

**I and II Samuel**  
**Overview of the Life of Samuel**  
**I Samuel 1**  
**Jim Alexander**

So I've been asked to give a sermon on the life of Samuel in about 35 minutes. I'm more accustomed to taking 35 days to unpack something like this, but, I was really excited. We started looking at I and II Samuel. There's so much in these verses. I'm guessing you're pretty familiar with it so as we go through this evening and in the weeks ahead, we're going to count on you kind of looking ahead with us, studying God's Word in advance so that you can be refreshed about what the Bible will be teaching us about various characters in the Old Testament scriptures, even as we read and study together.

So even tonight, as, as we are looking at the Book of I Samuel, throughout I and II Samuel, primarily there are three main characters. There's Samuel, for whom the book is named and there's Saul, Israel's first king, as well as the in David, the man after God's own heart, who God would choose to be king after Saul threw away the opportunity God had given him. And even as we look at those three characters, we'll be looking into the lives of a few others who kind of intersect with those three main characters throughout the book. But, you know, as I was reading and studying and I got pretty excited because as I was reading I Samuel in particular, I started to realize it really reads like a great book. You know, you've got heroes and you've got villains. You've got those who, stand out. they stand for the truth, even at the risk of their own lives. And yet there were others who would deny the truth at the peril of their own soul. We see some who will demonstrate great faith, even in the face of personal adversity and personal attacks.

And we're also going to watch as God sets some people up to lead, even as he's setting others down from their roles of leadership, that they had had for many, many years. And all of this is just to help set the stage for our study of the life of David that we'll get to in a few in a couple more weeks as we're studying together. Tonight we are just going to take down a high altitude look at the life of Samuel himself and, the book of Samuel, if you may or may not know, but originally was in one scroll. It was one book. It was just the book of Samuel. It wasn't until the original language, the Hebrew language was being translated into Greek that it got separated into the two scrolls and the two books, as we have it presented to us today. So tonight, as we're going to walk through Samuel, we're going to be looking primarily at a character study. We're going to look at Samuel and who the man was. And sometimes to know who the man was, you have to know how his life began. So we'll take a little bit of time or unpack his early years and then we're going to look at his calling.

We're going to look at who Samuel was as he served the Lord first as a prophet, also as a priest, and also not as a king, but as a judge. And yet, even though don't we hear the overshadow, the type of a Samuel as a type of Christ, the one who had come as prophet, priest, and King, Samuel as sort of a forerunner to this prophet. He's priest and he's a judge, the one who discerns the rules and makes decisions on behalf of the nation. So we'll look at him, his young life. We're going to look at him as prophet, priest, and judge. But we want to conclude our time together this evening by looking at the life of Samuel as an example for us and how we live today.

That's the beauty, I think, of doing a character study as we see how God develops the character of an individual, whether it was good or bad. We see also things that apply directly to us. And as Pastor Doriani just said, that leaves the door pretty wide open for the Holy Spirit to apply specific to your life truths from what we look at even together tonight.

So we're going to start looking at Samuel's early life. So if you have your Bible open to first Samuel, keep it open if you would, please, because we're going to look at multiple passages throughout the first 15 or 16 chapters or so as we walk through this together, but we're going to be looking as the chapter begins, at what was what was it like for Samuel when he was a little God?

Well, Samuel, of course, is the son of Elkanah and Hannah. We're introduced to them in the opening chapter. Elkanah actually had two wives, Hannah and Penina, and Penina had children, but Hannah did not. She was barren. So even as we begin unpacking Samuel's life, we see that while before he's even born, there's strife starting to build in the family dynamic, the home life that he be born into. Elkanah loved Hannah. He loved her so much that he tried to show her every way that he could. When they would go to the temple - Every year they go to Shiloh each year to offer sacrifices. He would give her more, a double portion to what he would give to the other wife. But yet every time they went in, even the most recent time, as they go before the birth of Samuel, her heart is so heavy she could not even eat.

So we see here the strife, the heaviness of her heart. And as she is heavy hearted, wanting the Lord to bless her with the child, she goes into the temple in Shiloh. And there is Eli, the high priest, as she is pouring out her heart to the Lord. She's so heavy hearted she's in great distress that even as she pours her heart out to the Lord, we see something about what God's doing in the way of the leadership of Israel, the nation. Eli the high priest, we're told later, is losing his eyesight physically. But we're going to see much more rapidly that Eli, the high priest, has long since lost his vision as a high priest. He's no longer really tracking with what God is doing. He's pressing 98 years of age. He has sons - nine and we're told don't even know the Lord. And yet here they are, priests in God's temple. So here we have Hannah in the in the temple and in verse 11, if you look with me in deep distress, verse 11 of chapter one, she prays and she makes a vow to the Lord, saying, O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son.

Then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life. And no razor shall touch his head, pouring out of heart to God. Hannah pleads with the Lord to hear and finally answer this prayer that I believe she has repeatedly been offering to the Lord. Time after time. Again. We've kind of seen some of those situations ourselves, haven't we?

Those times in your life where God just as burdened you, may not be regarding a child, but it could be regarding the health of a child, or a career move or some other big decision that's before you. And God is just increasingly burdening your heart. It's weighing you down and you're just pouring out your heart to the Lord, saying, Lord, how long will you not hear?

Will you not answer? And here Hannah pours her heart out to the Lord. And as she's pouring out her own distress, trusting the Lord to answer her prayer, she even goes so far as to say, Lord, if you give me that son, he'll take a Nazarite vow. She takes it on behalf of Samuel before he's ever, ever on the horizon.

No razor touches his head. That's just a summary way to say we're going to turn him completely over to the Lord. Like Samson, one of the judges. So would Samuel be a man who takes a Nazarite vow? So she's pouring heart out to the Lord. But here is Eli, the high priest, not discerning what's really going on. Maybe a good reminder to us to be careful about how quickly we can be to judge someone else.

We see their actions, but we don't know their heart. So we judge their actions without knowing the heart. And many times we can be led astray. Just as Eli is here in this passage, he sees this woman sitting in the temple just mumbling and mumbling and mumbling. What does he assume? But she's one of the worthless women that's already come to the temple.

Having been at the bottle too long. She's come to the temple drunk. But I love that Hannah has, boldness in her righteous self defense. She responds to Eli's, he gives that accusation and she says, do not regard your servant as a worthless woman. For all along I've been speaking out on my great anxiety and vexation. That's in verse 16.

To this Eli replies, May God grant your petition which you have made to him, and that we're told that Hannah finally has peace. She's heard from even maybe, as we would think of it, maybe, a priest that doesn't have the highest reputation anymore. But the word that she heard was actually the word she needed from God, no matter who it came to, God would grant your petition as she goes home in peace.

In time, she gives birth to her first born son. She names him Samuel, which simply means God has heard already. We tell by the naming of the child, as she is sticking with the vow that she has made, and as soon as Samuel is old enough to be separated from his mother, she and her husband return to Shiloh, and she does indeed keep her word.

She presents this young boy maybe three, maybe four years of age, to Eli and gives him over to a life of service to the Lord in the temple. Well, this means many things for Samuel. It means he's only going to see his birth mother maybe once a year. Every time when they came back to

offer their, their sacrifices again, we're told that each time she would bring him a new little robe, a new linen ephod, but a linen robe that he father, he would wear was signifying one of his roles, that he was becoming a priest.

But here he is. He's growing up in the temple under Eli's tutelage. And you know, time is going to prevent us from being able to look at chapter two to Hannah's wonderful prayer of praise and exaltation. But I would encourage you to please do look at that, because it's a wonderful passage of Scripture. We also won't really have enough time tonight to unpack fully a theme that is beginning to develop right here in chapter two.

And again, that's simply the theme of we can almost see if you look at my arm this way, you can see as Samuel's starting to rise in God's kingdom and what he's going to do, we can also see another family starting to decline. The family of Eli, half now insidious. God is starting to raise up a faithful leader for himself.

He is starting to take down those who have been faith less and serving the Lord. So we're told in, we can see that contrast pretty vividly if we look at just chapter two, verse 12 and chapter two, verse 21 and verse 12, we see the reason that God's about to judge Eli. Now the sons of Eli were worthless men. They did not know the Lord.

Years ago, when I was first sensing God's call to come into the pastor of one of the books that he put across my path was a book by a Puritan, Richard Baxter, called The Reformed Pastor. I learned early on that that was a book I was going to read every year, and I did so for about the first five years in ministry, because the first half of that book, all Baxter does is preach to the choir, literally.

He's calling out the pastors of his day saying, are you even a Christian? And that's a great place for us to live, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Just as now we realize these sons had never done, they did not know the Lord. But then in verse 21, we see the contrast. We see God blessing Samuel and Hannah in answer to a prayer we're told indeed, the Lord visited Hannah as she conceived and bore three more sons and two daughters.

And don't miss the last little part of the of the verse. And the boy Samuel grew in the presence of the Lord. We can think again of Jesus as he grew in favor and stature before the Lord, before God, and before men. Now Samuel likewise here is doing this. But as the chapter goes on, this dichotomy between Eli's faithless house and Samuel's faith filled life become more and more pronounced. God confronts the wickedness of Hophni and Phineas. He even confronts Eli because Eli's guilty of idolatry. He's one. Yeah, he's guilty of idolatry. You realize he rebukes his sons for the great evil that they're doing, even as they're serving, quote unquote, in the temple of the Lord. But he does nothing to stop them. He values his sons and their role and their being able to serve in the temple more than he values God's word. He's guilty of idolatry.

But Samuel, in contrast, is already being presented as someone who is ready to do whatever it is that the Lord commands even before he understands what God is actually doing. The chapter

two ends in verses 34 and 35. We read, and this that shall come upon your two sons. Hophni and Phinehas, shall be a sign to you. Both of them shall die in this same day. But I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what it is in my heart and in my mind, and I will build him a sure house, and he shall go in and out before my anointed forever. Already the author of the book of Samuel is giving us a shot across the bow about what's about to happen.

So now we turn our attention from his earliest years, Samuel's earliest years, to his calling and his calling. Again, we're going to look at his role, three main facets of Samuel's life. We'll go to him, see, see him serving the Lord in the role of prophet and priest and judge. Throughout this we're going to see as God uses him, how he also is developing his character in many different ways and is also giving him greater and greater impact as Samuel remains faithful to the Lord.

Let's look first about Samuel as a prophet. In the opening verse of chapter three, we're told Samuel was ministering to the Lord in the presence of Eli. But listen to the condition of the of the country, and the word of the Lord was rare in those days. There were no frequent vision. So Eli, whose physical eyesight was failing, is just reflecting how dim his spiritual eyesight has become. It has been long time since the word of the Lord had come to Eli, or anyone else to proclaim it. Oh, an unnamed prophet has already come to Eli. Before Samuel is about to do something, an unnamed prophet comes to Eli and he tells him what God is going to do and why God's going to do it. But now, Samuel, this young boy, we're about to see him give his first prophetic message. In verse ten we read, and the Lord came and stood calling, as at other times Samuel, Samuel. So you got it already called Samuel three more times prior to this, and again indicative of Eli's lack of vision and lack of understanding and clarity. The first three times he just says, no, no, no, I didn't call you. Go back to bed. But after the third time, Eli starting to realize this might be God speaking to this young boy.

So when the fourth time the Lord appears to Samuel, Samuel has been instructed as to what to do. 11 this fourth time, it's not just Samuel, but it's Samuel. Samuel. Any time we see and there's about 7 or 8 different times in Scripture that we see someone called by God by name, using the name twice Abraham, Abraham, when he's about to offer Isaac, probably one of the most vivid ones that stays in my mind.

What that presented was there's a sense of urgency about what's to happen. Not only is what's about to happen to Samuel urgent, but the message he is about to receive is very weighty. So God speaks Samuel. Samuel. But this time we're told the Lord didn't just speak to him. The Lord came and stood calling his name. Here's where Samuel meets God.

He did not know the word of the Lord until this moment. From this moment on, though, he would cling to the word of the Lord because of his relationship with God. A personal, vibrant relationship with God is critical for every one of us, each one of us. If we want to know what God wants for us in our lives, if we want to find that our life is actually fulfilling as we serve the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, it will come as we cling to His word and say, Lord, open my eyes that I might see great things that you have in store for me.

Show me the truths of your word that I might know who you are. Show me who you are. So am I know how to serve. Show me how to serve. That I'm. I bless your holy name. And here's Samuel responds as he was instructed to speak for your servant. Here's verse 11. Then the Lord said to Samuel, behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel, at which the two ears of everyone who hears it will tingle.

On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house from beginning to end, and I declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by a sacrifice or offering forever.

Or, you know, John tells us in first John that there is a sin that leads to death. And for that he says, don't even take the time to pray for that person. This might be an example in Scripture of how we see that happening. Their time to repent has long since passed, and God has declared his judgment on them without revocation.

So Samuel, having received this message, were told, laid there until morning. I don't know that he slept. I think if I was a young man, and I had heard such a weighty message about the man who's been kind of raising me for the last several years, maybe ten years or so, it would be hard to go back to sleep.

So he gets up and he starts going about his daily responsibilities there in the temple, whatever they were. And as he's going about his daily duties, Eli comes to him and presses him. Tell me everything that God told you last night. And here's Samuel delivers his first message as a prophet. As a prophet, Samuel was obligated to speak all of God's words without holding back.

So young Samuel tells Eli everything that the Lord has said in chapter three concludes simply by adding, And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him, and the Lord let none of his words fall to the ground, and all Israel from Dan to Beersheba. In other words, from the northernmost tip of Israel to the southernmost border of Israel, all Israel knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the Lord, and the Lord appeared again at Shiloh.

For the Lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord. The word of the Lord was no longer scarce in Israel. A prophet who loved the Lord, who had followed the Lord, who had served him with all of his life, was now brought up, raised up by God Himself, and put into a position to become not only a prophet, but priest and judge.

We're going to skip a few rocks across chapters four, five, and six, just for time's sake. but in keeping, we want to see how, in keeping with a call to be a prophet of God, every one of Samuel's words now had to come true. If a prophet spoke claiming to be a prophet of God and what he said from God did not come true, then he was a false prophet.

He was to be stoned and put to death. But now we're going to see how all of Samuel's words came to pass. The Philistines were told, were increasingly an enemy of the of the country, of the

nation of Israel. They're encroaching on their territory. The armies of Israel go out to battle. And as they go out to battle, thinking they've got it all covered, 3 or 4000 of their soldiers die on the battlefield.

Well, the army then returns back, goes back from the battle, and they they're kind of licking their wounds. They're trying to sort out why wasn't the God defeated us? That's literally what they ask. And there's they're asking, why did God to feed us? They come up with their own answer. Oh, they're talking to each other about why did God defeat us?

But they didn't talk to him, so they come up with their own answer. Oh, we forgot to take the ark. The ark of the covenant. The Ark of the Lord. That's what we'd failed to do. So this time they muster up a bigger army, and they take out with them with Hophni and Phineas in charge, they take the lead, and they take the ark onto the battlefield.

And this time we are told 30,000ft soldiers of Israel are slaughtered that day, along with Hoffner and Phineas. On the selfsame day. Well, Eli's been sitting back in the temple, trembling with fear for the ark of the Lord. A messenger comes and tells what has happened. He receives word that both Hophni and Phineas were killed in battle, and then the thing he feared most, and the Ark of the Lord has been captured by the Philistines that Eli were told, fell over backwards from his seat, and his neck was broken, and he died, for he was old and heavy.

His 40 year tenure as high priest came to a whimpering end, and the wife of Phineas, one of Eli's sons, was about to give birth to a child. And she's going into child, into labor, about to give birth to this son. She also is passing away from it and she names the boy Ichabod, saying, the glory of the Lord has departed from Israel, because the Ark of God had been captured.

So now Samuel is proven as a prophet. Everything that he was told and told to Eli did come to pass exactly as it was told. Now we see the responsibility has shifting a little more in focus to his role as priest and judge. Oh, he's still a prophet, but he's also now acting as a priest and judge.

Flip over to chapter seven, and chapter seven begins letting us know simply that 20 years have passed since chapter four, when we last saw Samuel to chapter seven, where he's on the scene again, this means God has given him time to grow and to deepen again in his relationship and to further his, his maturing as a servant of the Lord. But as this 20 years has passed, the ark of the Lord was for a while seven months in the possession of the Philistines. But an interesting thing had happened every time that they had captured the ark of the Lord, the Lord is wreaking havoc on their lives, boils and sores, and Dagon falling over his head, getting cut off.

Everything about it was a judgment against the Philistines. And now the Ark being back in Israel, but not back at Shiloh. The people, we're told, are lamenting before the Lord. The house of Israel was lamenting after the Lord. And while Samuel continues as prophet, now we're going to see him serve as their priest and their judge. Look with me in chapter three, verse three, rather beginning of chapter seven, beginning with verse three.

And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, if you are returning to the Lord with all your heart, and put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you, and direct your heart to the Lord, and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. Verse four. So the people of Israel put away the bails and the Ashtaroth, and they serve the Lord only. And then Samuel said, gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you. So they gathered in this pot and drew water, and they poured it out before the Lord. And they fasted on that day and said, there we have sinned against the Lord. And Samuel judged the people of Israel. Mizpah. Now when the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel.

And when the people of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines. Verse eight. And the people of Israel said to Samuel, do not cease to cry out to the Lord our God for us, that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines. So Samuel took a nursing land, and he offered it as a whole burnt offering to the Lord.

And Samuel cried out to the Lord for Israel. And the Lord answered him. As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack. But the Lord thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines. And he threw them into confusion. And they were defeated before Israel. And the men of Israel went out from Mizpah, and pursued the Philistines, and struck them as far as Beth car.

Then Samuel took a stone, and he set it up between this partition, and he called its name Ebenezer. For he said, till now the Lord has helped us. By the way, if you ever have John Haines ask you, come, thou fount of every blessing here I raise my Ebenezer. You now know what that means when you raise it up.

And these are you raising a testimonial up that the Lord has helped us. It is a visible testimony to his goodness. So here's Samuel fulfilling the same role as the 12 judges who are listed in the book of that same name in the Old Testament. Here Samuel is being used to lead Israel to deliverance from their enemies into a time of peace, into a time in which the people of God might turn their hearts toward him.

Samuel made offerings to the Lord on behalf of God's people, and he also judged them for their sins, calling them to repentance. And he went, settling their disputes throughout the land. As he became one of Israel's, or maybe Israel's first circuit writing judge. We're told in verse 15 that Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life, and he went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah.

And he judged Israel in all those places. Then he would return to Ramah, for his home was there. And there also he judged Israel. And there he built an altar to the Lord. Doesn't a sound like Samuel just being successful in everything that he does? God has blessed him. God has used him. God has called him. He is serving the Lord as prophet.



He serving the Lord is priest, and he is serving the Lord as judge. And he is faithful in all he does. However, chapter eight begins to paint a slightly different story. It give us a different picture. There we read when Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn son was Joel and the name of his second of Isaiah. They were judges in Beersheba. So far, so good. Joel simply means the Lord is God, and abortion means my father is the Lord. Samuel was naming them. He was guiding them in the right direction. However, we're told with a striking similarity to the sons of Eli. Verse three adds, yet his sons did not walk in the ways and his ways, but they turned aside after gain. They took bribes, and they perverted justice. So the elders gather to Samuel, and they gather to him, and they say, behold, your old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations. That's verse five of chapter eight. Well, we're told this demand was highly displeasing to Samuel.

Well, we took it first and foremost, most likely as an affront to God, because God was their king. This was a theocracy. God was the King of Israel. And what he also took it personally because when you reject someone who's been in this role as leader, as judge, as prophet, as priest, if you reject that God, you're also rejecting him.

We're told that Samuel was very displeased. So what does he do? He takes his displeasure straight to the Lord. but God's reply, I think to Samuel, stopped short of bringing him much comfort. Look at verse seven of chapter eight. And the Lord said to Samuel, obey the voice of the people and all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them, according to all the deeds that they have done.

From the day I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods. So they also are doing to you now then, obey their voice. Only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them. And Samuel obeyed, characteristic of his live character, the descriptive of his character.

Even in this he speaks. He speaks prophetically. He warns Israel what the king is going to do. You want an earthly king? Here's what you're going to get. He's going to take your sons and your daughters to do his bidding. Some are going to be charioteers, others will become horsemen. Others will be commanders of troops going into battle.

Others would be field hands. Some would make instruments of war. The daughters, they would become perfumers and cooks and bakers, producing delicacies fit for a king. But the king would take the best of their lands. He would demand a 10% tax, taking 10% of everything that the that the nation had. And finally we're told in verse 18, and in that day you will cry.

You will cry out because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves. But the Lord will not answer you in that day. You know, sometimes following the Lord and being someone who is not just a priest, offering to the Lord, but a prophet who's speaking the word of the Lord. Sometimes it's a very difficult task, because sometimes the message you have to deliver is very hard for the people to hear.

And Samuel remains faithful no matter what it cost him. He's still proclaiming clearly the exact word of the Lord. But despite his solemn warning, the people insist on having a king. Samuel once more takes the words that the people give to him, and he takes them to the ears of God, awaiting further clear instruction. But God replies yet again obey their voice, give them a king.

We're going to save much of the details that we find in chapters nine through 11 for next week, as Rob comes to teach us about the life of Saul. That was one of my bigger challenges. Preparing for the night is how do you only stick to Samuel when you've got so many interesting interactions going on throughout? But you have to come back next week to get the rest of these chapters.

However, I do want us to see that even as Samuel anoints Saul king, his work is far from over. Looking briefly with me, a chapter 12 Samuel now is giving what's called his final farewell address. His ministry is not over, but this is the last time that he addresses the nation as a whole. And in this address, he vindicates his life and he vindicates his ministry.

He challenged the people to speak up now, basically, or forever hold their peace with regard to his faithfulness and his integrity as a leader. Repeatedly, he calls the nation to testify against him if they found any fault in the way that he is led, put it on the table right now he's saying, judge me as your judge. But the people respond, you have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man's hand.

And then they validate their response once again saying, the Lord is our witness. Sammy goes on in this address to recount the nation's history, a history, unfortunately, that was filled with rebellion against the goodness of God. He reminds them how God they as God's people, how God had delivered them out of captivity and bondage in Egypt and established them in their own land.

Yet Israel forgot the Lord, their God. He reiterates how God is in judge after judge. Any name, some by name. There's Gideon, there's Barak and Deborah, there's Jeff, there's even Samuel, who was the last judge in Israel's lineage of judges. How God has sent these judges to deliver them from their enemies, to reestablish them in right relationship with God.

And still the people demand more. They want a king. They want to be like the other nations. Yet God continue to offer them both mercy and blessing. If there is, simply follow him. Speaking to all the people, including Saul, the King. Samuel continues now in verse 13 to say, and now behold the king whom you have chosen, for whom you have asked, behold, the Lord has set a king over you, if you will fear the Lord, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord.

And if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God, it will be well. Verse 15 but if you will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you and against your king. Saba then

concludes this final speech with something of an object lesson right then and there he calls from heaven this prophet, priest, and judge calls to the Lord to send thunder and rain.

It's a sign that God was judging their stiff necks in such a storm at this time, by the way, be very destructive. It was harvest time. It was the time when the of the year when it was typically dry. A heavy rain at this time would destroy much of their crops. It would impact the nation for months to come.

And yet God, in answer to Samuel, thunders from heaven, much like he did in Mount Sinai. God, the voice of God, was so tumultuous it was like great thunderings from heaven. And here he thunders yet again, and he sends the rain all in judgment of their sin. As Samuel boldly confronts that sin, he tells them that their wickedness was great, which they had done in sight of the Lord, and asking for themselves a king.

So the people were terrified of the Lord and of the Samuel. That day they cried out for an intercessor, for someone to stand between them and the holy justice of God. So Samuel replied in verse 20, do not be afraid. You have done all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart, and do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty.

For the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself. Verse 23. Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you. And I will instruct you in the good and right way.

Only fear the Lord, and serve him faithfully with all your heart, for consider what great things he has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away. You and your king. Well, after giving this final speech, we might expect that Samuel's work now is finished. He's led the nation in transition from judges to prophets.

He's led the transition from prophets to kings. The theocracy has transitioned to a monarchy, and Samuel has anointed Israel's first king. But Saul soon would prove to be the fulfillment of everything Samuel had said in prophecy from the Lord. And Samuel's judge would be the one to announce God's rejection of Saul as king. In a well known and often quoted section from chapter 15, Samuel exposes Saul's disobedience.

Saul was to go out against the Amalekites and destroy them utterly, bring back no livestock, and bring back no living being. But Saul thought he knew better. He brought back some of the livestock, and he returned with Agag, sparing his life. And Samuel now confronts him, saying, has 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 listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he also has rejected you from being king. And as Samuel executed God's

justice, he called for Agag the king and Agag the king. Thanks enough, time has passed. Surely things are okay now. He comes gladly almost happy to come before Saul and Samuel the prophet. But the Samuel speaks to him. It says, as your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless. Among women, before he personally hacked this pagan king to death. And we're told Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death. But Samuel grieved, oversaw, and the Lord regretted that he'd made Saul king over Israel. Well, we're told, as we wrap up our study of Samuel as his character, that Samuel actually grieved over Saul all the way until the Lord renewed his mission by telling me to get up and begin serving again as the priest. Go to Bethlehem, to the house of Jesse, and there await for the one that I will reveal to you. Anoint him as King. We'll be looking forward to that as we get to it with Pastor Doriani. But for tonight, let's just take away a couple quick lessons, because remember, we're looking at Samuel's life, not just his early beginnings, not only his call, his prophet, priest and judge, but also what does he show us about how we should live?

I think foremost is the fact that we know God is sovereignly at work in every situation of life. As Hannah's distress continued year after year, driving her to great desperation before the Lord God was working his plan was Samuel was displeased as Israel's rejection of God is their king and of him as their judge. God was still working his plan.

Likewise, we can be confident that whatever it is that we're facing tonight, God is still working his plan in our lives. There are times that he works in ways that we see, but many, many times more. He works in our lives behind the scenes in ways we don't understand and maybe don't even see. But God is working still.

He's working behind the scenes to increase our desperation for him and to align us with his plan and his purpose for our lives. A second important lesson for us today, I believe, is that God calls each one of us, like Samuel, to what Eugene Peterson rightly called a long obedience in this same direction. No matter what it costs us, we are called to follow the Lord faithfully, not veering to the left, not veering to the right.

We are called to stay true to God and His Word were to follow him. And whatever it is that he asks of us, Samuel remains steadfast in his service to the Lord. He remained constant in his love for God's people, and he remained true to God's Word no matter what it cost him personally, I think another timely reminder is simply this God's call in our lives may look different at different times or stages of our life.

You know, there are times that you think you know what God's doing, and he is doing it because he clearly calls you and leads you to do something, maybe take on a ministry or a good work for this company, or take on that task. But then a little time interesting things seem to seem to shift around a bit to suddenly realize, wait a minute, this isn't exactly what I signed up for, and God is starting to reveal to you that his call may be shifting even as you're living out your life.

You know God does that because he uses whatever it is he calls us to do today. Not just so we can do it today, but so he can prepare us for what he has for us to do tomorrow. God wants us

to be being becoming more like him, and the more he gives us, the more responsibility he gives us, the varying calls that he gives us, help prepare us to be like Jesus Christ, our Savior and our Lord.

There are times in life that we may find ourselves suddenly in a call this entirely different from the one we used to think we had. Or we may even find, like Samuel, that the call is still there, but more has been added on to it. Samuel never ceased being a prophet when he became a priest, and when he became a judge, God just continued to add to him the responsibilities that he had called him to do.

Maybe one last thought for us, even as we're walking through a time of transition as a church, I couldn't miss it. Samuel was a leader in transition. What can we learn about walking through transition together? Well, our theme for the year is to seek first the King and his kingdom. And I think the best way that we can serve the Lord today is to live as those who desire, more than anything else, to know God's Word, and through knowing God's Word, to know God personally so that whatever it is, whatever walk of life God calls us to whatever tomorrow looks like or next month or next year looks like that might be different from today.

We will remain constant because we have remained steadfast in God's Word. We each can remain steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. As we find, like Samuel, that our labor will not be in vain.

Lord, we do ask that you will continue to be pleased to guide us as your church. Help us, Lord, even as we have hurried through a man's long life and just these few short minutes.

But Lord, would you take and apply to our lives some of the truths from this. These passages help us to see that following you is worth whatever it costs, that obeying you is the very best thing that we ever can do. And then, Lord, let us be found faithful. Let us be found as those who love you so much that we will not veer to the left or to the right.

And Lord, even as you're guiding us as a church, let us remain steadfast to the to the mission, to the ministry, to the vision, to the purpose that you have given to us so that we might reach Birmingham to reach the world for Christ, and see your glory made known. And the Lord let us rejoice together, as together you increase our faith, you deepen our faith, and you draw us close to yourself.

We will praise you together in Jesus' name, Amen.