

CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

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THE LIFE AND WORK OF SAMUEL

John Haffner

One of the most well-known among the non-writing prophets, Samuel was a judge over God’s people, the last leader of this sort for Israel. His mother, Hannah, prayed earnestly for a child and she dedicated him to the service of God at a very young age. Samuel trained under the high priest, and eventually grew to serve and to lead God’s people through pivotal times of conflict and transition. He consistently showed a dedication to the Lord and His truth. We will briefly examine three windows into his life, uncovering key principles of application for us in the Christian age.

First, Samuel shows us the importance of proclaiming the truth. As Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli, he had many opportunities to grow and develop in the faith. During this time, the Lord called to Samuel in the night. Initially he mistook the Lord’s voice for that of Eli, but the elderly man corrected the lad and urged him to listen to God’s instruction (1 Sam. 3:1-9). The message young Samuel received from the Lord was a difficult one. Eli would be punished for not restraining his sons from evil. Samuel felt, as many of us would, hesitant and fearful to share the hard message (1 Sam. 3:10-15). However, with Eli’s encouragement, Samuel faithfully proclaimed the word of the Lord as a prophet must (1 Sam. 3:16-18). Christians today need to understand the message that God has revealed to us (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 1:1-2). Having heard this message, we have a responsibility to speak the truth, even when hard and unpleasant (Gal. 4:16; 2 Thess. 1:8). As Samuel was instructed not to hide anything of all that God had revealed, we too must declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

Second, Samuel shows us the importance of patience and prayer. In his old age, he made his sons judges over Israel, but the people refused to follow them. The elders of Israel told Samuel to give them a king instead, to lead them like all the nations (1 Sam. 8:1-5). Rather than responding to this upsetting news immediately, Samuel wisely chose to pause for prayer. Although Samuel felt that he was being rejected, Israel’s desire for a king was a rejection of the Lord (1 Sam. 8:6-9). Samuel tried in vain to dissuade them from their decision and God granted their request (1 Sam. 8:10-22). Many times, we will act out when we are displeased or receive difficult news. It is dangerous to speak

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FROM THE EDITOR:

THE UNNAMED PROPHETS

Cody Westbrook

When we think of the prophets we tend to think of men like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Elijah, and for good reason. Their work in the service of God is renown to us, as it was during the time of the first century (cf. Matt. 16:14). But Scripture describes the work of many prophets of old. Some worked in palaces and some among the people. Some wrote, some did not. Some worked for many years, some for just a short time. And a few did their work anonymously.

In 1 Samuel 2, 1 Kings 13, and 1 Kings 20 we read about 3 men simply referred to as “a man of God” and “a man of the sons of the prophets.” Though their work does not occupy major real estate in God’s Word there is still much to be learned from them.

The most obvious lesson to be gleaned from all three is that the world does not need to know your name. How challenging it is in a culture like ours to be willing to work without recognition. And yet, that is exactly the kind of attitude called for in servants of God. Paul wrote, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself” (Phil. 2:3). Think of the countless number of Saints who have left their mark here on earth in ways which we will never know this side of eternity. We may not know their names, but God does, and that’s enough. Remember the refrain of Hebrews 6:10–“For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name....”

A second lesson to be learned from these prophets is the importance of proclaiming God’s Word with clarity. In each account we find the statement, “Thus says the Lord” followed by a clear description of exactly what the Lord said. One who speaks God’s Word must do so in completeness and clarity. Peter said, “If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). Paul said, “Preach the word!” (2 Tim. 4:2), and indeed he did (cf. Acts 20:27)! Though there are no prophets today, every preacher puts himself in the position of speaking

on behalf of God. It is a sacred trust that must be taken seriously (Jas. 3:1). Like the prophets, we must preach the Word with clarity. We must not preach philosophy or opinions, and we must not preach in question marks.

Consider also the courage displayed by each of these prophets. A man of God spoke to God’s High Priest and informed him that his sons would die and his house would be cut off (1 Sam. 2). Another man of God stood before a king to rebuke him for his rebellion against the Lord (1 Kings 13). And a man of the sons of the prophets surprised wicked Ahab with news that his life would be required because of his league with Ben-Hadad the Syrian (1 Kings 20). What courage it takes to go before a man of power and confront him with truth, and yet these men did just that. Second Timothy 1:7 comes to mind–“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” We may not confront kings in 21st century America, but we confront a culture just as wicked as that of old. We must summon the same kind of courage displayed in God’s prophets.

A final lesson to consider is the need to remain faithful. First Kings 13:11-34 is one of the most curious sections of scripture in the Old Testament. We are introduced to another anonymous prophet described only as “an old prophet” (1 Kings 13:11). This old prophet deceived the man of God who stood boldly before Jeroboam, and it ended in the young prophets death. First Kings 13:26 describes the situation by saying, “It is the man of God who was disobedient to the word of the Lord.” Though there are many thoughts and questions provoked by the context, one point that must be remembered is the importance of life-long faithfulness. The man of God had done great work for the Lord in confronting Jeroboam, but that work did not save him from future disobedience. Likewise, it is not our faithfulness yesterday that matters, but our faithfulness today, tomorrow, and into the future. Remember the question

asked of the Galatian Saints—“You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?”

Much more could be said about these prophets. May we continue to study their lives and learn from them. That we may be better fit for the service of God.

CW



NATHAN, THE COURAGEOUS PROPHET

Chase Green

“Moral courage is higher and a rarer virtue than physical courage” (William Joseph Slim).

The Bible contains many examples of people who acted courageously. I think of examples such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Daniel and his three friends in Babylon, and many others, including the prophets of the Lord. One of the prophets that exuded courage was Nathan. This prophet may not have written a book of the Bible, but we might say he “wrote the book on courage,” so to speak. The reason is as follows.

Imagine a scenario where your boss has just committed a very serious crime, and not a victimless one. You have knowledge of the crime and are tasked with confronting him. Would it not be easier to just “let things slide” or “sweep things under the rug?” Might there be repercussions if you

say something? But it would be morally wrong to ignore the responsibility of confronting sin. Nathan found himself in just such a situation.

Second Samuel chapter 11 tells of when David committed sin after sin involving the beautiful (but married) woman Bathsheba. After gazing upon her from his rooftop as she bathed, David 1) enquired about her, 2) was told that she was a married woman, 3) pursued her anyway by having her brought to him, 4) committed adultery with her, 5) tried to cover his sin up by bringing her husband (Uriah) home from battle, even 6) getting Uriah drunk as part of his scheme. When Uriah honorably refused to be with his wife, David then 7) murdered Uriah by having him put on the front lines and intentionally cut off from the rest of the troops. The story has the makings of a best-selling true crime novel, but it really happened.

Enter Nathan the prophet. In 2 Samuel chapter 12, God tasked Nathan with confronting David for his egregious list of sins. We will examine that confrontation in a moment, but think about the stakes of this confrontation from Nathan’s point of view. What if, after being confronted, David had exclaimed to Nathan “off with his head!” in a fit of rage? Even though this would have been further sin on David’s part, David as king certainly had the power to do so. He also had a conscience that was so seared that he had already killed one man, so it is not unreasonable to conclude that this was in the realm of possibility.

Perhaps that is why what follows in 2 Samuel 12 is so remarkable. Through inspiration, Nathan picked the perfect method for confronting David – using a parable to veil the identity of the true offender until David’s wrath could be provoked, and then “laying it on him” that he was the real offender! It is a brilliant method, for it removed the possibility of arguing with the facts of guilt.

The parable was as follows:

There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. The rich man had exceedingly many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him. And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man’s lamb and prepared it for

the man who had come to him (2 Sam. 12:1-4).

Without applying the facts of the parable to himself, David in his wrath pronounced the death penalty and fourfold restitution upon the offender (v. 5-6). This is when the story reaches a crescendo: “Then Nathan said to David, “You are the man!” (v. 7a). In subsequent verses, Nathan continued to rebuke David, and to David’s credit (because he was a man after God’s own heart), David promptly repented, simply stating “I have sinned against the Lord” (v. 13).

What would have happened if this unsung prophet of the Lord had not had the courage to confront this powerful king? We can only imagine, but Nathan’s example of courage in proclaiming truth should remind all (especially those who preach) of the seriousness of confronting sin when it is present.

CW

MICAHIAH, THE MASTER’S MOUTHPIECE

Cody Kilgore

The Lord will de-mask the disguised, so we learn in Ahab’s attempted conquest for Ramoth-Gilead. In 1 Kings 22, Ahab, King of Israel, had orchestrated an attempt to regain the land he deemed as his own. With the aid of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, and about 400 prophets, Ahab became emboldened. While the voice of Jehoshaphat declared that they inquire from the Lord (v. 5), Ahab’s preference remained upon his men. In fact, unsatisfied with the prophecy of the near 400, Jehoshaphat further sought the voice of God, “Is there not here another prophet of the LORD of whom we may inquire?” Now, insert the voice of God channeled through the medium of Micaiah the prophet - a man hated because of his unfavorable prophecies (v.8). Fast forward to verse 37, Ahab has died in battle. What was said? In unison with the 400, Micaiah would affirm, “Go up and triumph; the LORD will give it into the hand of the king.” In contrast with the 400, Micaiah would affirm the loss of a shepherd, a king (v. 17), and the presence of a lying spirit, one permitted to entice Ahab toward his demise (v. 23). To Ahab these final words were made, “If you return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me... (v. 28).”

The prophecy of Micaiah reigned as truth—the 400 and alleged friend of Ahab, Zedekiah, were exposed as liars.

An obvious lesson from Ahab’s death is that what the Lord declares will come to pass. But what more can we learn?

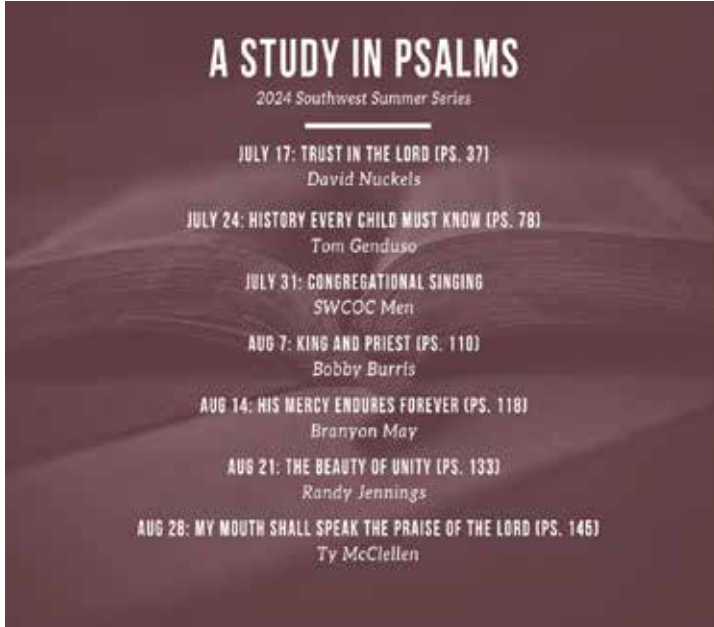
First, the Word of God cannot be bound. Paul reminds us of this (2 Tim 2:9). He wrote to a young evangelist who stood at the crossroads of faithfulness and fleeing. Similarly, we see Micaiah placed at those crossroads. Micaiah had two options: speak a lie and be spared, or speak the truth and endure the consequences. As a man with a genuine appreciation for God as the judge to whom he must give account and the King to whom he must give homage, Micaiah found himself sharing what was a message of death and destruction to his hurt - being cast into prison with meager rations until Ahab returned. Like Paul, he was in chains. Like Paul, he had an option - deny your statements and be released. Yet, with the knowledge of Ahab’s death and the fact that he would not return in peace, he continued steadfastly - even if such a stance implied he would remain in prison the rest of his days under such conditions.

Second, the Lord will de-mask the disguised. Ahab understood the implications of Micaiah’s prophesy. Instead of deferring to God, he sought to work around Him. He went into battle disguised as an ordinary soldier but died as a king. It was not by chance that a stray arrow struck him but by the Word of the Lord. Though I recognize how costly the payment for sin is, I find comfort in this fact - authenticity reigns. When it comes to the kings of the divided kingdom, only one was truly a king - God marked that in the death of Ahab. When it comes to those occupying pulpits, the time of accounting will be at hand. The peddlers of the gospel will be gathered like weeds (Matt. 13:30). Those who have tried to mask their sins will be parted to the left (Matt. 25:41). Those who have died with Him and endured with Him will live with Him and reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:11-12). Those who embody authenticity will be as pillars in His temple (Rev. 3:12) - Permanent.

Third, the righteous are bold. Proverbs 28:1 reminds us, “The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion.” Micaiah will forever stand as an ensign of boldness among the people of God. What can be said of the man who “boldly” struck the mouthpiece of God, Zedekiah? Seeing as the rest of Micaiah’s prophecies came to pass, I imagine the prophecy concerning Zedekiah did as well, “... you go into an inner chamber to hide yourself (v. 25).” Will we have a bold spirit like Micaiah, speaking the Word of God despite unpopularity, consequences, and threats? Or, will we embody weakness like Zedekiah and seek to save our lives? “Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it” (Luke 17:33).

Micaiah serves us as a hallmark of service unto God. Service which does not permit wish-washy stances and statements. Service which does not get carried about by seeing to our self-interests. Service which is carried about through steadfastness and endurance. “Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. (2 Tim. 2:3-4)”

CW



ELIJAH, THE TISHBITE

Bill Burk

Elijah enters the stage of history mysteriously, with little introduction and no fanfare. *Immediately, the text presents him as a man of prayer.* James, the half-brother of the Lord, explains that Elijah, despite being a man like the rest of us, was able to use his powerful prayers to start and end a drought (1 Kings 17:1; Jas. 5:17-18). In the same chapter, he fervently petitioned the Lord to resurrect a widow’s son from the dead, and God granted his request (1 Kings 17:21-22). His prayers were instrumental in defeating the prophets of Baal, leading to

a short-lived revival in Northern Israel (18:36-39). The Bible assures every faithful Christian that they too have the privilege of praying prayers that can make a difference, just like the prophet. This prayer model is accessible to all (Jas. 5:16; Matt. 7:7; Heb. 4:16; 1 John 5:14). It’s important to note that Elijah’s actions were not just about the physical act of praying, but also about the faith he had in God’s power to answer those prayers.

Elijah was not just a man of prayer but also a man of remarkable courage and toughness (cf. 2 Kings 1:1-18). Wicked King Ahab desired to kill Elijah (1 Kings 18:9-14), yet the prophet fearlessly faced him and took on hundreds of the king’s wife’s false prophets, defeating and executing them (1 Kings 18:20-40). After Jezebel had the noble Naboth murdered to acquire his vineyard for her spineless husband, Ahab callously took possession of it to turn it into a vegetable garden. Elijah confronted him and prophesied of the king’s death and the fall of his house due to his wickedness (1 Kings 17:17-26). The strength of the prophet’s words caused the king to humble himself before God (1 Kings 17:27-29). The Bible teaches that God hasn’t given the Christian a spirit of fear but of power, love, and a sound mind (2 Tim 1:7). With the Lord’s help, the disciple can display the same courage and toughness Elijah did in any circumstance, inspiring us to face our own challenges with faith and determination.

Although strong and brave, Elijah was also compassionate and sensitive. He displayed his compassion by providing the faithful widow from Zarephath (cf. Luke 4:25-26) with daily necessities and by lovingly raising her son from the dead (1 Kings 17:8-24). He displayed sensitivity and vulnerability in his interaction with the Lord after Jezebel sought to kill him after his victory over her prophets on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 19:1-10). He opined that he alone served the Lord when, in fact, the Lord still had seven thousand faithfully following him. Elijah proves that it’s possible to display bravery and strength while still exhibiting compassion and sensitivity towards the things of God.

Finally, Elijah was a man who possessed great faith and trust in the Lord. The Lord ultimately used unclean birds and a helpless widow to care for Elijah, and the prophet trusted him (1 Kings 17:1-16). He exhibited faith in trust in God when he took on Jezebel’s prophets and admonished the people to serve only Yahweh (1 Kings 18:21). He showed great faith as he took on Ahab (1 Kings 18:18-19) and then later his son Ahaziah

(2 Kings 1:1ff). Because of his faith, rather than dying like men do (Heb. 9:27), God used a whirlwind to usher him into his presence (2 Kings 2:10-11). The faith of Elijah, like a chariot with its horseman, served as Israel's strength (2 Kings 2:12-14). Those born again can also experience great victory through faith in Jesus (1 John 5:4) while at the same time strengthening those around them (Matt. 5:16).

CW

of Jericho complained about bad water; he miraculously made water potable (2 Kings 2:22). On his way to Bethel, he encountered youths who mocked him; he cursed them, and two she-bears mauled forty-two of them (2 Kings 2:24). These miracles established his authority as God's prophet and spokesperson.

Elisha's miracles profited the great and the lowly. His miracle of oil helped a widow pay her creditors and spare her children from slavery (2 Kings 4:1-7). A Shunamite woman provided him an apartment. He blessed her and her husband to have a son. When he died from a problem with his head, Elisha raised him from the dead (2 Kings 4:8-37). The same woman benefited from Elisha's counsel to escape a famine (2 Kings 8:1-6). He purified poison stew, and he multiplied bread for 100 men (2 Kings 4:38-44). In 2 Kings 6:1-6, he made an axe-head float helping one of the sons of the prophets.

Elisha benefited God's people during time of war. His miraculous counsel ensured the defeat of the Moabites (2 Kings 3). It also protected the king of Israel from Syria (2 Kings 6:8-12). Syria sent a force after Elisha. They surrounded him in the city of Dothan. He told his servant, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them" (2 Kings 6:16). His servant's eyes were opened, and he saw the mountains full of chariots of fire. He struck his enemies with blindness and led them to Samaria where they were surrounded. He did not have them killed but fed and returned them to Syria. "The bands of Syrian raiders came no more into the land of Israel" (2 Kings 6:23).

During the siege of Samaria (2 Kings 6:24-7:20), the city was reduced to cannibalism. The king wanted Elisha's head (2 Kings 6:31). When they came to take him, he said the siege would end the next day (2 Kings 7:1). The officer who came to take his head would see the food restored but would not eat it (2 Kings 7:2). The man was trampled by the mobs leaving the city for food (2 Kings 7:20).

Elisha's most famous miracle was healing Naaman, a commander of the army of Syria who had leprosy (2 Kings 5). A servant girl informed Naaman about a prophet in Israel who could heal him. After speaking with Israel's king, who disavowed such ability, Elisha sent for Naaman. He commanded him to dip seven times in the Jordan river to be healed. This river drained the entire Jordan valley into the Dead Sea. It was full of filth. Naaman protested that Syria's rivers were far cleaner and did not immediately obey Elisha. A lowly servant persuaded Naaman. After the seventh dip, he came up clean (2 Kings 5:14).

Elisha prophesied the death of Benhadad and the rise



ELISHA, THE SON OF SHAPHAT

Kevin Cauley

God told Elijah to anoint Elisha "as prophet in your place" (1 Kings 19:16). He was a prophet of war who would "sweep up" after Jehu by killing those who opposed God (1 Kings 19:17; 2 Kings 13:3; 2 Kings 9:22). When Elijah called Elisha, he slaughtered his own oxen, burned the yokes to cook the meat, and fed the people (1 Kings 19:21). He would not return to the farm.

Elisha's persistence resulted in his being given a double portion of Elijah's spirit (2 Kings 2:9; 15). After witnessing Elijah being taken into the whirlwind, Elisha miraculously divided the Jordan river (2 Kings 2:14). When the men

of Hazeal (2 Kings 8:7-15). He had Jehu anointed who avenged the wickedness of Jezebel and Ahab (2 Kings 9). Near death, he instructed Joash to strike the ground with arrows to predict deliverance from Syria (2 Kings 13:1-19). After Elisha died, a dead man was placed on his bones who “revived and stood on his feet.” (2 Kings 13:21).

God worked many wonders through Elisha in a time of great wickedness in Israel. Did God’s people listen to His prophets? Sadly, many of them did not. Years later, Jesus said of Elisha, “And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian” (Luke 4:27). Why were not more healed? “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house” (Mark 6:4).

CW

to do all by the authority of the Lord (Col. 3:17).

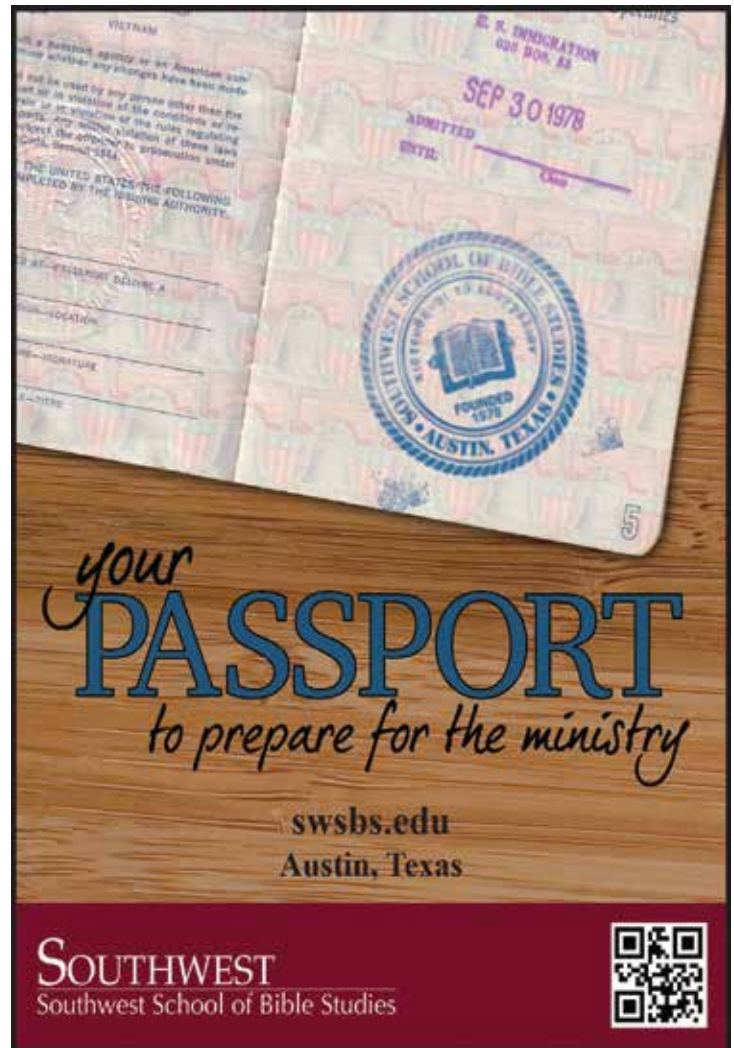
Samuel was a good man who saw dark days and tumultuous times in the history of Israel. Despite the hardships, he remained true to the Lord as a faithful servant. Like this great prophet, you and I must share the message of truth, no matter the response we think may come as a result. We must patiently draw close to God in prayer, fortifying ourselves against the wickedness of the world around. Through it all we must be prepared to fully submit to the will of the Almighty, never becoming presumptuous or prideful in our religion. May we continue to develop our faith by learning from men like Samuel.

CW

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without thinking or to allow ourselves to be sucked into needless arguments (Matt. 12:36). Rather than act rashly, we should choose to hold back and cast our cares upon God (Pro. 29:11; 1 Pet. 5:7). Samuel’s powerful example of prayer demonstrated great trust in God and allowed him to walk properly in trying circumstances. We would do well to follow this pattern (Phil. 4:6-7; 1 Thess. 5:16-18).

Third, Samuel shows us the importance of priority and submission. Towards the end of his life, Samuel faced another great challenge. King Saul, who God had instructed him to anoint over Israel, had gradually been turning further and further from righteousness. After receiving the Lord’s instruction to utterly destroy the Amalekites, Saul decided to spare their king and take the best of their livestock alive (1 Sam. 15:1-9). God sent Samuel to rebuke Saul for his disobedience. For rejecting the word of the Lord, the Lord rejected Saul as king over His people (1 Sam. 15:10-23). The prophet declared, “to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22). All followers of God need to appreciate the beauty of true submission. The outward form of religion is nothing if the heart is not right. Jesus often addressed this same point in His public ministry (Matt. 9:13; 12:7). As faithful Christians, we must never allow our ideas to supplant divine instruction. We are





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Each of the four men who graduated will begin full-time positions as a minister with various congregations. Our school emphasizes Bible study and does not admit students based on their desire to be supported, full-time preachers after school. Yet, at the heart of our program, we have always trained men for ministry. We teach the Scriptures, but we also teach how to craft sermons. We teach proper study and interpretation, but we also teach men to stand up and proclaim the truth. We train men to sit down face-to-face with someone and teach them the gospel. We emphasize a diligent work ethic because a lazy preacher is a worthless preacher. When a congregation hires a SWSBS graduate, they should expect a man who has the head of an exegete, the heart of an evangelist, the hands of a hardworking servant and who is a herald of the King. We wish Brandon, Bryce, Alex, and Chris the very best as they begin the work of ministry. May God bless you abundantly as you remain faithful to Him.

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