

CHIEF MINISTRIES

November 2018

No one else - You - Samuel

“Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem (1 Samuel 16:1) Samuel might have said, “Why me?” As far as I know he didn’t. But many of us have done so. Moses did. Having been given the commission to confront Pharaoh, Moses said, “O Lord, please, send someone else to do it!” This did not make God very happy; in fact, the Lord’s anger “burned against Moses” (Exodus 4:13-14).

The earlier days Samuel had the opposite problem; he had to learn not to take rejection personally. Every leader has to learn this. In Samuel’s case it came when Israel demanded a king. Samuel knew this was wrong. He warned them on bended knee. He was distressed. *“And the Lord told him, ‘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’”(1 Samuel 8:7).*

When we take rejection personally, we will need a lot more of God’s fiery disciplining. It’s hard not to take rejection personally, especially if you have been close to the people who can’t go along with you. God graciously answered Samuel, *“They haven’t rejected you, but Me”*. When we know we are carrying out God’s mandate, we have an authority that withstands the most vehement (hateful) criticism. We become humbly conscious that God has deemed to elevate us to the Big League - and we follow in the path of those lonely leaders who heard from God.

A few years ago, in coming to prison, I found myself gripped by John’s words in Revelation 1:9: *I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus...* Those words seemed to call me to move up higher in my relationship with God. It was as though John were speaking to me. I felt John’s loneliness. I was lonely. I felt that God was saying welcome to the Big League - a realm known by those willing to suffer, to endure, to persevere. I thought too of these words, *“We must go through many hardships (much tribulation [KJV]) to enter the Kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22)*

Loneliness. It goes with the job of being today’s man or woman. We live in a day when collective leadership is in vogue. The greater the consensus, the less the stigma. This way we can pass the buck to each other when things fall apart.

Now I’m not saying we shouldn’t listen to each other. We must be accountable. We all need those around us who will not be rubberstamps and who will warn and rebuke... *“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17)*. Those who remain unteachable and unaccountable because they have achieved a measure of success will almost certainly be found out and lose credibility - if not their anointing - at the end of the day. *“Wounds from a friend can be trusted” (6)*. Fallen leaders can be partly explained by an absence of their being accountable to others.

On the other hand, today’s man often walks alone. Samuel did. Moses did. Abraham did. Elijah did. Paul did.

Samuel now had to break up with the regime he had set up. He had to turn away from what God did yesterday. Although Samuel had initially opposed the idea of kingship, he went along with it because God told him to. Once he came to terms with God’s fresh word - *“Let them have a king”* - Samuel gave all his energy to it. The kingship and the discovery of Saul to wear the crown was Samuel’s baby, so to speak. He actually became the architect of the whole thing. But now he was told to abandon it. If I could explain how I myself am going through this very thing right now, perhaps one may understand it better, but I’ll let the Word of God speak. The same God who had accommodated Israel with a king now regarded Saul as finished.

It wasn't easy to do this. First, accepting the kingship. Second, abandoning it. Both were the results of obedience to God's fresh anointing. From one point of view Samuel could be seen as vacillating (going back and forth) as being for Saul, or not? The truth is, Samuel was taking orders from God.

The greatest stigma of being today's man or woman of God is probably that of being misunderstood. Nothing made sense. It didn't add up that a few days after raising Lazarus from the dead, the same man was now hanging on the cross. Why didn't Jesus stop the proceedings that led him to His crucifixion? Anybody who could control the wind and storm on the Sea of Galilee could surely have intervened before Herod or Pilate. When a detachment of soldiers fell back in John 18:6, Jesus could have fled. There were a bunch of ways he could have stopped being crucified. Common sense told everybody this. So why was He being crucified? The disciples couldn't figure it out - *they all forsook Him and fled (Matthew 26:56)*. Never once did Jesus explain Himself. It must have been almost unbearable emotional pain for Jesus to see Mary Magdalene sobbing her heart out at the scene of the cross and not be allowed to whisper to her, *It's okay, Mary; all is going according to plan. I'm atoning for the sins of the world by My blood.*" But there was no hint of this. He had to bear the further stigma of being misunderstood, even by those closest to Him.

Only Samuel knew that Saul was yesterday's man. He had to make a decision; Should he stick to his guns by supporting Saul right or wrong or listen to that voice that had never failed him yet? He listened to God.

This shows how all relationships must be subservient to God's greater glory. No matter how close people get to each other, they must be closer to God. The irony is, the closer people are to God, the more they will love each other. The more they put the value of God prior to their commitment to each other, the more they really respect each other. If you know you're doing the right – God thing and you've been subservient to God first and then your "leadership", and yet you don't feel or see the love, it's probably apparent your part of a yesterday's – man ministry. Perhaps it's time to move on, especially when it can be seen that spiritually and physically those "leaders" are going through the motions. It may be reminiscent of Saul begging Samuel to honor him before the people by making it appear he was still today's man (1 Samuel 15:30). Trust me; there are many among us who draw near to God with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him.

I think of some of my close friends. The dynamic that holds us together is that we love God more than we do each other. If I stopped listening to God and turned away from Him. I would expect my friends to warn me – then lovingly rebuke me if I did not come to my senses. It works both ways. If my closest friend broke with the principles that spawned our relationship, however much he has been like a brother, I would warn him and rebuke him – but I would keep loving him. No friendship or relationship is worth its salt if it does not have an inflexible commitment to God's glory first and to one another second, it would break my heart if I had to break with any of my friends – for any reason. But I would do it if I had to because of my greater love for God's honor.

That is what Samuel had to do with Saul. Today's man is often in the awkward position of having to do this. Sentimental attachment must be put to one side. Nostalgia has to go. The precious sentiment of what was would never be sufficient to keep a relationship intact if all were not equally committed to hearing God's voice.

Have you ever had to do this? Maybe some of you – as Christians (most of you, not yet though) have had to say farewell to a person, a church, an organization, a group of friends, a worship service with whom you had been in sweet company. It was not because you got off the rails – they did. You would have been loyal to the end. But they broke faith. Perhaps you felt betrayed. *"Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me." (Psalm 41:9)*. No covenant with any person, church, group or organization should be based on sheer human loyalty to one another. It is love for God that brought about the fellowship in the first place.

It is a severe test to one's strength whether God will always be put first – and obeyed. Today's man or woman must get his approval from God only. *"How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes only from God?" (John 5:44)*. It is a way today's servant of Christ must bear the cross. But the more I bear this cross, the more I put God's voice first, the more I am jealous of God's glory. By doing this, then the more I will be respected, appreciated and loved by these friends. That, in fact, is what makes a real friendship.

If you wish to be today's servant, then you must also resist gloating when you have been vindicated. If Samuel had been small minded, he would have been glad Saul had failed the test. Samuel was the only one who had warned against the kingship. We might expect him to shout to the house tops, "I told you so". How do we know he didn't do that? Because God said to Samuel, *"How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? (1 Samuel 16:1)*. There was no gloating only mourning. *"Do not gloat when your enemy fails; when he stumbles, do not let your heart rejoice" (Proverbs 24:17)*.

A good evidence that you and I can be trusted with today's anointing and today's stigma is that we mourn when a brother or sister slips or falls. Cain said, "*Am I my brother's keeper?*" (*Genesis 4:9*). The answer is YES! I fear that the anointing many of us desire is largely delayed because of a rival spirit. We look over our shoulders and consciously or unconsciously, compete with one another. Virtually no consideration at all is given to seeking the glory that comes only from God. We want mutual adulation more.

D. L. Moody heard a speaker say, "The world has yet to see what God could do with one man totally resigned to Him." What the man meant was this; someone who wants only God's honor, not man's; someone who has no grudge against a soul and who doesn't care what people think as long as one follows the Holy Spirit. Internally, D. L. Moody said, "I want to be that person." It changed Moody's life, and Moody began to shape the world. But not without considerable suffering in the meantime.

Today's man or woman also ought to be on the lookout for tomorrow's man. "*The Lord said to Samuel, 'How Long will you mourn for Saul, surely 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'*" (*1 Samuel 16:1*). As long as our deep concern is for the status of tomorrow's generation, we are in fairly good shape.

Perhaps the saddest moment in Hezekiah's life was when Isaiah warned him that he should have never allowed certain Babylonians to gaze on the things in the palace of Jerusalem. Isaiah prophesied:

*Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD: ^{v17}Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says the LORD. ^{v18}And some of your own sons, who will come from you, whom you will father, shall be taken away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." ^{v19}Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good." For he thought, "Why not, if there will be peace and security in my days?" ^{v20}The rest of the deeds of Hezekiah and all his might and how he made the pool and the conduit and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? (*2 Kings 20:16 – 18 ESV*).*

This should have sobered Hezekiah to his bones. Instead, his only comment. "*The word of the Lord you have spoken is good*; Hezekiah replied. For he thought, "*Will there not be peace and security in my lifetime ?*" (^v 19). He wasn't thinking of the next generation but only himself.

Jonathan Edwards said that the one thing Satan cannot successfully counterfeit is a love for the glory of God. As long as you and I truly love God's honor, including the reputation of His church today and tomorrow, it is good evidence we haven't been duped by the devil. But if it is my own reputation I am worried about, there is no proof I am today's man. In fact, it's quite the opposite.

Samuel, one of the greatest men that ever was, simply followed the Lord all his days, no matter how he appeared to man. He was a symbol of today's servant of God. He was on the lookout for tomorrow's man.

Samuel assumed that the next king of Israel would be Jesse's firstborn. Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "*Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord*" (*1 Samuel 16:6*). Any servant of Christ has his biases. Samuel knew that the firstborn of any family would receive double the inheritance. But God had broken that pattern before. Isaac, not Ishmael, was God's anointed. Jacob, not Esau, was God's anointed. So, it was about to happen again. The Lord said to Samuel, "*Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.*" (^v 7).

Samuel began to think he had missed the Lord signal. Jesse had first brought Eliab, then Abinedab, then Shammah. All Samuel could say was, "*Nor has the Lord chosen this one*" (^v 9). Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel. He still could not feel right. "*The Lord has not chosen these*" (^v 10). Today's servant of Christ must be willing to hear the voice of the Spirit above his own personal biases and prejudices. So, Samuel asked Jesse, "*Are these all the sons you have?*" (^v 11).

Had Samuel followed his instinct, he would have gone by "outward appearances". He must have thought this when he saw Eliab and said to himself, "*Surely the Lord's anointed stands before the Lord.*" But that is when God's voice transcended Samuel's instinct.

It is not always easy to tell the difference between our instincts shaped by years of knowledge and experience, and the voice of the Spirit. This is where many of us fail. We hastily go by outward appearances – our comfort zone.

Have you learned to recognize God's set-up? This is what we find in John 6. The moment Jesus's words begin to offend – *"I am the bread that came down from heaven"* – the crowds drew on information they had always known: *"they said, 'Is this not Jesus.....whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven?'"* (John 6:42). The offense is camouflaged by God's set-up. This way people can rationalize and dismiss the person and feel completely justified. When Jesus went so far as to say, *"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you"* (v 53). That did it. *"This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?... From this time many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him"* (v 60, 66). They could not have felt more justified in their disgust: But God set them up.

Eliab, Jesse's firstborn, was a set-up. This is surely the one, even Samuel thought at first. But fortunately, Samuel kept listening to the voice that he trusted. *Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here."* ^{v12} *And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he."* (1 Samuel 16:11, 12 ESV)

There is a famous site in Kentucky called Mammoth Cave, the largest underground cavern in the world. It is amazing and worth seeing. Many tourists go there, but when you get close there are signs everywhere describing other caves in the area. They have all sorts of names, and the hype to get the tourists to stop include signs such as; "The most beautiful cave in the world: Some people stop and go into these and never get to see Mammoth Cave.

If we are not truly tuned in to the voice of the Holy Spirit, we can let any prejudice of our own charm us to miss the authentic. On top of this God may well test us by allowing our prejudice to overrule when someone's outward appearance is not up to what we think should befit an anointed servant of Christ.

Once Samuel saw David, despite his young age and utter lack of experience, the Lord said, *"Rise and anoint him; he is the one"* (v 12). How did Samuel know? I only know that he knew. He knew he was not deceived. But he would not have been able to supply evidence to Jesse or anyone else that would be totally convincing. The pain of being today's man is that you can't convince another person of what you see unless the Holy Spirit shows them as well.

I would like to say a further word about my own dad. He wasn't perfect, but he sure was close. He was the godliest man I have ever known. His devotion, prayer and Bible study had more to do with influencing me today than any other factor. He was not a man with a title of minister, church leader, pastor, philanthropist. He was a layman, yet he did all of those things. He prayed at least 30 minutes every day. I wonder if there are still men out there like him in the world today. Or are they moving too fast in a too fast world. Surveys say the average pastor only prays about five minutes a day. I feel so fortunate to have had a father, a dad like him. Yet his walk, his way wouldn't save me or change me. I had to go down that road myself. He always said, "son, take the low road because it will always lead to the high road." He saw the anointing in my life before I did.

Today's servant of Christ has to put his or her personal wishes – even relationships – to one side. It can be a lonely road. "Who is equal to such a task?" **"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.** ^{v35} **For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.** ^{v36} **And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.** ^{v37} **Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.** ^{v38} **And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.** ^{v39} **Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.** (Matthew 10:34 – 39 ESV).

Some of my testing has come even through these writings. Some believe what I write. Some reject it. Some have complained to chaplains, other "leaders" in their units. Even some of my friends have failed to see it for what it truly has always been – a labor of love to open the eyes of the blind and to spare many an unexpected end. But it all continues to prepare me for battles far greater than those experiences. *"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much"* (Luke 16:10). God gives little tests – however great they may seem at the time – to get us ready for the battle royal.

Part of the sacrifice of being today's servant of Christ is that vindication usually comes tomorrow. Possibly after we are in heaven. Partly what made those in Hebrews 11 "today's" servants in their day was that they were willing to have the fruits of their labors borne by a successive generation. *And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive*

what was promised, ^{v40} since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. (Hebrews 11:39, 40 ESV).

Peter reminded his readers that, as for the prophets of the Old Testament. *“It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look” (1 Peter 1:12 ESV).*

This is an example when those with the Lord continue to be today’s man or woman. This is a real legacy. *“For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do” (Hebrews 6:10 ESV).* Those Hebrew Christians who did not succumb to the pressures of their day would never be forgotten.

Samuel wanted to leave not just a personal legacy by which he would be remembered, but a legacy for Israel tomorrow. That is what made him today’s man. Had he only thought of himself, he would have been perilously close to becoming yesterday’s man.

We are all guilty of thinking of ourselves and how we will be remembered. But the irony of church history is that those who prepared most for tomorrow’s church were the most remembered, those who wanted to build their own empires became yesterday’s men and women while they were still alive – and hardly remembered afterwards.

When he was president, Ronald Reagan kept a little plaque on his desk that read, “There is no limit to how far one can go as long as he doesn’t care who gets the credit”. That to me is profound. If you and I can bring that into our own lives, I suspect it would make a considerable difference – not only in our usefulness but also in how we are remembered. It would mean wanting, first of all, the honor that comes from God only, then to affirm His servants, no matter who they are. That is the challenge of being today’s man or woman. When one truly does not care who gets the credit for any brilliant idea, but just wants to see it carried out, there is no limit to how far that person can go.

So.....are you willing to be the one who might have to walk a road that few dare tread? Are you willing to speak the truth in love? Even if you are ostracized (put out) because of it? It is obedience that will bring a reward at the judgment seat of Christ. *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (2 Corinthians 5:10 ESV).*

Whether or not we receive a reward will be determined by our accepting our anointing (which requires obedience) and living within its limitations (which means not disobeying) whatever that profile follows. We will also be blessed here below on the basis of how we lived within the grace given to us. We may or may not be pleased with the profile that comes with that anointing. But the greatest thing that can happen to you or me at the judgment will be to hear Jesus say, *“Well done!”*

God never promotes us to the level of our incompetence. What he truly calls us to do, we can do. So, go do it! And do it with the power that comes with the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Go! Do!

I’m believing with you,

Chief

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Christ’s

Heart

In

Every

Felon