, God instructed Samuel in 1 Samuel 9:16, "About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him leader over my people Israel." God said that He would send the person who would become king tomorrow. That God would send someone to be king so soon suggests that even before Samuel had spoken to Him, God had already considered the sentiments of His people and had foreseen someone who would replace Samuel to rule over Israel.

At this point, Samuel, unexpectedly finding himself rejected both by the people and God, might have felt justified in voicing a complaint before God. However, Samuel did not react in such a way. He obediently followed God's command, almost mechanically, taking the flask of oil and anointing Saul's head, whom God had chosen. Samuel even kissed Saul and blessed him for success. In 1 Samuel 10:1, Samuel said, "Has not the Lord anointed you ruler over his inheritance?" In verse 6, Samuel said the Spirit of the Lord would come powerfully upon Saul and change him, making him a new person. This Spirit would also let Saul prophesy with the prophets. In verse 7, Samuel said, "Once these signs are fulfilled, do whatever your hand finds to do, for God is with you." This was a complete blessing for Saul's success, given by Samuel without any personal reservations.

Throughout his time, Samuel had governed the people as a prophet who

prophesied. In other words, the people were accustomed to being led by a prophetic leader like Samuel. Therefore, it seems Samuel was concerned that if Saul, once he became king, could not prophesy, the people might not believe in or follow him. Thus, in an era where kings did not prophesy and prophets prophesied separately, Samuel blessed Saul to become a king who could also prophesy, effectively securing Saul's position. This shows how sincerely and thoroughly Samuel supported Saul. Furthermore, this also reflects how genuinely Samuel acted to fulfill God's will.

Samuel completely disregarded his own feelings and followed only God's will. However, if Samuel had considered himself not as a servant of God but as a son of God, like Jesus, or believed he held the status of a child of God like us, would he have silently blessed Saul without saying anything to God, who had set him aside from ruling Israel to prepare a new king?

If Samuel thought he held the same sinless status as God's only begotten Son, Jesus, or if he thought he held the status of being a child of God through salvation, like us, he might have questioned God, such as by asking, "Why have You forsaken me?" It would have been natural for Samuel, if he saw himself as God's son, to ask his Father, "Why have You forsaken me?" However, Samuel was dedicated to God from birth as a servant. Because he was a servant to God, he remained faithful to that status and practiced righteousness accordingly.

Thus, Samuel followed God's command. He filled a horn with oil, went to Saul, and anointed him.

As Samuel anointed Saul, he observed him and saw his potential for greatness. Despite being chosen to be anointed to become king, Saul displayed humility. As seen in the latter part of 1 Samuel 10:22, Saul hid among the baggage, feeling unworthy of the kingship. However, when the people finally found Saul, they saw that he was taller than anyone else by a head, as mentioned in verse 23. Furthermore, according to 9:2, there was no one more handsome than Saul in Israel, making him an exceptional choice for king. Samuel thought, "Ah, God has chosen well for the king."

Samuel continued to pray for the one God had chosen to be king, following God's will and seeking to please Him. He hoped Saul would do well in fulfilling his royal duties and become a great king. Thus Samuel supported Saul in every way possible, including through prayer.

However, one day, as stated in 1 Samuel 16:1, God said, "I have rejected him as king over Israel." God told Samuel in the same verse, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king."

Samuel received this command and remained faithful to his role as God's servant. Without objection, he followed God's command and went to Jesse.

When Samuel arrived, as mentioned in 1 Samuel 16:6, he met Jesse's eldest son, Eliab. When Samuel saw him, he thought Eliab was as commendable as Saul, whom God had previously chosen. So, when he saw Eliab, Samuel thought to himself, "Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord," as mentioned in the latter part of verse 6. Samuel believed he was in agreement with God's thinking, but then God spoke differently. In verse 7, God told Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height." Later, referring to David in verse 12, God said, "This is the one."

David was a boy whom even his parents and brothers did not consider king material. They had not thought of David as the one to become king. Yet, God led Samuel to David, declaring him as the chosen king. God then instructed, "Rise and anoint him; this is the one."

Samuel must have been surprised when he saw David, who was not only shorter than Saul but also not as humble as Saul had been; instead, David appeared bold. According to 1 Samuel 17:28, even David's brothers accused him of being arrogant and wicked, indicating that David was not recognized or respected by his own family. Thus, even Jesse, a good man, did not consider

bringing David forward as a potential king until Samuel specifically asked for him. David was a boy who was not acknowledged by his father and brothers.

Given these circumstances, Samuel could have said to God something similar to what Moses had said in Exodus 4:13, such as, "O Lord, this is not the right person. Please look for someone who is able to become a good king." However, Samuel did not say this to God.

Why did Samuel not question God's instructions more thoroughly and instead chose to follow them unquestioningly?

Moses, although a servant of God, initially resisted God's call by suggesting, "Please send someone else." Yet, God persisted and chose Moses to serve Him, despite his reluctance. Samuel's situation, however, was different from that of Moses. God did not push Samuel into service as He did with Moses, nor did He choose Samuel for any particular skills. Samuel was dedicated to God by his mother even before he was conceived. From birth, Samuel was a Nazirite, never cutting his hair as a sign of his dedication. Samuel knew that as a Nazirite who was fully dedicated to God, he must obey God's commands, no matter how shocking they might be. Thus, he disregarded his personal feelings and obeyed without question when God commanded him.

Samuel lived his life this way, setting aside his personal feelings for the work of God, serving only the Lord until his death. In doing so, Samuel finally rested in death. In other words, he found peace. However, Saul later sought out Samuel.

Saul was the king for whom Samuel had mourned and prayed. Despite Saul's potential for greatness, Samuel harbored a sense of regret that Saul did not become the great king he could have been. In his later years, Saul found that no matter how much he inquired of the Lord, God did not respond to him, as recorded in 1 Samuel 28:6, which states, "When Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or Urim or prophets." Driven by desperation, Saul resorted to seeking out a medium, a practice forbidden to him, even disguising himself to do so. He used the medium in an attempt to

desperately contact the deceased Samuel. Saul did not seek the medium for comfort; his intense desire was to meet with Samuel, leading him to seek out the medium.

When Samuel was summoned as a spirit, he neither comforted the troubled Saul, nor blessed him, nor prayed for Saul to receive God's compassion. In his lifetime, Samuel had indeed harbored sorrow for Saul. Given their relationship, one might expect Samuel to want to bless, comfort, and pray for Saul. However, even in his spiritual form, Samuel did not provide those for Saul. He did not act in such a manner.

In 1 Samuel 28:16, Samuel speaks decisively, saying, "Why do you consult me, now that the Lord has departed from you and become your enemy?" And in the latter part of verse 17, he adds, "The Lord has torn the kingdom out of your hands and given it to one of your neighbors—to David." Samuel neither offered comfort nor prayers for Saul; indeed, he was unable to provide either form of solace for him.

Throughout his life and even after his death as a spirit, Samuel subjected himself mercilessly to the will of God. Indeed, whether in the flesh during his lifetime or at rest in spirit after death, Samuel denied himself and obeyed only the will of God. To reiterate, whether alive in the flesh or deceased in spirit, Samuel's allegiance to God remained unwavering. For Samuel, God was his sole focus. The will of God was of paramount importance to Samuel, not just during his earthly life but also after he became a spirit.

And so God refers to Samuel as one who "practiced righteousness" in Hebrews 11:33, acknowledging his steadfast obedience and righteousness.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, how did Samuel become one of those who pleased You with their faith, as mentioned in Hebrews 11? We reflect on how Samuel knew You well and understood that he was a Nazirite dedicated to You, leading him to

obey Your will unconditionally. Samuel was aware that as someone dedicated to You, his role was to obey You, even when it contradicted his own thoughts.

Samuel obeyed You completely, whether in the flesh or in spirit, knowing that such obedience glorified You and was the path of righteousness. Because he lived this way, he is recorded in Hebrews as one who practiced righteousness through faith.

Today, we also understand what righteousness is. Oh! Heavenly Father, You have made us Your children through Your Son, Jesus Christ, allowing us to call You Father. Yet, we confess that we fall far short of Samuel's obedience. We desire to be Your servants, to practice Your righteousness like Samuel. Guide us to subdue ourselves, to live out the rest of our days fulfilling Your will. Look upon us with favor. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen, amen.