

# *Samuel and Saul*

by  
Dr. Manford George Gutzke

## Samuel

Samuel was the last of the judges, but in obedience to God he anointed the first king. Israel had once had judges, now they would have kings. It all happened in this man Samuel. The spiritual significance of the period of the judges is seen in Judges 21:25. When you try to understand the judges note what it says: "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

"In those days" meant in the time of the judges. The people all lived in their tribes, in their families, with no central government. The government was largely the fathers telling the sons what to do, and the fathers and the sons telling the wives what to do. People got along as well as they could. The usual law that prevailed was the law of Moses, interpreted to them by their priest. Every Sabbath Day they did not work. They came before the Lord at the tabernacle to bring their sacrifices. The priests taught them the things of God. They were told how to live according to the law of Moses.

As there was no central government or king the people did as they saw fit, and this led to confusion. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes. There was no king in Israel. That pointed to the idea of a king. That is the way the Bible puts it. With the kings is the beginning of control.

To be in a kingdom or have my personality in line with the kingdom is for me and my wishes to be under control. Thus my life can be fairly well organized and under control. Adjusting my life to the law of the kingdom, I can live with considerable peace and quietness. This can be shown in our lives by each one obeying simple traffic laws. Traffic moves more smoothly and our lives are generally safer, as a result of what some would call restraints.

The full concept of kingdom is similar, except that the ruler is one person, the king: and the king controls. Under the judges there was no king. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes. When there is a king, the king tells them what to do; and they are to do what they are told. This is the way the kingdom operates.

In other words what was needed in the days of the judges was a guide. Each judge was a director. When each judge arose and was given the authority by the people to speak for God, he announced the word of God, and pronounced the word of God. He preached it and the people did what he said. In those days they had peace. But when the judge died they had no ruler. Then each one got to doing what he wanted to do and they began to have trouble again. So the people got concerned about it: the need was for a permanent guide or director.

And in his lifetime that is what Samuel was. Samuel was used of God to be a director for the people, a leader for the people. In that sense he is the type of Christ so far as we are concerned. Living in our day and time as believers in Christ, we have a leader: that is our Lord Jesus Christ. He is permanent because He is with us all the time. And He is the One who is to guide us.

With reference to Samuel, first I want to speak about his birth. You know it is an interesting thing that with many of the great men in the history of Israel there is often something unusual about their birth. Not in every case, but in many cases. Moses was supposed, according to the law of the land, to be killed. His mother put him in a basket and put him down by the riverside. That was unusual. Joseph was Rachel's son. She did not have any children for a long time. Not until her old age did she have a child and that was Joseph. Afterwards she had one more child, Benjamin. She died in childbirth giving birth to Benjamin, Joseph's younger brother.

With Samuel it is the same story. In Samuel's case for a long time his mother had no children. Hannah became very much burdened. In desperation, in agony, she prayed to the Lord and pledged to the Lord that if the Lord would give her a man-child she would dedicate that child to the Lord's service. Then Samuel was born.

Hannah may seem to have been a sort of flighty person for various reasons, but she was apparently so upset because her rival was more favored than she was, and she felt that her husband did not love her any more. He scolded her about that, in a very ordinary domestic situation. This may show Hannah as a very human person. But when her heart was the heaviest and her spirit was under the greatest burden, she went to the Lord in prayer. She was in the temple praying, and she was praying so hard that she was talking to herself, talking out loud.

When Eli the priest came, he thought she was drunk. He scolded her for being drunk. Hannah did not resent it. She just talked respectfully to him. She told him "I am not drunk. My heart is so heavy. I feel so badly about this." She was just praying so loud, praying so hard, she was talking out loud by herself in her prayer.

Eli was evidently so smitten by what he had said, falsely accusing her, that he was moved to tell her: "Whatever you were praying for, the Lord is going to do it for you." And sure enough He did. Samuel was born. But she had promised God that if He gave her a man-child she would bring that child and dedicate it to the Lord. This she did. Incidentally she wrote a song about it and Hannah's song is one of the fine testimonies in the Old Testament. Miriam's song was a great testimony when they came out of Egypt, but Hannah's song when God answered her prayer is a remarkable testimony of reverent thankfulness and gratitude to God for what He had done.

She kept the little boy home until he was old enough, as if to send him to boarding school. Then she brought him in and turned him over to Eli. She put him in that boarding school permanently. Then we read that once a year she brought him a little coat that she made especially for him. It was as if she brought him an extra suit of clothes. She came once a year to give it to him. Mark her down for a faithful woman. She dedicated her son to the Lord and lived without him, that he should do the Lord's work.

About the biggest thing we would say with reference to Samuel's birth was that he had believing parents. That is significant to this day, and should be far more considered than we commonly do among believers in Christ. Sometimes I feel frustrated in my ministry when I feel so many of our young people come up to the age of getting married and establishing homes, when no one from the church has ever talked seriously to them about the fact that they could pray to God about all these things, including the children that they are going to have. In the case of Samuel it was very clear, the faith of the parents is very much involved so far as Samuel is concerned.

Samuel was dedicated to his life work early in his life. This is difficult for Americans to appreciate. I grew up among people who felt that every child was to pick his life work for himself. But I have discovered as I read the Bible, and also when I look around about me, that there are a good many people

who amount to something in this world whose parents chose for them what they were going to do. Many men go on in professions and become successful in them because they had parents that pointed them to that particular life work. In the case of Samuel he was early dedicated to the Lord's work. He was regularly reminded of his parental care, as his mother brought him that coat so regularly. He was wisely guided by Eli, the old priest. It is interesting to note that Eli could not bring up his own sons, but he certainly brought up Samuel. His own sons did not amount to anything, but this young boy put into his hands really did well. It would seem that some of us make better teachers than parents. Eli's sons were a grief of mind to God, they were an annoyance and a disgrace among the people, and they broke Eli's heart. But he had a fine lad in Samuel and he brought him up well. And Samuel was well trained.

Samuel is one of the few men in the Bible of whom there is no evil record. There are many men in the Bible of whom there is no evil record, but there is no good record either. But of the men of whom there is anything written, there is a lot written about Samuel but not one evil thing. There is a lot written about Joseph, but not one evil thing. There is a lot written about Daniel but not one evil thing. Joseph, Samuel and Daniel are three men in Scripture, Old Testament Scripture, of whom no evil is recorded. Samuel as a man had nothing striking about him. There was no great catastrophe in his life, no big crisis. Samuel was obedient. All his life long he did as he was told. He did what he was told by his mother who sent him to stay with Eli. He did what he was told by Eli; and he did what he was told by God. This was the case all his life long.

Samuel was a boy about seven years of age or so, just a lad, when he went to sleep at night and heard his name called, "Samuel." He got up and ran into Eli's bedchamber, and said, "You called me. Here I am." And Eli said, "I did not call you. Go back to sleep." He went back to sleep as he was told. When he lay down he heard a voice "Samuel". He got up and ran in and said, "Eli you called me. Here I am." And then Eli perceived it was the Lord. He said, "I did not call you. But I will tell you what to do. You go back in there and lie down just like you did and when that voice calls you 'Samuel' you answer 'Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth'." All his life long, that is the way it was for Samuel. What God wanted to have done, he would do. And God did not want him to do so much, except just what he was told. That would be just what God would show him. As God showed him what to do, that is what Samuel did. And that is what made Samuel the great man that he was.

Scripture records that before Samuel's time that there was no vision in the land. People did not know what the Word of God was. There was not anybody who could interpret God's will. But from Samuel's time on the record is that Samuel let none of the Lord's words fall to the ground. He cherished everything he got from the Lord. God spake through Samuel and all Israel was blessed by a man who just did what he was told to do.

Even a man like Samuel would not guarantee how his sons would do. And I think that the community in which they lived had more to do with the sons than the parents had. I think it is always that way. I frankly think that the crowd that your young people are with is more effective in impressing them than you parents are. When Samuel got old, he was no longer able to get around to judge among the people.

By the way in connection with his judging the people, Samuel invented the circuit judge idea. Before Samuel's time if you wanted to get a case tried you had to go to headquarters, had to come to wherever the leader was. But Samuel wanted everybody to have the benefit of the judgment so he arranged four places in his kingdom and he held circuit courts four times a year in various places in his kingdom. He went out to the people to make it possible for them to bring their cases before him.

But Samuel got old and when he got old he was not able to get around much. The people knew that soon Samuel would be gone. When the people thought about Samuel being gone, not having anybody telling them what is what, they came to Samuel and they said to him, "We want you to make us a king. If we had a king, as a permanent leader, we would be better off." And they said, "Look round about us, all the other nations around have kings." Samuel did not like it. He said, "You have a King. Your King is

God. You do not need a king." But they insisted they wanted a king. Other nations had kings and they wanted a king. They wanted to be like the others. And Samuel said, "No, it is not a good idea." They said, "Well we want it." Samuel said, "I do not think you are right. I do not want to give it to you." I am satisfied when God spoke to Samuel that God was answering Samuel's prayer, satisfied that Samuel was praying for the people about this thing. And in praying to God, God said to Samuel in effect what amounts to this, "The reasons they have for wanting a king are not good but they want a king. The reasons you have for opposing the king are good. But you are not the one in charge." The people wanted a king and God said to Samuel in effect, "Do not take it evil that they are not following you." These are the exact words: "They have not rejected thee, they have rejected me."

God told Samuel to go and get them a king. It was against Samuel's better judgment, but they wanted it; and God said, "Since they want it, you give it to them." Then He said to Samuel: "And tell them how to get along with the king. And when you appoint the king, tell the king how to get along with the people. You stay with them and instruct them how they ought to do, and then pray for them."

But Samuel was permitted to tell the people the truth. He called all the people together, and he told them, "You wanted a king, I told you 'No' but you insisted on a king. I asked the Lord, the Lord said for me to give you a king. All right, I will give you a king; but he will make your young men go to war. He will take your money and spend it and waste it, and he will oppress you. You will have trouble but do not say I did not tell you. That is the road that you are going to take. Nevertheless I will show him what to do." Then Samuel uttered these famous words: "God forbid that I should sin in ceasing to pray for you."

Samuel went out and selected them a king, put him in his place, told the king how to do, told the people how to do, and prayed for them. The king did not do what he was supposed to do. Samuel came and judged him, warned him. The second time the king did not do what he was supposed to do, Samuel came to him and told him, "You are out. God is not going to be with you. He is going to raise up another one."

Then Samuel went out and picked another king, brought him in, and anointed him for his place. All of that trouble came because Israel picked a poor road. They could go that way if they wanted to. That is something that is hard for some of us to grasp. If folks are just bound to go and make fools of themselves, Almighty God will just let them go and make fools of themselves. Heaven will not fall down on them. The stars will still be in their places. They can go right on making fools of themselves, and they will feel real bad. What about the rest of you who care for the people? You know what God will say to you? "Teach them. Show them. Help them. Pray for them. " You may say "I told them not to." But we should not take it so seriously. We should not feel so badly about it. We want to save their souls.

We need to learn about Bible truth and about God. Consider what God has to put up with us! So many of us are just bound to go ahead and do things that even we ourselves have a pretty good hunch are not going to work out; but we want to and so we do. God has a way of overruling that. When once God lays His hand on yours, and you put your hand in His, He will never let you go. You cannot do any such fool thing as will ever break you off from Him.

There is only one thing you can do to prevent His gracious plan for you. You could turn your back on Him. For that I cannot say anything for you. As we shall see in dealing with Saul the first king, Samuel came out to tell Saul; when he finally gave Saul his sentence, and told Saul he would be forever destroyed as a king, he told him: "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

To obey is better than giving a big sum of money to the church. And to hearken, to listen to God, that is better than singing all the anthems in the world. That is what our sacrifice is, praising God. You could not sing enough anthems in the world to make up for just one little disobedience. If you just obey God, that is what God wants. You can go and sing afterwards. But He wants you to obey. This of course applies to me also.

But thank the Lord I do not have to prove me perfect to tell you the truth. All I have to do is tell

you the truth and the wonderful thing about the truth is God is holy, just and righteous; but He is merciful and kind and loving. That does not mean that He ever approves foolishness. It does not mean he ever condones evil. God is able to overrule, and He did overrule. In the case of Samuel He had a man that was very pleasing to Him. So when we finish looking at Samuel we have a demonstration of the fact that the life is best lived that is humbly obedient to guidance from God. When you reach the place where you do not have to do it your way any more, when you have reached the place where you submit yourself to God, and you ask God to overrule in your affairs, that is the road. This is not to reconcile you with God. Christ Jesus has done that. You are reconciled to God and He is reconciled to you. That is the road to blessing. That is the way to have peace and strength and joy in your soul.

# Saul

The record concerning Saul is the story of a young man who had his chance for everything. There was just one requirement: that he should obey God. There was something that God wanted him to do, the doing of which would have qualified him for every blessing, and the failure to do which forfeited every opportunity he had. This story has a sad ending because the young man missed it. He failed in a very simple little thing: he wanted his own way. And just at the point where he wanted his own way, he disqualified himself; and lost all that God had arranged for him to have: had planned for him to have. And of course such a story as that will have a very strong lesson for us.

Whenever we are studying any of the kings, we should keep in mind that the Bible speaks of it this way: "He hath made us to be kings and priests unto God" (Revelation 1:6). There is a sense in which each believer in Christ is called to be a king, and just as a king exercises dominion, so must we. Here is a profound truth! Believers, like kings, who have been given great opportunity, have equally great responsibility.

If they fail in responding to the situation they will lose this privilege which they have, and they will no longer have it. We are sinners, and that makes us unworthy. We are weak and that makes us unable. It never dawned on us when we were children or when we grew up, that we would have the privilege of becoming the children of God, but that is our privilege. We are called into the family of God. Any human being is given the privilege of being God's own child. When we are born again, we are called into the family of God. That is our privilege, we could never have earned it.

While we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. There is offered to us in Christ Jesus the wonderful blessing that we can have the favor of God which we cannot earn, but which is given to us freely as a gift. This is the very essence of the Gospel. In this sense we are like Saul, in that it is all offered to us: put right there before us. The Gospel is offered to us, so that through the grace of Jesus Christ you and I, though we were poor, yet we can become rich because while He was rich, He became poor for our sakes. That is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich (II Corinthians 8:9).

We have the privileges of all the riches of grace in Christ Jesus. The Bible calls it the heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ. I am impressed to think that if a pastor were to start in and preach on this every Sunday as long as he was in the pulpit, he would never adequately, ever completely tell his congregation the wonderful opportunity that every last one of them have. They can actually be the children of God. No doubt there is a condition. You and I know the condition very well. In the Gospel we say the condition is you should believe in Him. Believing in Him includes everything, obeying whatever it is; believing in Him includes all yielding, all surrendering to Him. Believing in Him is stepping into Christ and letting Christ step into you. It is joining up with Him and truly on that basis all is mine. But if I do not join up with Him, if I just hear it with my mind and leave it there because I mentally assent to it that it is true, that is not enough. I must commit my heart to it, and take Him into my heart.

The time had come for a king to be chosen. Samuel had been ordered to find them a king. It is worthy of note that Saul was unaware of this. Although Samuel had the commission to go out, and find the king, he did not know who it would be. Here is a vital lesson of faith and trust. Many times people imagine that if you are working for the Lord you ought to know exactly what the Lord wants you to do. The Bible teaches us differently.

The great man of God had a general leading from God. He then probed the mind of God facing their circumstances. Samuel knew God wanted him to choose and anoint the king. He did not know who that would be. In waiting on God in prayer he was told that when he would go out into the country he

would find this young man hunting some livestock for his father. Samuel went out and began to inquire around. He found out about Saul who was out hunting some livestock that his father had lost. Saul was just a farmer, a young man, but of course full grown because afterwards when Saul came in he stood head and shoulders above all the men.

Samuel, when he saw him, felt in his heart, "That is the man." So he had to break the news to him. Why would Samuel go and anoint him? Why did Saul receive this anointing beforehand in private? The reason why Saul was anointed before he was shown to the people, the reason David was anointed years before he became king, was that that anointing experience, that sense of being anointed for a task affects one's mind. It affects the psychology of the heart and mind. From then on the anointed one would feel differently about things. If you know you are to be in a certain place, that you are to have a certain privilege, a certain opportunity, from the time that the finger points to you and you have been tapped, from that time on you feel differently. God in dealing with these men gave them time to get their minds around to it.

So this young man Saul who was out doing a farmer's job, had a big evening meal. When the waiter brought in the food, he brought in the best piece of meat and set it in front of Saul. That was the first intimation he got. Samuel was an old man, an honored man, widely known, the most famous man in the country. It was as if the President had come to be in the banquet hall. In the presence of Samuel the servant brought the meat and set it in front of Saul. I suppose one of the first things he might have said would have been: "Take that away from me. I am not the man. You do not want to put it here." But that was it. You might at some time when somebody is preaching, and a great truth is being shown, suddenly feel like it is just right for you! It would be easy to say "No, he did not mean it for me. I am not that important. It must have been for someone else around here." But no, it is right for you.

When Saul saw what the waiter had done, he was aroused by this and knew it was no passing thing. Samuel invited him outside. When he got him outside he told him, "God has chosen you." Saul's reaction was negative. "Why me? I am not important. I am just doing a roust-a-bout's work. I am chasing donkeys. That is what I am doing. I am not anybody. And my father's family is not important, they are just farmers. And our tribe Benjamin is the smallest of tribes. Why pick on me?" Samuel gave him to understand "God will be with you. And with God with you, you can do it."

Later Saul was to be brought out publicly. Apparently they chose leaders by some kind of lot: it was an election process of some sort. In this case it pointed directly to Saul, and they turned to get him. They went out to find Saul, he was hiding.

What about you? Whenever we talk about the Gospel, and you have the feeling "Oh you do not mean me," you would not be any different from Saul. But the answer would be "We do mean you." So it was with Saul. They found him and brought him in, and crowned him king. When they put him up as king, right away there were some folks that said "Who is this fellow who is going to be king over us?" The reaction was not unanimous. "Who are the tribe of Benjamin? They are the smallest tribe we have here. What party does he belong to that amounts to anything?" They talked against him, and some of them said "To your tents, O Israel. What have we got in this?" That was a poor start. When he was named many fell away.

Saul showed his wisdom in that he did not try to stop them. He went home too. He had been identified. He had been nominated. He had been elected. He could wait. That is wisdom. He could never be king if they did not want him. God had appointed him but with, out their consent he could never be king. He knew that. He was that wise. And so he went on about his business and waited.

It came to pass that a certain enemy came from the Ammonites. Nahash the Ammonite came down and besieged the city of Jabesh. He gave them a time limit. Within so long they were to give them the heads of so many of their prominent men, if not he would destroy the city. What would these poor people do? They had a king in the land now, so somebody asked for a little time. Nahash gave them time, and they sent word to Saul where Saul was out working on the farm.

Here was a crisis. And in the crisis Saul came forward. This was wise. Saul waited until things got into a situation where they needed somebody. Then they turned to him. Then he did a very significant thing. He took the ox with which he was plowing, slaughtered him, cut him up into pieces, and sent a piece of meat to each section of the country. He in effect made it a kind of a token, an invitation, a challenge, to come on in here together and fight this enemy. They did not all come but some came. And of those who came Saul put himself in front.

Saul was an artful military commander in the field. He feinted over here and hit them from over there, pretended he was going to strike over here, and came around behind and completely overwhelmed them. He destroyed them. Israel had a glorious victory. In this glorious victory under the leadership of this young man all the people began to sing, "Long live the king. God save the king." That is where the word was started, the British still have it. While they were all excitedly celebrating the big victory under the leadership of this young hero, someone said "Now where are these men who were criticizing? Who are these men who spoke against him? Bring them out here and we will cut their heads off." And Saul said, "No, no one will lift a hand against anyone." He went on to say, "The victory is the Lord's. It is not for us to take advantage of it. This is not a day for harming one another. This is a day for thanksgiving." That was wise. It was smart. He was magnanimous to his critics. That is the way to knit them together. That is the way to become king. Saul's conduct up to this point was everything it should be. He was wise, brave, shrewd and strong. What more could they want in a man who was to be king?

Saul ruled one year. Everything went fine. The next thing that came up was the crisis with the Philistines. The enemy came and Saul as king mustered his soldiers to go out against them. The Philistines were lined up in the field and Saul had his army lined up. But the Israelites had a procedure to follow. They would not go into a battle like this without the blessing of God. The blessing of God was ministered by them by Samuel, the old prophet. The understanding was that Samuel was to come and offer up sacrifice to God. They were going to have a communion service before they went to battle. Saul had his army together, rather loosely organized, a group of volunteers, to fight against his enemy. Saul waited until Samuel would come to conduct the service. Saul waited a whole day.

Saul was waiting to go against the Philistines. If Saul could have moved immediately and had the advantage of surprising them, if he could have attacked at once, he might have caught his enemy off balance. But he had to wait all day long. Here is Saul, a man of action, a big strong man of action, waiting. The second day he had to wait all day long. The soldiers began to grumble. Someone said, "Well if we are not going to fight, I am going home." The third day he had to wait all day long. Saul's army began to fall away from him. Saul having to wait was where the weak spot showed up. Saul became impatient. Saul did not have to wait just three days, he had to wait seven days. By that time his soldiers had gone home. The enemy was getting stronger and finally Saul could not stand it any longer.

The record is he forced himself, which is to say he did a presumptuous thing. Samuel was supposed to come and offer the sacrifice and offer up prayer. Samuel did not come. So Saul went in and offered up a sacrifice himself and offered a prayer. It sounds so reasonable from a military point of view. It was just exactly the thing to do, but right here we see Saul's weakness. This is profound. The weakness of Saul was that he did not see and he did not understand that by military power he never would win. He was never going to win because of military tactics. He used them but that was not the margin of victory. The margin of victory was the blessing of God.

The blessing of God on a poor procedure is better than the best procedure in the world without the blessing of God. God loves to bless people. He just loves to bless people that are not so awfully smart. People get the blessing from God who do not trust their smartness.

The very next day Samuel came. He walked over to Saul and in effect asked him, "Now what have you gone and done?" Then Saul told him, "Well I waited and I waited and I just could not wait any longer." "Oh that is your trouble, Saul, you could not wait. You could not wait on God." And Samuel told him

"Your time is numbered. Just as sure as you cannot wait on God, God cannot have anything to do with you." But God did not cut him off that first time. But he warned him.

Saul was impatient, and with the impatience was presumption. At the bottom of presumption is pride, self-confidence, and that is linked up with unbelief. The important factor was God. The fighting was incidental. God can bless anyone but He will bless them only if they will walk with Him. Apart from the blessing of God no one can win in spiritual things. That is what we are to learn. Everyone of us should just humbly pray to God, "God keep us from getting impatient. Just keep us from getting all tense and worked up about something. Just keep us trusting in God." "Wait on the Lord. Wait patiently for Him, and He shall bring it to pass."

Saul continued to reign, but he never was blessed in the same way again.

Samuel also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord (I Samuel 15:1).

That is a simple principle. You have been called to be king, listen and obey.

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not (I Samuel 15:2-3).

God sent Saul to this thing. He was to fight with Amalek and completely destroy him. Saul went up in battle against them and defeated them.

And Saul smote the Amalekites . . . and he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly (I Samuel 15:7-9).

The things that were not any good were destroyed. But the things that were good they kept.

Saul had been told to destroy it all. The word we have to use is "disobedience." Saul knew what God had said, but he said "I want that for myself." This is so natural. It is just like breathing, isn't it? Well I know it is very natural, sin is too.

Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments (I Samuel 15:10-11).

This is a human way of saying that God said to Samuel, "I am going to be sorry that I made Saul to be king. He is turned back from following me, and has not performed my commandments." This was new. At first he did everything God wanted him to do. But he is getting now to where he does what he wants to do.

"And it grieved Samuel." We should not miss this. "He cried unto the Lord all night." You may get to thinking Samuel's heart was soft, but he certainly did read the riot act to Saul. And Samuel certainly does tell Saul exactly what is going to happen. We should never think for one moment that Samuel did not care about Saul. Saul had been his choice. Samuel had great grief, like a father with his son. There was great grief in Samuel to see how Saul had failed:

And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal. And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God (I Samuel 15:12-15).

These were the stock Saul had spared. Notice he said "they have brought them", not me. "The people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God." Saul was alibiing by saying the people saved those things because they were going to make a contribution to the church! They saved them because they wanted them. Saul said "We brought these things to sacrifice."

But now Samuel says something to Saul that is profound:

Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, was thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel? And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord. And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal. And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou has rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king (I Samuel 15:16-23).

"To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of the rams." You know the fact of rams was the sacrifice they brought in. To listen to God, to obey God – do you know what that means for us today? The sacrifice we bring is somewhat in our money but not so much only in that, we bring the sacrifice of our lips. We come into the presence of God to praise Him. We sing the hymns to praise His name, we read the Scripture that honors Him. We pray the words that describe glory and honor to Him. God is saying to anyone of us. "Your Scripture reading in public and your praying in public and your singing in public are all all right, but what I want is the obedience of your heart. I want your heart and nothing else will take its place." To obey from the heart, to respond willingly, obediently to God, put one's trust in God and walk humbly with Him, honestly, sincerely with Him is better than all the church going you will ever do and all the church services you will ever attend. That is the way it was being taught back there then and under those circumstances Samuel pronounced Saul's doom. He told him God would have no more to do with him.

And because God would have no more to do with Saul, he, Samuel, would not have anything more to do with him. And so Saul said to Samuel, "I know I have done wrong and I do not question the justice of this judgment that you have just pronounced, but when I go out now in front of the people you come and stand by me so the people will not get the idea that I am forsaken because I need it for the morale of the people. I want to keep up the situation." Then Samuel said, "No, I do not want to step out there. It would be misrepresentation, because I am not with you any more." But Saul said, "If I go out there alone, the people will know there is something wrong. And it will not be any good for the people. So you come and stand by me." So Samuel said, "All right, I will." So he went out and stood by and went through the public worship services, went through the public acclaim, went through all the big celebration, Samuel stood by him, a special concession, a consent on the part of God, to not disturb all the people with the full judgment immediately. But when Samuel went home that time he never came back. Samuel went home, up to his mountain home, and stayed there. And he never saw Saul again till the day of his death. But you know what the Bible says? Samuel grieved for Saul all the days of his life.