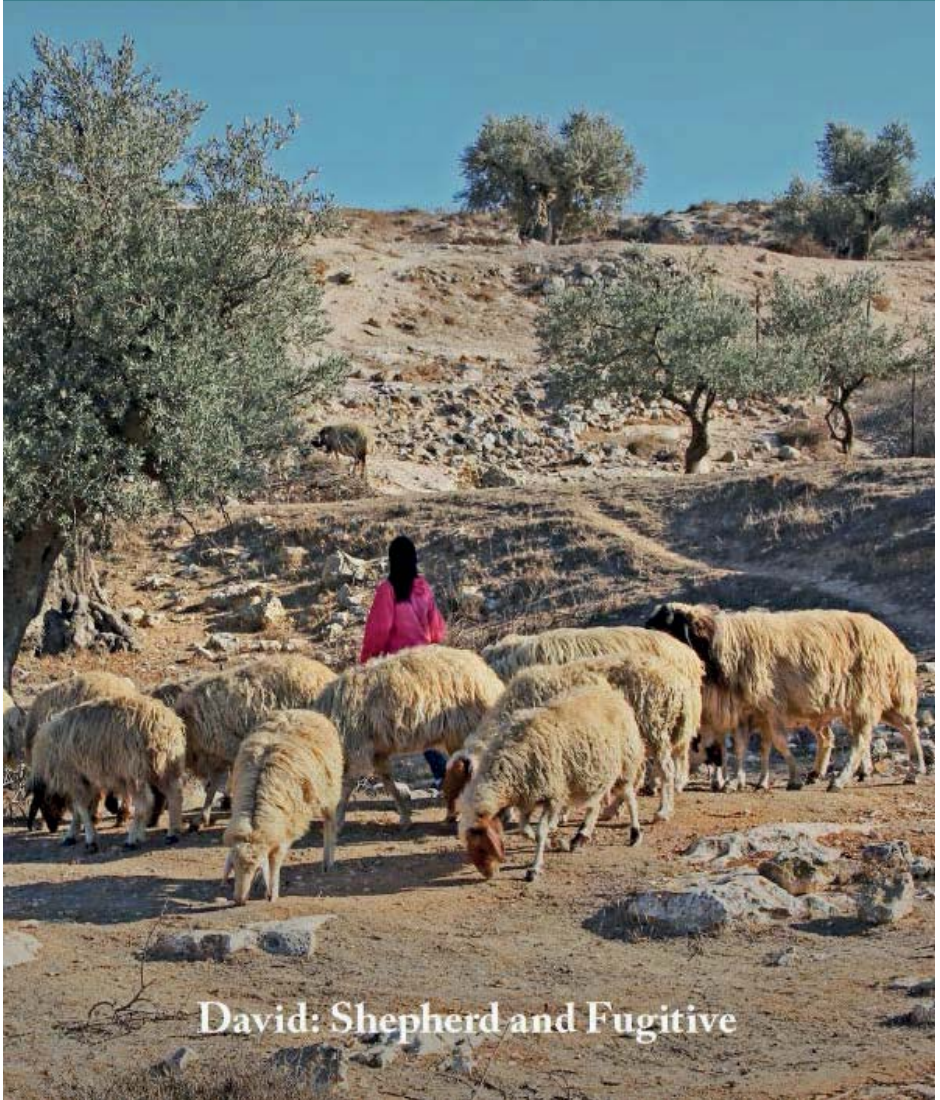


1 Samuel Explained & Applied 09

Ger de Koning



David: Shepherd and Fugitive

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Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Gen	Genesis
Exo	Exodus
Lev	Leviticus
Num	Numbers
Deu	Deuteronomy
2Ko	2 Korinthiërs
Jos	Joshua
Jdg	Judges
Rth	Ruth
1Sam	First Samuel
2Sam	Second Samuel
1Kgs	First Kings
2Kgs	Second Kings
1Chr	First Chronicles
2Chr	Second Chronicles
Ezra	Ezra
Neh	Nehemiah
Est	Esther
Job	Job
Psa	Psalms
Pro	Proverbs
Ecc	Ecclesiastes
Song	Song of Songs
Isa	Isaiah
Jer	Jeremiah
Lam	Lamentations
Eze	Ezekiel
Dan	Daniël
Hos	Hosea
Joel	Joel
Amos	Amos
Oba	Obadiah
Jona	Jonah
Mic	Micah
Nah	Nahum
Hab	Habakkuk
Zep	Zephaniah
Hag	Haggai
Zec	Zechariah
Mal	Malachi

New Testament

Mt	Gospel of Matthew
Mk	Gospel of Mark
Lk	Gospel of Luke
Jn	Gospel of John
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Rom	Letter to the Romans
1Cor	First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor	Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal	Letter to the Galatians
Eph	Letter to the Ephesians
Phil	Letter to the Philippians
Col	Letter to the Colossians
1Thes	First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes	Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim	First Letter to Timothy
2Tim	Second Letter to Timothy
Tit	Letter tot Titus
Phlm	Letter to Philemon
Heb	Letter of the Hebrews
Jam	Letter of James
1Pet	First Letter of Peter
2Pet	Second Letter of Peter
1Jn	First Letter of John
2Jn	Second Letter of John
3Jn	Third Letter of John
Jude	Letter of Jude
Rev	Revelation

Explanation of general format

PERSONAL PRONOUNS are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

BRACKETS [] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

SHARP BRACKETS < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** * are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

ALL CAPS in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

The first book of Samuel

Introduction

The books 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel belong together, they form one book. They give the account of the history of Israel from the end of the 12th century BC until the beginning of the 10th century BC. The protagonist of these books is not Samuel, but David. Samuel has written but is not the author of the books that bear his name. In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel together with 1 Kings and 2 Kings form one book called 'The book of the kingship'. That the books of Samuel are also about the kingship is shown by the fact that the king has been in the foreground since 1 Samuel 8.

The big theme in the books that bear Samuel's name is not the person Samuel, but that of which he is the forerunner and what he introduced: the kingship. We find in both books of Samuel the history of the kingship in Israel for a new period led by the spirit of prophecy. The ultimate goal is to establish the kingdom of God in Him to Whom both the priesthood of Aaron and the prophetic order of which Samuel is the representative and the kingship of Israel in David point to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The greatest of all Samuel's deeds found in this book is the anointing of David. The books that bear his name are those that actually are about the true David, the great Son of David, the Anointed (1Sam 2:35), Christus, Who always stands before God's attention. God always had His King in mind. Christ is the center of God's counsels.

Jacob speaks of Him in connection with Shiloh and the ruler's staff (Gen 49:10). We also hear it in the words of Balaam when he speaks of a star and a king (Num 24:17b). Moses speaks of Him in the royal law (Deu 17:14-20). At the end of the book of Judges the king is missing. There we see how it goes then (Jdg 21:25).

The last word of the book of Ruth is the name "David". This gives the content of the books of Samuel that follow immediately after the book of Ruth. In David God is going to fulfil His purpose. That purpose is that He will place His dominion in the hands of men. He does this with Adam, and he

does this with David. This characterizes the kingdom of God. Both Adam and David fail. The thoughts of God are revealed in the Lord Jesus. He is the true Adam and the true David.

God wants to bring order in a sinful people through His king, after the priesthood has failed. That is why God is going to introduce His king. The anointed priest represents the people with God. The high priest Eli is a believer but fails completely. The priesthood as mediatorship has ended. At first, the king of the people, king Saul, also fails. Then comes God with His man. When he reigns, the priesthood also regains its meaning.

Eli is replaced by a prophet, not by a new high priest. With this, a new office has been introduced into the people. The prophet is also an intercessor. By his speaking to the people on behalf of God and by his intercession on behalf of the people with God, the prophet prepares the people to receive God's king. This is only possible, however, after the king of the people has been there first. As an application for our time we can say that the service of the New Testament prophet brings the hearts of the people under the rule of the Lord Jesus.

In the book of Judges and the 1st and 2nd book of Samuel we see a picture of the history of Christianity. We can compare this with the history of Christianity given to us prophetically in Revelation 2-3. In Judges we recognize the church in Thyatira (Rev 2:18-29). In Eli, in the beginning of 1 Samuel, we see the principles of Sardis (Rev 3:1-6). Eli is a believing man, but his works are not perfect. He has the name to live but is dead. We see this especially in his sons. In Judges little is said about priests. What is said of it shows us the degeneration of the priesthood in Eli's sons. It is a picture of how the priesthood has developed in Protestantism.

Then God begins a new way of communicating with His people, namely through His prophet. A period begins which is reminiscent of what is said of the church in Philadelphia. After the death in Protestantism, presented in Sardis, the prophetic service comes to the fore in all its clarity. The church of Philadelphia is reminiscent of this. It is said of the believers in that church that they have kept God's Word (Rev 3:8b).

There are two applications to make. The first application is the prophetic one for Israel. Prophetically we see in this book the remnant of Israel con-

nected with David. We also see that David and his people are persecuted by Saul who is a picture of the antichrist. In Hannah and her son Samuel the spirit of the remnant comes to the fore.

The second application is the practical one for us. We live in the time when the Anointed is rejected. We are connected to Him as His subjects. We need the service of prophets. This does not mean prophets who predict the future, but prophets who apply God's Word to the hearts and consciences. Like Samuel introduces David, so do prophets today introduce the Lord Jesus through their service. They bring us under His authority. They point out to us, by telling and explaining to us God's Word, how we should submit to Him in practice.

Samuel's service is important. He is both judge – which in a way can be compared to king – and priest and prophet. He is the first prophet in the sense of a man of God who, in a time of decay, acts to lead the people of God back to Him (Acts 3:24; 13:20b). We need such men and their service to bring our hearts back under the authority of Him to Whom "all power is given in heaven and on earth" (Mt 28:18b).

In God's Word the name of Samuel is not only connected with the name of David but also with that of Moses and Aaron (Psa 99:6; Jer 15:1a). His name means 'heard by God' or 'asked from God'. That name he makes true in his life as an intercessor for the people. Here too he is a type of the Lord Jesus. Samuel is "a man of God" (1Sam 9:6-10). The title 'man of God' is reserved for people who stand up for God's rights in difficult times. Moses is called six times 'man of God' (Deu 33:1; Jos 14:6; 1Chr 23:14; 2Chr 30:16; Ezra 3:2; Psa 90:1). In the New Testament Timotheus is so called (1Tim 6:11) and anyone who places himself completely under the authority of Scripture (2Tim 3:16-17).

The history of Samuel begins here as early as that of Samson began, namely before his birth, as later the history of John the Baptist and of our blessed Savior. Some of the heroes of Scripture come out of nowhere, as it were. At their first performance they appear immediately in full service, while for others the life story from birth is described. But what God says of the prophet Jeremiah applies to all: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you" (Jer 1:5a).

Some great men, however, are more noticed than others when they enter the world and are distinguished from ordinary people already at an early age, as is the case with Samuel. In this case, God acts according to His sovereignty and pleasure.

Samson's history introduces him as a child of promise (Jdg 13:3), Samuel's history introduces him as a child of prayer (1Sam 1:9-11). Samson's birth is foretold to his mother by an angel, Samuel is prayed from God by his mother. Both births indicate which wonders happen through word and prayer.

To reflect: It is God's intention that in me a Samuel is being born and grows up, because of Hanna's mind, exercises, and prayers in me.

1 Samuel 1

Verse 1 | Elkanah, Samuel's Father

1 Now there was a certain man from Ramathaim-zophim from the hill country of Ephraim, and his name was Elkanah the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite.

The history of Samuel begins with the presentation of his father Elkanah. Elkanah lives in Rama, here called “Ramathaim-zophim” which means “the two heights (of the) Zophites”. It seems that the city is so named in order to distinguish it from other cities called Ramah; the addition may have been derived from the Levitical family of Zophai or Zuph (1Chr 6:26,35). In the rest of this book only Ramah is mentioned. This is the place where Samuel not only is born (1Sam 1:19), but where he also lives, works, dies (1Sam 7:17; 15:34; 16:13; 19:18-19; 19:22-23) and is buried (1Sam 25:1a; 28:3a).

Elkanah's family is given back up to four generations. That corresponds to the two times that the ancestors of Elkanah are mentioned in 1 Chronicles. First, the family of Elkanah is mentioned in the genealogy of Kohath (1Chr 6:26) and then in that of Heman, the leader of the singers, a grandson of Samuel (1Chr 6:33). Elkanah is a Levite of the rebellious Korah family (1Chr 6:27,34,37; Num 16:1-3). Korah perished, but his children were spared by grace (Num 26:11). Samuel, the son of Elkanah, is a Levite. Therefore, he can serve in the tabernacle.

Elkanah is called an “Ephraimite” because, as far as his civil place is concerned, he belongs to the tribe of Ephraim. The Levites are counted among the tribes amid which they live, so that they are also named after that tribe (cf. Jdg 17:7).

Verse 2 | Hannah and Peninnah

2 He had two wives: the name of one was Hannah and the name of the other Peninnah; and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

Elkanah's wife, Hannah, is barren. This is also the case with Sarah (Gen 16:1), Rebekah (Gen 25:21) and Rachel (Gen 29:31), the women of the patriarchs. Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, is also infertile (Lk 1:7). God uses this fact to make His work visible and that its results may be to His credit. In these cases of infertility God works great things. If nothing can be expected of man, God is given the opportunity to fulfill His plans to bestow grace. He does not do this without practicing His instruments.

Elkanah is a believer, but he is not a 'man of God'. He gives the impression of being a man who faithfully fulfils his religious obligations, as many do today. Even though his spiritual exercise is not perceptible, he has it. But Hannah still stands out far above him spiritually. The fact that he has two wives does not plead for him either, although he could point to men like Abraham and Jacob who also had two or even more wives.

Of his two wives Hannah is mentioned first, which makes it likely that he married her first. Later in this chapter his love for her is shown. Yet he took a second wife, Peninnah. Elkanah probably married also Peninnah because Hannah was barren. He will have thought up a good reason for himself, but it is against God's intent (Mt 19:4-8). For family life, it always means misery.

Hannah means 'grace', with which she is clothed. Peninnah means 'shiny' or 'pearl', but she only radiates herself. Peninnah lives in the same environment, but there is no spiritual life to be seen in her. She mocks Hannah and reveals herself as her opponent. Peninnah can point to 'success', she has children, perhaps even ten (verse 8). In this way we too can easily measure spiritual blessing by the supporters of a movement. If you compare Hannah with that, what does she represent, without 'success' and miserable? But God does not judge that way. He brings her into exercise, that she may produce fruit for Him.

From a prophetic point of view, the feelings of a God-fearing remnant are not primarily to be found with Samuel, but with Hannah. Her soul exercises should be those of the whole people. We are here with the few faithful. This is just as in the beginning of the Gospel according to Luke, where we meet an unknown and insignificant number of people in the midst of an apostate people, with whom the longing for blessing is present

for the whole people (Luke 1-2). Among them is Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus, who sings a hymn of praise (Lk 1:46-55) much like the hymn of Hannah that we will hear in the next chapter.

Verse 3 | Shiloh

3 Now this man would go up from his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests to the LORD there.

In Shiloh is the tent with the ark in it. The tent is the visible sign of God's presence. Elkanah goes there. He does not only sacrifice, but he also worships. The faithful performance of his religious obligations does not make him a formalist, who without thinking performs a meaningless ceremony. He is aware of the grace, of which he is the object as a descendant of Korah. That makes him a worshipper. For us it is the same. Although he does not understand the deep exercises of Hannah, he is upright in what he believes.

For the first time the expression "the LORD of host" is used here. This points to the kingship of the LORD over the universe, over the angels, over the stars, and over His people. He reigns over all powers, both visible and invisible, good, and evil, wherever they may be in heaven and on earth. This name, mentioned here by the Spirit of God, is mentioned by Hannah in verse 11. She speaks to Him in His royal dignity.

At the place where Elkanah goes to worship, Eli's sons work as priests. Here only their names are mentioned. The way they exercise their priesthood is described later.

Verses 4-7 | Elkanah, Hannah and Peninnah to Shiloh

4 When the day came that Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters; 5 but to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, but the LORD had closed her womb. 6 Her rival, however, would provoke her bitterly to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. 7 It happened year after year, as often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she would provoke her; so she wept and would not eat.

It seems that when they go to Shiloh, they always have a common sacrificial meal. On that occasion, Elkanah gives each of his family members a part of the peace offering. Elkanah's love goes particularly to Hannah, which he shows by giving her a double part of the sacrifice of the peace offering (cf. Gen 43:34). It seems that this is also the reason for Peninnah's hateful behavior. Every time Elkanah shows his love, Peninnah repeats her vicious, agonizing remarks.

Because of Peninnah's hateful behavior, going up to Shiloh is always a torment for Hannah. Peninnah behaves like this year after year. Peninnah provokes Hannah mainly by mocking her because of her childlessness, as the end of verse 6 seems to indicate. She may suggest that Hannah is childless because of a judgment of the LORD and that her piety will therefore not be sincere. Her behavior is reminiscent of Hagar looking at Sara with contempt from that moment on (Gen 16:4), while Sarah, like Hannah, later has a son.

From Hannah we do not read that she scolds Peninnah for her nagging. She endures the libel. She is able to do so because she has the mind of the Lord Jesus, "while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting [Himself] to Him who judges righteously" (1Pet 2:23). Yet her grief is so great that she cannot participate in the meal (cf. Deu 26:14a).

Verse 8 | Elkanah's Lack of Understanding

8 Then Elkanah her husband said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep and why do you not eat and why is your heart sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

Elkanah means well, but his reaction shows that he has no insight into Hannah's grief. He does not understand the cause. Hannah is alone and misunderstood with her exercises. She does not react like Rachel did, who also wanted children, but blames Jacob for not doing so (Gen 30:1). Hannah does not want anything for herself, she wants something for God. She is prepared to give directly to the LORD what she gets. Hannah does not want to prove herself against Peninnah but seeks the welfare of the people. She feels what it must mean to God that His people have deviated so far from Him.

Elkanah finds it sufficient that they have each other. Hannah looks further. The satisfaction of Elkanah only concerns himself and brings us nothing further. He does not think so much about Hannah's well-being, but about the value he would have to have for her anyway. What he says can be felt as a reproach by a woman. He does not realize that Hannah's feelings should be feelings of the whole people. The Lord finds such feelings more often in women than in men.

Verses 9-11 | The Prayer of Hannah

9 Then Hannah rose after eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. 10 She, greatly distressed, prayed to the LORD and wept bitterly. 11 She made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head."

In these verses we hear the prayer of Hannah in the temple. She does not go to Elkanah with her need, because she knows he does not understand her. She cannot go to Eli either. But she can go to the LORD. While others come with sacrificial animals, Hannah comes with a broken spirit and a contrite heart. God does not despise that (Psa 51:17).

She cannot go to Eli because he represents a priesthood that is not directed toward God, but toward himself. Priests are expected to stand up to serve, but Eli sits on a chair. He put it there himself, because in the description of the tabernacle we do not read about a chair. He can no longer see well (1Sam 3:2) and he is old and fat (1Sam 4:18). These physical characteristics also indicate his mental state. He represents the priesthood as it is frequently found today.

The praying Hannah forms a great contrast with him. Hannah is the woman of whom it can be said: "Her worth is far above jewels" (Pro 31:10b). She is a praying mother. That marks the life of the child she asks for. In the book 1 Kings and 2 Kings we often read in addition to the name of a king that "the name of his mother was ...". Timothy also owes a lot to his mother and grandmother (2Tim 1:5).

Hannah asks not just for a child, but for “a son”. The masculinity takes precedence. This man must stand before the LORD, to look after the interests of His people. Faith is clear and simple. Hannah prays specifically, targeted, with a purpose. Our prayers are often general, aimless, and therefore cannot be answered. That they are not heard should not surprise us.

As Levite, Samuel only must serve from the age of twenty-fifth, a service that ends when he turns fifty (Num 8:23-26). This is not in the mind of Hannah. She gives him to the LORD for all his life. We see the development of the whole life of Samuel. It is closely followed from its earliest years and is described to us, with its first formation taking place in a godless environment.

When we pray for a blessing, we can learn here from Hannah that in our prayers we also say that what we desire we want to use for the Lord’s honor. Of course, this is only valuable if it is the real desire of our heart. Then we will dedicate what we receive through faithful prayer to Him and joyfully use it in His service. It makes the enjoyment of what we have asked and received all the greater. The true joy in everything we have lies in the communion we have in it with the Father and the Son (1Jn 1:3-4).

Even as a Nazarite Samuel does not necessarily have to devote his whole life to God. The Nazarite vow is taken for a certain period (Num 6:1-8). That can be a short time. Hannah however dedicates her son for his whole life. As a trademark of this he will not cut his hair. Long hair is a picture of devotion and dependence, self-subservience. For Samuel this is for the sake of God.

In the time of the church the woman may show this to the man (1Cor 11:1-16). For every Christian, since his conversion, he has been spiritually committed and submissive to the Lord Jesus, completely dependent on Him. It is a life based on the question: “What shall I do, Lord?” (Acts 22:10a).

Verses 12-16 | Eli and Hannah

12 Now it came about, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli was watching her mouth. 13 As for Hannah, she was speaking in her heart, only her lips were moving, but her voice was not heard. So Eli thought she was drunk. 14 Then Eli said to her, “How long will you make yourself drunk? Put away your wine from you.” 15 But Hannah replied, “No, my lord, I am a woman

oppressed in spirit; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the LORD. 16 Do not consider your maidservant as a worthless woman, for I have spoken until now out of my great concern and provocation."

The high priest Eli has no knowledge of God's thoughts. He who, as a high priest, should intervene most of all for the greatest difficulties of the people, understands the least of a sorrowful woman. He treats Hannah mercilessly, while he should be merciful just like a high priest. He brutally breaks off her fellowship with the LORD. She prays intensely and long because her grief and need are great.

Eli proves his incompetence as a high priest by not recognizing a praying woman as such. Apparently, he is more used to drunk women. But he should see the difference between a drunk woman, who behaves uncontrollably, and the praying Hannah. He has no insight into what occupies the heart of Hannah. He is incapable of sympathizing with the best spirit and disposition of his time.

When the church is born and the believers are filled with the Holy Spirit, the unbelieving people also think that the first Christians are drunk (Acts 2:13-15). The spiritual man is always fooled by those who have no knowledge of the power of God in the inner man. If the highest priest already has such a misjudgment, how should the condition of the people be?

Hannah is here the true priest who prays for the people. She is in the true priestly mind, for her desire is that the people return to God. Therefore, she prays for a male child. To bring the people back to God, she asks if God wants to raise up a man for this.

She pours out her heart, but Eli only pays attention to her mouth. He goes off on the outside and thereby comes to the wrong verdict that she is drunk. Hannah's reaction to the accusation is gentle and lovely. She addresses him with all the respect he deserves for his age and position. She does not blame him for the behavior of his sons and his failure to punish them. She does not throw at him of having to put his own house in order first before he accuses and condemns others in a hard way. Instead of rebelling against him, she bows down before him. All she does is explain her behavior and asking for understanding.

She has been more than just fervent in her prayer to God, and that, she tells him, is the true reason for the disorder in which she seemed to be. If we are unjustly reprimanded, we may try to declare our conduct is pure before the Lord. At the same time, by explaining our conduct, we must try to convince our brothers to what they have misunderstood.

Verses 17-18 | The Hearing Promised

17 Then Eli answered and said, "Go in peace; and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of Him." 18 She said, "Let your maidservant find favor in your sight." So the woman went her way and ate, and her face was no longer [sad].

Eli does not ask what is going on. His spiritual feeling is too numb to invite Hannah to tell him what concerns her so much, what great care and grief torments her. Yet God uses Eli to make Hannah the requested promise. As a compensation for his hasty, unfriendly reprimand, Eli blesses her kindly and fatherly.

He did not regard Hannah's statement as an insult, as many are all too inclined to do if they are shown to be mistaken. He was convinced by Hannah and now encouraged her as strongly to believe in her prayer as he had previously hindered her in her prayer. By the words "go in peace", he not only indicates that he is convinced of her innocence, but he blesses her as authoritative, because he is high priest, in the name of the LORD.

In a short time, he has received a totally different and this time correct opinion from her wisdom and Godliness. He promises her that the God of Israel will give her the prayer – whatever it may be – which she has prayed from Him. Hannah accepts in confidence what Eli gives her and does not despise it. She takes his blessing as the voice of God for her soul.

Hannah is an example that we can win those who have reproached us because they did not know us by showing a gentle and humble attitude towards them. We may even be able to make them our friends and turn their reprimands to us into prayers for us.

Hannah has left her burden with the LORD and returns home enlightened. The prayer has changed her. Peninnah must have been surprised to find out what happened to Hannah, how that great change came about.

Hanna's exercises are a great encouragement to all who are in great spiritual need. For years there can be felt a deep, sharp pain, a hunger of the heart that just does not get satisfied, a disappointed hope. There is nothing but a quiet waiting. If it has the effect it has with Hannah, then it is through these circumstances that we learn how to pray. We will then discover the secret of childlike faith. We will also discover that we are being made fit to become the recipient of some invaluable gift to the world.

Verses 19-20 | The Birth of Samuel

19 Then they arose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD, and returned again to their house in Ramah. And Elkanah had relations with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. 20 It came about in due time, after Hannah had conceived, that she gave birth to a son; and she named him Samuel, [saying], "Because I have asked him of the LORD."

When Elkanah and his family have finished sacrificing, they go home. They have a long journey ahead of them, but they do not want to leave before they have worshipped as a family. It is an example for us personally and as a family. The strength of the spiritual life of the family lies in praying and worshipping together. There is no better start of the day than to worship the Lord, to tell Him that we admire Him for Who He is, what He has done and will do. To Him, Who is first in all things and takes the first place, should also be dedicated our first time and attention.

The birth of Samuel does not happen by supernatural means, but by the way God has given for it. He does, however, give this pregnancy because He remembered Hannah, that He remembers Hannah's prayer and that He will now hear it. For God, remembrance is not to suddenly remember something that has forgotten, but to basis of a previous request because the time has now come. What happens is connected to something in the past.

Samuel is born. In the name she gives him, she expresses God's great goodness to her in the answer to her prayer. "Samuel" means "prayed of God" or "answered by God" – because she has prayed for him to the LORD. This name also indicates the character of Samuel. He will be a man of prayer, his service will be marked by prayer (1Sam 7:5; 8:6; 12:19,23; 15:11).

A woman of prayer brings forth a son of prayer. Hannah has begged, Samuel does intercession. Bringing the people back under the authority of God is only possible through prayer and the Word of God. For Hannah, the word applies: "Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting" (Psa 126:5).

Whenever she calls the name "Samuel", she honors God for His goodness and grace. In the same way, we should always express our gratitude for the blessings we have received (Psa 116:1-2). How many situations can we call 'Samuel'? Whenever we are saved from a need or when there is provided in a need based on prayer, we can write 'Samuel' on it. We will then particularly consecrate these situations to God, honoring Him for them.

Verses 21-23 | Elkanah Confirms Hannah's Faith

21 Then the man Elkanah went up with all his household to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and [pay] his vow. 22 But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, "[I will not go up] until the child is weaned; then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD and stay there forever." 23 Elkanah her husband said to her, "Do what seems best to you. Remain until you have weaned him; only may the LORD confirm His word." So the woman remained and nursed her son until she weaned him.

Samuel will appear before the LORD as a priest according to Hannah's intention. In practice, he performs the priestly service. Hannah has high thoughts of her son in connection with God. She is not satisfied with an ordinary life for her son. This is not a natural pride. It stems from her desire that only the LORD will be central in his life.

First, he must be fed by her. Under her influence and through her nutrition and education he will receive the basic formation necessary for his stay with the LORD in an ungodly environment. Therefore, she stays at home when Elkanah goes on his way to make the annual sacrifice. Elkanah shows his faith by agreeing with Hannah's desire to wait until Samuel can join them and stay there.

Elkanah has confirmed the vow of Hannah (Num 30:13-14), and makes a vow himself. He is encouraged by the faith of Hannah. He trusts that the LORD will do what He has said. This seems to indicate that he has come to

share the expectation of the blessing that will come to Israel through this child because of Hannah's prayer.

Hannah stays at home because the child needs milk. The time will come when the child no longer needs the milk. Our children need our help in their spiritual growth, but there must come a time when they themselves take spiritual food. We teach them to read and pray and we read and pray with them, but there comes a time when they must do this themselves. They must learn to stand before the Lord independently.

Verses 24-28 | Hannah Dedicates Samuel

24 Now when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with a three-year-old bull and one ephah of flour and a jug of wine, and brought him to the house of the LORD in Shiloh, although the child was young. 25 Then they slaughtered the bull, and brought the boy to Eli. 26 She said, "Oh, my lord! As your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you, praying to the LORD. 27 For this boy I prayed, and the LORD has given me my petition which I asked of Him. 28 So I have also dedicated him to the LORD; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the LORD." And he worshiped the LORD there.

When the time has come – Samuel is about three years old – Hannah gives him to the LORD. She entrusts him to Eli's care, from whom he would receive his further formation and training for the tabernacle service. She has received him from the LORD and gives him back to the LORD (1Chr 29:14b).

She brings the son of her vow to the house of the LORD, together with a sacrifice. Her sacrifice consisted of "a three-year-old bull and one ephah of flour and a jug of wine". The bull serves as a peace offering or votive offering, the flour as a grain offering and the wine as a drink offering. The purpose of her vow is Christ, for that is what the whole sacrifice speaks of.

The bull is often used as a sin offering and as a peace offering. This speaks of the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross through which He has put sin away and made fellowship with God possible. Hanna realizes – in pictures – that it is only on this basis that she can offer her son to God. The number three is the number of the resurrection (Mt 16:21; Lk 24:46; 1Cor 15:3-4; 1Pet 1:21). The fine flour of the grain offering speaks of the Lord Jesus as

true Man Who lived in humility on earth in full dedication to God until death. Wine speaks of the joy that God finds in His Son. He also finds this joy in all those in whom the Son becomes visible on earth, as with Paul (Phil 2:17) and as it will also happen in Samuel's life.

With the words "as your soul lives", Hannah wants to say, 'as true it is that your soul lives so true it is that I stood here with you then to pray to the LORD'. She tells Eli about their first meeting and the hearing by the LORD. That will be more than three years ago. She still remembers exactly where she stood. This is often the case with special events in someone's (spiritual) life, whether it is about suffering or a special word from the Lord or a special meeting. Hannah rejoices in the same place where she has spoken to the LORD in her sadness.

Even now, there is no blame in the direction of Eli. She does not come triumphantly to tell her right. It seems as if she has forgotten all. At this place she only thinks of her prayer. Her triumph is in God. She knows Him as the abundant Giver of all good. She comes to fulfil her vow. Hannah teaches us how to overcome and forget the injustice done to us by people.

The first act we read of Samuel is that he worships the LORD. That is the result of the milk Hannah gave him. He learned this from his mother. She is a woman of prayer. We will see this in the next chapter. Her hymn of praise is a prayer. Her prayer is worship or prophecy. Often, she will have prayed with Samuel, often he will have heard and seen her pray. The impressions he gained in his first years have shaped him.

1 Samuel 2

Introduction

After the prayer of Hannah as supplication in the previous chapter, we now hear a prayer of her as worship and prophecy. It is not so much about the little Samuel, but about Christ (verse 10). This is how the prayer must be for each of our children. It is not about their social prosperity, but whether Christ will be seen in them.

As mentioned earlier, Hannah's prayer resembles the hymn of praise of Mary (Lk 1:46-55). Both Hannah and Maria are examples of a faithful remnant in their time. Both feel deeply the decayed condition of God's people. Both understand that no man, but only God, can change this. Both are prophetic songs and a great encouragement at the beginning of a history characterized by dark clouds. It is like the bow of hope in the clouds of the impending judgment.

The prayer can be subdivided into four parts:

1. Verses 1-3. Hannah sings of the God of salvation as the faithful, omnipotent, omniscient God. She speaks of "our" God (verse 2).
2. Verses 4-5. Hannah speaks of the salvation she experienced and the degradation of the opponent.
3. Verses 6-8a. The way in which salvation is experienced is that of death and resurrection.
4. Verses 8b-10. God leads everything to His purpose, the battle between good and evil is ended forever. Christ rules over the recreated earth.

The prayer of Hannah, in which she pours out the feelings of her heart after she has dedicated her son to the LORD, is a hymn of praise with a prophetic and Messianic character. It is a psalm as the ripe fruit of the Spirit of God. Hannah knows the destination of Israel to be a kingdom. She knows about the promises God has made to the fathers. She is filled with the desire for the fulfillment of the promises. In the spirit she sees the King Who the LORD will give to His people and by Whom He will give his people the dominion over the earth.

Verse 1 | Expressions of joy

1 *Then Hannah prayed and said,
“My heart exults in the LORD;
My horn is exalted in the LORD,
My mouth speaks boldly against my enemies,
Because I rejoice in Your salvation.*

The great prophetic perspective of this prayer begins with personal expressions of a woman’s soul exercises. She speaks of “my heart”, “my horn”, “my mouth”. From this personal experience she goes during her hymn to the ends of the earth (verse 10).

She prayed her first prayer in silence – only moved her lips (1Sam 1:13) – to God Who also listens to what is said in secret. Now she opens her mouth wide to tell the wonderful things the LORD has done. She speaks from the abundance of her heart. Her heart rejoices not so much in the gift, Samuel, but in the LORD as the Giver. “My horn” indicates the power on which it rests as the precursor of the horn of the Anointed (verse 10).

The first part of the verse (“heart”) and the third part (“mouth”) belong together. The mouth expresses what lives in the heart (Rom 10:10). Also, the second part (“horn”) and the fourth part (“help”) belong together. The horn is a picture of strength. Her help lies in the strength of the LORD.

Verse 2 | No One Can Be Compared With the LORD

2 *“There is no one holy like the LORD,
Indeed, there is no one besides You,
Nor is there any rock like our God.*

After having expressed her own joy at what she has found in the LORD, she continues to speak only of Him. She rises above her own victories and is, as it were, completely seized by Who He is.

The first characteristic she sings of is His holiness. Holiness is a special feature of the God of Israel. No idol claims it.

Apart from Him there is no God. Only He is the uncreated, eternal God. Everything that is outside Him comes from Him. He is the origin of it. Nothing outside of Him has an existence apart from Him. “For by Him all

things were created, [both] in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him” (Col 1:16).

Apart from Him there is no support, no source of salvation. Every sure and steady help is only present in Him. He is the only rock.

Verse 3 | The LORD Is Omniscient

3 *“Boast no more so very proudly,
Do not let arrogance come out of your mouth;
For the LORD is a God of knowledge,
And with Him actions are weighed.*

The second characteristic is His omniscience (Psa 139:1-4). He sees not only the deeds, but also the thoughts and motives: “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Heb 4:13). He tests all deeds.

This is a consolation for Hannah and a warning for Peninnah to moderate her tone and pay attention to what she says. Over the head of Peninnah, Hannah speaks to the enemies of Israel and of God. She leaves the judgment to the LORD, Who will do perfect justice where there is still injustice.

Verses 4-5 | The Tables Are Turned

4 *“The bows of the mighty are shattered,
But the feeble gird on strength.
5 “Those who were full hire themselves out for bread,
But those who were hungry cease [to hunger].
Even the barren gives birth to seven,
But she who has many children languishes.*

All actions are controlled by God. The roles are reversed. He is behind the development of things. Only through His advice we can begin successfully, continue, and complete a work. Everything He proposes and performs or allows to be performed, every action, every thought, everything is considered and weighed, perfectly harmonious and effective. Nothing is in vain or useless. Any result will confirm this.

Hannah sees in faith the result of the LORD's actions. Through His intervention, the hero becomes powerless and the powerless is girded with power. This is also the case with those who are satisfied and those who are hungry; with those who are barren, and with those who are rich in children (Psa 113:9; Isa 54:1-6).

This complete reversal of the roles will take place through the judgments preceding the empire of peace and in the kingdom of peace that immediately follows: "For after all it is [only] just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and [to give] relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire" (2Thes 1:6-7). Examples of this we see in the book of Esther, where the LORD humiliates Haman and raises Mordecai. We also see it in this book in His humbling of Saul and His exaltation of David.

Verses 6-9 | The Omnipotence of the LORD

- 6 *"The LORD kills and makes alive;
He brings down to Sheol and raises up.*
- 7 *"The LORD makes poor and rich;
He brings low, He also exalts.*
- 8 *"He raises the poor from the dust,
He lifts the needy from the ash heap
To make them sit with nobles,
And inherit a seat of honor;
For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's,
And He set the world on them.*
- 9 *"He keeps the feet of His godly ones,
But the wicked ones are silenced in darkness;
For not by might shall a man prevail.*

In these verses all is about the LORD, about what He does. Hannah looks beyond the death and the grave and points to the life and the resurrection. This is special in the Old Testament (Deu 32:39a). All blessings of the LORD are based on the death and resurrection of Christ. All who know that they are dead of themselves are given life in Him. They may know that they died and rose with Him. In the resurrection all the promises of

God are fulfilled. Abraham also learned this and believed: “He considered that God is able to raise [people] even from the dead” (Heb 11:19a).

The LORD hath made rich and poor, that men may be dependent on one another (Pro 22:2). This also applies spiritually. Those who are rich, that is, those who know their spiritual riches, owe it to God. Those who are poor look up to God. To accept this distinction from the hand of God makes us grateful and content (cf. Jam 1:9-10a). That preserves the rich for pride and the poor for discouragement. Rich and poor need each other. The distinction in the position we take is also made by God.

In the kingdom of peace God will show the great end results of His actions. Those who are now small, and poor will then have a place of honor. Examples of this we see in Joseph who becomes a ruler of slave and prisoner (Gen 41:14,38-44) and in Lazarus who is a beggar on earth, but in heaven gets a place in the womb of Abraham (Lk 16:20-22).

Hannah sings of Him as the Almighty. We see this in the way the LORD has founded the earth. The foundation or pillars upon which He has set the earth is His Word, for He upholds the universe “by the word of His power” (Heb 1:3). The earth rests on foundations which bear the earth by the power which He gives it. If the foundations of the earth are His, the righteous has nothing to fear.

With the omnipotence which becomes manifest in the keeping of His creation, the LORD also keeps the feet of His godly ones. How could man’s power ever stand up to the omnipotence of that great God? He keeps the feet of His godly ones on the way to the inheritance He promised them, that they may not stumble or slip (Psa 116:8; 121:3). He keeps the inheritance for His godly ones and keeps His godly ones for the inheritance (1Pet 1:4-5a). But from the wicked who oppress and persecute the righteous, God will take away the light of His grace, so that they may perish in darkness. The power of the wicked can do nothing against the omnipotence of God.

Verse 10 | The King and Anointed of the LORD

10 *“Those who contend with the LORD will be shattered;
Against them He will thunder in the heavens,
The LORD will judge the ends of the earth;*

*And He will give strength to His king,
And will exalt the horn of His anointed."*

All rebellion against the LORD will be broken. He will let His thunder be heard in heaven over all His opponents. Thunder is the announcement that the LORD is coming to judge. When it thunders, man feels on an alarming way the presence of the almighty God. Thus, the LORD clears the way by judgment to ground the kingdom of peace.

This empire covers the whole earth, to its ends. Then the LORD gives the government of this kingdom to "His king". Hannah concludes her prayer with "His anointed". That says as it were that the Anointed of God is God's last word to man. "His king" and "His anointed" are none other than the Lord Jesus. About Him it is in this book (verse 35). Just as the name "LORD of hosts" is used for the first time by Hannah (1Sam 1:11), there as a barren and sad woman, this is also the case with the name "anointed", but now by a fruitful and happy woman.

Verses 11-17 | Samuel and the Sons of Eli

11 Then Elkanah went to his home at Ramah. But the boy ministered to the LORD before Eli the priest. 12 Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the LORD 13 and the custom of the priests with the people. When any man was offering a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come while the meat was boiling, with a three-pronged fork in his hand. 14 Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the fork brought up the priest would take for himself. Thus they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. 15 Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, "Give the priest meat for roasting, as he will not take boiled meat from you, only raw." 16 If the man said to him, "They must surely burn the fat first, and then take as much as you desire," then he would say, "No, but you shall give [it to me] now; and if not, I will take it by force." 17 Thus the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for the men despised the offering of the LORD.

Samuel is always called "boy". That indicates the contrast with the adults around him. It also indicates that God begins something new with what is not deemed in the world. He hides His plans "from [the] wise and intelligent" and reveals "them to infants" (Mt 11:25).

The Spirit shows the development of the child Samuel into an adult man and servant in a religious and at the same time godless environment. That can only be God's work. Samuel is formed in the hidden. He does not serve Eli before the LORD's face, but he serves the LORD under Eli's supervision. He may even be dependent in his very young years on the care of the women with whom Eli's sons sleep.

Eli's sons are "worthless men" or "children of Belial", that is, they have nothing in common with Christ (2Cor 6:15a). In these two priests we see how external presence with God, without knowing Him, results in the worst deviation from Him. A holiness that is only external is the worst unholiness. Eli's sons act as if there is no God. Their behavior caused men to despise the offering of the LORD and to no longer take heed of God's precepts.

God has provided in the law for priests to receive their share of the peace offering (Lev 7:34). However, Eli's sons are not satisfied with this. They do not care about that. Not only do they take much more than they are entitled to, but they also take it even before God has received His share. It is a display of power and an expression of iniquity and arrogance of the coarsest kind.

Today we see that happening when the church takes away of the people belonging to God's people what God is entitled to. We see it in church leaders who enrich themselves at the expense of the church people. In such a situation, people are needed who give God His part again as the first Rightsholder. Do we take the best for ourselves and should God settle for the leftovers?

Someone of the people who comes to sacrifice knows the law and speaks to these corrupt priests about it. He points out that the fat must first be sacrificed (Lev 3:3-5,16). The priest's servant does not care about this. He was given his command by the priest, and he followed it closely. That also gives him the most benefit. He even threatens with violence if the offeror does not give what the priest demands.

This performance gives a picture of the service to God that is considered a very great sin. The representatives of God present Him as a violent, greedy God. The result is that people no longer take the sacrifice so seriously.

Here we can learn the lesson that a misrepresentation of Who God is will lead to a despising of the Lord Jesus and His work.

Verse 18 | Samuel Serves the Lord

18 Now Samuel was ministering before the LORD, [as] a boy wearing a linen ephod.

After the description of the wickedness of the priestly sons, we see here again the true servant. Although Samuel does not belong to the priestly family, he is the true priest. His purity in the impure surroundings comes to the fore. Samuel's behavior contrasts sharply with that of Eli's sons.

The linen ephod is a linen garment worn by priests (1Sam 22:18). David also wears it once when he brings the ark to Zion (2Sam 6:14). David is a king-priest. Purity and priestly mind belong together. Samuel is not from Aaron's family, but he lives in God's presence and can pass on God's thoughts as a prophet.

Verses 19-21 | Growth

19 And his mother would make him a little robe and bring it to him from year to year when she would come up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. 20 Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife and say, "May the LORD give you children from this woman in place of the one she dedicated to the LORD." And they went to their own home. 21 The LORD visited Hannah; and she conceived and gave birth to three sons and two daughters. And the boy Samuel grew before the LORD.

When Elkanah and Hannah are going to make the annual sacrifice, Hannah always brings a little robe to Samuel. This means that his mother is busy with his growing. Every year she takes the right size with her. She knows his growth. Do we know the spiritual growth of our children? Parents must have something for every spiritual age.

Hannah is always busy with Samuel's clothes. In the same way a mother is always busy forming the character of her children, especially by her example. The children see how she behaves, what she says and how she says something, and what her dealings with the Lord are like. Thus, children will become kind or rough, interested in the things of the Lord or

indifferent to them in accordance with the example they have seen in the lives of their elders.

In the meantime, Eli has understood that Elkanah and Hannah are special to the LORD, because the LORD is special to them. He pronounces His blessing upon them. He will have done so now with more insight than before (1Sam 1:17). The family of Elkanah is increasing. Hannah gets a total of six children, a rich blessing. She gets more than what she prayed for. This is how God often acts.

Meanwhile Samuel grows before the LORD, that is, close to Him in the sanctuary and under His protection and blessing. If the heart is directed toward the Lord, as is the case with Samuel, we will grow spiritually “in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2Pet 3:18a), even though the environment is still so ungodly.

Verses 22-25 | Eli Rebukes His Sons

22 Now Eli was very old; and he heard all that his sons were doing to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who served at the doorway of the tent of meeting. 23 He said to them, “Why do you do such things, the evil things that I hear from all these people? 24 No, my sons; for the report is not good which I hear the LORD’s people circulating. 25 If one man sins against another, God will mediate for him; but if a man sins against the LORD, who can intercede for him?” But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for the LORD desired to put them to death.

Eli’s sons are only out to satisfy their lusts. They seek the satisfaction of their belly (cf. Phil 3:19a). The step from physical satisfaction to the satisfaction of their sexual lusts is easily made. Those who cannot control themselves with food, often cannot control themselves in sexuality. Eli’s sons can no longer escape judgment after they have misbehaved themselves like this.

Eli admonishes his sons about their behavior, but his admonition comes too late. Partly because of his weak performance they have hardened their hearts. Now the time of conversion is over. Eli does not know the thoughts of God and therefore continues to act in his weak way. He is behind the facts.

The LORD had to make the decision to kill them. That decision is irrevocable because they irrevocably hold on to evil and despise every exhortation.

It goes with Eli's sons as it did with the pharaoh, who also first hardened his own heart (Exo 7:13,14,22; 8:15,19,32; 9:7,34; 13:15) and whose heart is hardened by God afterwards (Exo 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:4,8,17).

Verse 26 | Samuel Grows in Stature

26 Now the boy Samuel was growing in stature and in favor both with the LORD and with men.

If the spiritual darkness increases, the light of God shines the clearer. Samuel grows against the oppression. The LORD and men rejoice more and more the more they see of Samuel's fear of God (cf. Lk 2:52). His life is a blessing for all who encounter him. It is striking how much he is different from Eli's godless sons.

Verses 27-29 | A Man of God Comes to Eli

27 Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Did I [not] indeed reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt [in bondage] to Pharaoh's house? 28 Did I [not] choose them from all the tribes of Israel to be My priests, to go up to My altar, to burn incense, to carry an ephod before Me; and did I [not] give to the house of your father all the fire [offerings] of the sons of Israel? 29 Why do you kick at My sacrifice and at My offering which I have commanded [in My] dwelling, and honor your sons above Me, by making yourselves fat with the choicest of every offering of My people Israel?'

An anonymous man of God is sent to Eli. When the man of God speaks of "the house of your father", he means Aaron's house. He opposes this to "Pharaoh's house", which is the house of slavery, where the people have served Pharaoh and his interests. With this he reminds Eli of his origins.

Then the man of God speaks of the electing grace of God that He called Aaron and his house to the priesthood. He also points to God's gracious provisions for priests. Everything He has given makes their sin to want more and more a contempt for all those abundant gifts of God (cf. 2Sam 12:8-9).

The LORD holds Eli responsible for despising "My sacrifice and ... My offering" because he did not act against his sons. In the accusation that Eli

is being made, it is also said that *he* has feasted on to the best part of each grain offering. So much the actions of his sons are also attributed to him.

Although he has reprimanded his sons, indicating that he has insight into their wrongdoing, he has not stopped their wrongdoing. Eli's lack of action has contributed to the contempt that the people have gotten for the sacrifice and service to the LORD. He has honored his sons more than the LORD. Every father has the danger of choosing for his son if he must choose between his son and God. Let fathers follow the example of Abraham, who did not kindly ask his children, but commanded them "to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice" (Gen 18:19).

Verses 30-34 | Judgment on Eli's house

30 Therefore the LORD God of Israel declares, 'I did indeed say that your house and the house of your father should walk before Me forever'; but now the LORD declares, 'Far be it from Me—for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed. 31 Behold, the days are coming when I will break your strength and the strength of your father's house so that there will not be an old man in your house. 32 You will see the distress of [My] dwelling, in [spite of] all the good that I do for Israel; and an old man will not be in your house forever. 33 Yet I will not cut off every man of yours from My altar so that your eyes will fail [from weeping] and your soul grieve, and all the increase of your house will die in the prime of life. 34 This will be the sign to you which will come concerning your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: on the same day both of them will die.

To despise the sacrifice (verse 29) is the same as to despise God. The consequences of this are serious. God cannot now give the promised (Jer 18:9-10). Is God now returning to His promise and contradicting Himself? It cannot be and it is not.

God has promised Aaron's house that it will always serve Him. Aaron had four sons. Two are killed by the LORD (Lev 10:1-2). Of the two remaining, Ithamar and Eleazar, Eleazar succeeds Aaron. Eleazar is followed by Phinehas. That has become the line of the priesthood in Israel. However, something has been done – what that is, cannot be inferred from the Scriptures – by which the line of the priesthood has been transferred to

Ithamar. Eli does not originate from the line of Eleazar, but from the line of Ithamar. By his unfaithfulness to the LORD, the promise made to Aaron is taken away from Ithamar.

The promise of a reliable priest will be fulfilled in Zadok (Eze 44:15), who becomes a high priest at the time of David. Zadok comes from the line of Eleazar (1Chr 6:3-8). God always fulfill His promises in a way that shows *He* did it.

God will break the strength of Eli and his whole family. His offspring will die young. Eli will experience it in his time that the LORD's dwelling will be in distress. He will experience this when the ark is captured by the Philistines (1Sam 4:10-11; Psa 78:59-61). Later Shiloh is destroyed, and the ark disappeared, captured by the enemies (Jer 7:12; 26:6). The few years Eli will still be alive will be tormented by what is promised to him here. Always the thought of this judgment will occupy him. He will have no joy in his last years of life.

The man of God also tells him the death of both his sons. Here their names are mentioned. Phinehas bears the same name as a former family member. That member of the family, however, has behaved completely faithful to the LORD when sin has entered the people (Num 25:7-13). That Phinehas was the son of Eleazar.

Verse 35 | God Provides a Faithful Priest

35 But I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in My heart and in My soul; and I will build him an enduring house, and he will walk before My anointed always.

After the announcements of judgment in the previous verses now follows a promise of the LORD. It is based on nothing but His own sovereign proposal. He Himself will appoint a faithful, reliable priest. Faithfulness contrasts sharply with the unfaithfulness of Eli and his sons.

First, we can apply that to Samuel. Then it is of application to Zadok, who will become a priest instead of Abjathar. Abjathar is the last descendant of Eli's house. Solomon deprives him of the priesthood (1Kgs 2:26-27). It is taken from Abjathar because he is in connection with Adonia who has

proclaimed himself king (1Kgs 1:7), while Zadok does not participate in it (1Kgs 1:8). Above all, it applies to the Lord Jesus as the King-Priest.

The “enduring house” is the house of David (1Sam 25:28). The “anointed” often refers to the priest, but here it is the king according to God’s thoughts. The priest will stand before the anointed king. We see this in this book, where the emphasis is on the king after God’s heart. The priesthood is exercised in the presence of the kingship. The Lord Jesus is both. He is both King and Priest. In Him the kingship and priesthood unite completely. In Him it is as God intended.

Verse 36 | The Remnant of Eli’s House

36 *Everyone who is left in your house will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver or a loaf of bread and say, “Please assign me to one of the priest’s offices so that I may eat a piece of bread.”*”

What this verse says we see in Abjathar, who will serve David (1Sam 22:20; 23:9; 30:7). He represents all those who escape judgment. They will depend on the grace of the new priest. They will appeal to that grace.

1 Samuel 3

Verse 1 | Word From the Lord Is Rare

1 Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD before Eli. And word from the LORD was rare in those days, visions were infrequent.

The priesthood is under judgment. God has pronounced judgment. This opens the way to bring forward the prophet of God. In this way God prevents a void from arising in the relationship with His people. He will always give a connection between His people and Himself, no matter how great the failure of His people may be. Before the judgment on Eli and his house is carried out, God makes clear to His people the way in which he comes to them now to reveal His will, and that is through a prophet.

In those days, the Word of God has little place among God's people. It is the same today. There is hardly any reading in the Bible anymore or it should be an easily readable translation. It is often not a question of getting to know God's thoughts, but of satisfying the religious feelings that are characteristic to each person.

The fact that there is no vision coming into the public domain means that there are no public announcements of God's will concerning His people. That means that there is darkness over the people. Yet even in the darkest times God has a testimony for His Name. Whoever is truly for God will not rejoice long without a message from God. Such a person is the young Samuel.

He serves the LORD, but still under Eli's supervision. He serves the LORD, despite the corrupt way of life of the sons of Eli. Both the supervision of the weak Eli and the company of the wicked sons is determined by the LORD as the climate in which Samuel's education must take place. In this dark environment the light of Samuel's faithfulness to the LORD will shine even more.

Verses 2-10 | The LORD Calls Samuel

2 It happened at that time as Eli was lying down in his place (now his eyesight had begun to grow dim [and] he could not see [well]), 3 and the lamp of God

had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God [was], 4 that the LORD called Samuel; and he said, "Here I am." 5 Then he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, lie down again." So he went and lay down. 6 The LORD called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he answered, "I did not call, my son, lie down again." 7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor had the word of the LORD yet been revealed to him. 8 So the LORD called Samuel again for the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli discerned that the LORD was calling the boy. 9 And Eli said to Samuel, "Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. 10 Then the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for Your servant is listening."

At the time appointed by Him the LORD reveals Himself to Samuel. That happens at night. Eli and Samuel went to bed. However, there is a fine distinction in the way that is said of each of them. We read of Eli that he was "was lying down in his place", while we read of Samuel that he "had laid himself [to sleep]", as it also can be translated. With what we know about Eli it is conceivable that he loves his bed and spends a lot of time there. In him, the sleeping high priest, we see a picture of the spiritual state of the people in those days. This idea is reinforced by the statement that he can no longer see. Eli is not only physically, but also mentally blind.

We read from Samuel that he has laid himself to sleep. This indicates an activity after a day's work. He longs for it. When he goes to bed, God's lamp must almost be extinguished. The lamp of God is the candlestick in the tabernacle. It is night and the lamp is still burning weakly. But just when the night is darkest, there may be hope for the dawn of the day. A new day is about to start, to give new and bright light in this young Samuel, who is almost grown up and sleeps near the ark.

When people sleep, the Holy One of Israel does not sleep. The LORD appears to Samuel, not to Eli. He cannot address Eli. When the LORD calls Samuel, he hears a voice as if Eli were calling him. It must have sounded like a human voice. Although Samuel does not know that the LORD calls

him, he obeys directly. Obedience is the starting point for all spiritual growth and for all increases in service.

Eli has no idea that the LORD could have called Samuel. He is blind and deaf for that. The only thing he can say is that the boy just must lie down again and try to sleep. We can see the picture of soothing the conscience with an eye on the condition in which we live. We do not want to be disturbed and if there is anything that disturbs us in our rest, we do not ask any further. We would like to rest as soon as possible.

There is always a great danger that we will get into a spiritual state of drowsiness and stay in it because we feel comfortable in it (1Thes 5:6). Then we need to be shaken awake. The Lord must say to us: "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you" (Eph 5:14). If we are sleepy ourselves, we will encourage others who are awake to sleepiness. Let us be careful not to say to anyone 'lie down again and go to sleep again' when God speaks to him!

When Samuel is called a second time, Eli replies again that he has not called him, and that Samuel should lie down again. Samuel must have done so. Yet it does not say so, but we read a kind of explanation of the fact that Samuel has laid himself down again. For he knows not yet the LORD. This does not mean that he does not believe in Him. Samuel certainly believes in the LORD, but all his contact with the LORD has so far gone through Eli. Eli did not teach Samuel to listen to the voice of the LORD. He cannot do that either because he doesn't know the voice of the LORD himself. Now the time has come for the LORD to make Himself known to Samuel.

As an application we can say that Samuel has so far only heard about the LORD from others, like so many young people today. Many young people know about the Lord Jesus through their parents. This may be normal for some time, but at some point, there must be a personal meeting with Him. Children cannot continue to rely on the faith of their parents or elders, otherwise they will not grow up to maturity. To become spiritually mature, the spiritual eyes must begin to see the glory of the Lord Jesus.

The LORD calls patiently for the third time. He knows it is ignorance and not unwillingness. We must be patient with each other and, above all, with those whom we consider slow in understanding. When Samuel goes to Eli

for the third time, Eli finally understands that the LORD has called Samuel. That must have told him something. It must have dawned on him that God did not call him, but the boy. We see here that in every new generation there are young people who have received from the Lord something that He has not given or has not been able to give to the elderly. In this case He cannot give it because Eli is spiritually unable to understand His voice.

There is no jealousy in Eli that the LORD passes him and reveals Himself to Samuel. When he realizes that the LORD calls Samuel, he gives a good advice. Samuel must, as soon as the LORD calls him again, place himself before Him as a willing listener and stand up as a servant. Samuel does the same. By mentioning his name twice, the LORD calls Samuel for the fourth time. Mentioning the name twice is special. It happens a few more times in the Scriptures that the LORD or the Lord Jesus calls someone's name twice when He addresses Him, for example "Abraham, Abraham" (Gen 22:11) and "Saul, Saul" (Acts 9:4).

In response to the voice of the LORD, Samuel does not say "speak, LORD", as Eli has said to him. He did so not out of disobedience to Eli, but probably out of awe, because he does not feel worthy calling that Name. This is in stark contrast to the great familiarity with which the name of the Lord Jesus is often mentioned today. Many sermons and so-called worship services often lack respect for that Name. Respectless His Name – Jesus, without calling Him Lord – is called.

It is also important that we have respect for all who God has placed above us, such as parents, elders, and rulers. This is prescribed by God in His Word (Eph 6:1-3; Lev 19:32; Rom 13:7). That too is not found much anymore nowadays. When respect for God disappears, it also disappears from society.

Verses 11-14 | The Judgement on Eli and His House

11 The LORD said to Samuel, "Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. 12 In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. 13 For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and

he did not rebuke them. 14 Therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."

God reveals His thoughts to those who have an obedient mind and do not think highly of themselves. He reveals them to "infants" (Mt 11:25). The revelation Samuel receives comes at a time when Israel is at a low point in its history. God must let the judgment over the priesthood come. At the same time with Samuel a new period for Israel starts. Judgment not only comes over the sons, but also over Eli and his house. The judgment is final. They have sinned consciously and willingly and there is no sacrifice for that.

The message the LORD has concerning Eli and his house will deeply root and resonate for a long time. Eli is blamed for not having done anything about evil, even though he has seen it. Seeing and knowing evil and not acting against it, when the responsibility lies there, is as bad as committing it yourself. This can be applied to believers who remain part of a church where sin is not judged. One can raise the voice, but if nothing happens, one is guilty of maintaining evil if one stays there. If evil is not judged, one must leave.

Verses 15-18 | What the LORD Has Said

15 So Samuel lay down until morning. Then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. But Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. 16 Then Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." And he said, "Here I am." 17 He said, "What is the word that He spoke to you? Please do not hide it from me. May God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the words that He spoke to you." 18 So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, "It is the LORD; let Him do what seems good to Him."

In general, God does not call a prophet to preach a happy message. The first message Samuel must deliver is one of judgment. He will no longer have slept, aware of the seriousness of the vision. His message did not make him proud. He is not happy that he must tell Eli judgment must come. He is introduced for the first time to the burden of a prophetic message to pass on an unpleasant message to someone he loves, appreciates, and honors.

The LORD does not command Samuel to tell the vision to Eli, but he feels that he must. Eli helps Samuel to tell what he has heard from the LORD.

Although God has not spoken to him, the high priest, he wants to hear what God has said. He understands that it is about him. Now comes the moment when Samuel becomes a prophet. This is the moment when he speaks the words of God to Eli.

Prophecy service is often difficult. It is speaking of admonition at the right time. Jeremiah is also young when he is instructed to prophesy, and is encouraged by the LORD: “But the LORD said to me, ‘Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ Because everywhere I send you, you shall go, And all that I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, For I am with you to deliver you,’” declares the LORD. Then the LORD stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me, “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth”” (Jer 1:7-9). The weakest is like the strongest when he has the words of God on his lips.

Eli accepts the judgment of God. He does not argue but acknowledges the greatness and righteousness of the LORD. With this he also acknowledges the prophecy service of Samuel. Yet he does not come to repentance and condemnation of his sons. He bows under the judgment of God, that is all he can do.

Verses 19-21 | The LORD Is With Samuel

19 Thus Samuel grew and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fail. 20 All Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the LORD. 21 And the LORD appeared again at Shiloh, because the LORD revealed Himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the LORD.

Samuel grows. He not only grows physically, but also spiritually. Because he lives with the LORD, the LORD is with him. The LORD rejoices that He can connect himself with Samuel. He shows to all Israel, from the extreme north, where Dan lies, to the extreme south, where Beersheba lies, that Samuel is His prophet by fulfilling all His words, which Samuel speaks.

It is as if we hear the joy of Holy Spirit when He says that the LORD continues to appear in Shiloh. The LORD rejoices that there is one to whom He can reveal himself, one who knows Him and lives for Him. Here we have the opposite of verse 7. Now Samuel knows the LORD, and the LORD reveals Himself to him. He does so through His Word. That is still the way in which God reveals Himself to us.

All revelations to Samuel prove to the people that there is a new connection between them and the LORD. He reveals Himself to His people through the prophet, no longer through the high priest. Samuel has a willing ear. God can make His will known to such people, and He can use such people in His service to His people.

In a way Samuel is also a priest and king. In times of decay, God often concentrates several characteristics in one person. God calls prophets when the people are in decay. Samuel is the first of them (Acts 3:24). He is also the last judge; he closes as it were the period in which God was in connection with His people through judges (Acts 13:20b).

1 Samuel 4

Verses 1-2 | The Philistines Defeat Israel

1 Thus the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to meet the Philistines in battle and camped beside Ebenezer while the Philistines camped in Aphek. 2 The Philistines drew up in battle array to meet Israel. When the battle spread, Israel was defeated before the Philistines who killed about four thousand men on the battlefield.

The first part of verse 1 still belongs to the last verse of 1 Samuel 3. The LORD reveals Himself to Samuel through His word. This word is passed on by Samuel to Israel. Yet it is called here “the word of Samuel”. The people hear him speak, but he only passes on what the LORD has spoken to him.

As Levite he teaches the people the law (Deu 33:8-10a; 2Chr 17:8-9; 30:22). His service concerns all the people who as itinerant Levites he teaches from place to place and exhorts to obey God’s law.

When Samuel is confirmed in his service, we get the history of breaking down the old situation. This history we see happening in the going ‘into captivity’ of the ark. God in His providence allows the ark to be captured by the enemies of His people, which otherwise would never have happened, but the people are responsible for it. The main enemies in this history are the Philistines. In the book of Judges, they have come forward more and more clearly. In this first book of Samuel, it is the first mention of the Philistines since the capture and death of Samson, about twenty years ago.

It is important to remember anew what these enemies present. The most remarkable thing is that they live in the same land as the Israelites, a land that God promised to Israel and now belongs to them. However, there is a big difference between the ways along which both peoples ended up there. There is a short way from Egypt to Canaan and that is “the way of the land of the Philistines” (Exo 13:17). By this way, the Red Sea and the wilderness can be avoided, as well as the Jordan, while Israel came into the promised land via the Red Sea, the wilderness, and the Jordan.

In the spiritual application we can learn a lot from this. The Philistines represent the nominal Christians. These are people who confess to belong to God's people, but who do not find it necessary to believe that Christ died and rose up for them, and that they died and rose with Him (in the picture the Red Sea and the Jordan). Nor did they get to know the experiences of the wilderness. They came into the land without having realized these truths in their hearts and experienced them in practice. According to their confession they no longer belong to the world (Egypt). In name they belong to God's people, but they are not born again.

The Philistines do not belong in the land of God. God's people, however, have failed to expel the Philistines from the land and precisely they get the ark in their hands, as we will see in the following verses. The ark is in the Old Testament one of the most beautiful pictures of the Lord Jesus. The gold of the ark speaks of His Godhead and the wood of His Mankind, who are united in one Person (the ark). In the mercy seat of the ark we see a picture of His work of atonement and in the cherubs of His government. The ark stands in the most holy place in the immediate presence of God. It is also the throne of God. In Christ "all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Col 2:9).

It seems that Israel is taking the initiative in the fight because they are first mentioned. They go to war without a command from God or a threat from the Philistines. There is no priest who comes to encourage them (cf. Deu 20:1-4). Nor is there any indication that they consulted Samuel for this fight. It seems to be a sudden outbreak of violence, possibly a sudden outburst of violence because of the humiliations suffered.

They camp besides "Ebenezer", which means "stone of help". This name is already mentioned here, although the place will receive this name from Samuel only twenty years later after a victory over the Philistines (1Sam 7:12). It is as if this already indicates that the place where the defeat is suffered will become the place where the LORD gets the honor.

The first battle is won by the Philistines, because God is not here with Israel. Just like Samson, they are powerless, because they did not remain separated to God. Nor do we read of any action of Samuel in prayer for their benefit. They rely solely on their own strength, while their hearts have

departed from God (Jer 17:5). If the people of God do that, they always fail. God departs from those who depart from Him (Hos 9:12). The LORD also departed from Samson (Jdg 16:20), because Samson first departed from Him.

Verses 3-5 | The Ark Is Taken Into the Camp

3 When the people came into the camp, the elders of Israel said, "Why has the LORD defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us take to ourselves from Shiloh the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that it may come among us and deliver us from the power of our enemies." 4 So the people sent to Shiloh, and from there they carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts who sits [above] the cherubim; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, [were] there with the ark of the covenant of God. 5 As the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth resounded.

When the people have returned to the camp, the elders wonder why the LORD has made them suffer the defeat. The question is a pious expression, but without any working of conscience. They are not waiting for an answer, but they themselves give the answer. Therefore, this answer is not from the LORD, but comes from their own heart. They accept that the defeat is from the LORD, possibly because they realize that He did not go with them. A fair conclusion but followed by a wrong reaction.

The effect of the defeat should have been general humiliation (cf. Jos 7:6-8). Then they would have known that it is by their sin, their unfaithfulness to the LORD. However, they resort to a foolish act. Now they want to force the LORD to go with them. They want to take the ark with them, that it may redeem them.

The leaders have some knowledge. However, a little knowledge is life-threatening if you imagine that you know everything. They remember that the ark was once with them and then gave them the victory. That was when they were at Jericho and the walls fell (Jos 6:3-20). Only they forget that the walls of Jericho fell "by faith" (Heb 11:30). Here the faith is lacking. This is an act of superstition that the ark wants to use as a mascot. God has not given any command to do so. What they want, borders on magic.

The same happens in Christianity with statutes such as baptism and supper. These symbols, when used independently of faith, are attributed a magical effect in their mere use. As soon as external customs are separated from a living relationship with God and Christ, they become idolatry. In this way, the cross becomes a sign of victory, while it means defamation.

Prayer and Bible reading can also become inanimate habits, as well as visiting a Christian meeting. This happens when these things happen from a thought that God will be happy with them and not from an inner desire to have fellowship with Him. There can only be fellowship with Him if the whole life is subjected to His will. Otherwise it is a fetching of the ark of the covenant, while the heart is not directed toward the God of the covenant.

God's presence is only where there is obedience to His Word. Therefore, Moses was able to count on God's presence when he let the ark go ahead (Num 10:35-36; cf. Jos 3:10-11). Perhaps Hophni and Phinehas remembered that event when they let the ark come.

It is easy for man's corrupt heart to invoke examples from Scripture to justify wrong practices. Therefore, these examples are then taken out of their context. Once the ark has arrived in the land, there is no indication that it can be removed from its resting place when certain events happen. All the time the people must go to the ark as the place of God's presence (Deu 12:5-14). Never may they pick up the ark to come to them.

It is customary for all peoples of the earth to take their gods and sacred materials with them in the war. This is what the Persians, Romans and Greeks do, for example. In our modern age we find remnants of this ancient superstition in the dedication and blessing of crosses and the sanctification of national colors and flags.

The ark is taken to be used in battle. At that moment, the Holy Spirit gives a detailed description of the ark. The ark is "the ark of the covenant of the LORD". This indicates the connection between God and His people. It is also "the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts" (cf. 1Sam 1:3). That is His Name as the Prince of His hosts. Finally, it is mentioned that He "sits [above] the cherubim", indicating that He rules in righteousness.

According to God's thoughts this is all connected to the ark. For faith, the ark is the glory and honor of Israel (verse 22). However, there is no faith

with the people and even less with the two sons of Eli who are with the ark. The connection of the ark with the two wicked sons of Eli is a connection that God cannot accept.

It is not the priests who let the ark be taken, but the people who send to take the ark. The people rule and do what is good in their own eyes. The whole people cheer, but it is a hollow, vain cheering without any real reason. So much they have been misled. Their cheers prove their religious error. Seeing a symbol enraptures them while they deny its truth. Cheering is always easier than fighting. It is easier in mass meetings to become enthusiastic under the influence of the mass than in daily life to live devoted to the Lord. A high degree of religious excitement is no proof of God's favor and blessing.

Verses 6-11 | The Ark Taken by the Philistines

6 When the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, "What [does] the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews [mean]?" Then they understood that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp. 7 The Philistines were afraid, for they said, "God has come into the camp." And they said, "Woe to us! For nothing like this has happened before. 8 Woe to us! Who shall deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? These are the gods who smote the Egyptians with all [kinds of] plagues in the wilderness. 9 Take courage and be men, O Philistines, or you will become slaves to the Hebrews, as they have been slaves to you; therefore, be men and fight." 10 So the Philistines fought and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent; and the slaughter was very great, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand foot soldiers. 11 And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

The Philistines also lack insight, which is understandable. For them, the ark is also a mascot, nothing more. Just like the unbelieving Israel, they interchange the symbol with the true God. The cheering of the one and the fear of the other are both the result of unbelief and ignorance.

The Philistines speak of "the Hebrews", not of "the Israelites". The Israelites were among the foreign peoples known as "Hebrews" (Exo 1:15; 2:6). What the Philistines say further shows that they are familiar with the history of the ark and God's people. They know what happened about

three hundred years ago. Yet they are not accurately informed. They connect the plagues with which God plagued the land of Egypt with the wilderness and not with the land of Egypt.

In any case, they are extremely impressed by the power of God, Who, by the way, with their idolatrous view they see as several mighty gods. The only thing they can say to each other as people of the world to encourage each other is: *“Be men.”* The man of faith speaks differently. He does not trust in his own human strength, but in the Lord.

The Philistines are fighting with all their strength, while it seems as if there is no battle on the part of Israel. They may have been surprised because they trusted their mascot and thought in their folly that God would fight for them because of the ark. They lose because the LORD is not with them and gives them into the hand of the Philistines. Superstition makes a person blind to the real danger and powerless against the enemy. Israel do like the sons of a certain Sceva who, out of pure self-interest, call the name of Jesus to be successful (Acts 19:13-17).

God will not be forced to fight for us if our heart is not with Him. The use of holy words, the citation of venerable leaders, relying on sanctified substances such as baptismal water and bread and wine is all worthless. It is about purity of heart and hands. No external privileges, no previous experiences of God’s presence, no correctness of position or doctrine can take the place of truth in the heart of God. God *“desires truth in the innermost being”* (Psa 51:6).

The slaughter is large. Around the ark, the corpses must have piled up because they desperately wanted to protect the ark as the symbol of their belief. The defeat is insulting and extensive. God uses this war to liberate the ark from the hands of wicked men who boast to be His people. Eli’s sons have disappeared from the stage forever. The ark is going into captivity. At the same time, the way it goes is a triumphal march, as we will see.

Verses 12-18 | Message of the Losses Suffered

12 Now a man of Benjamin ran from the battle line and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes torn and dust on his head. 13 When he came, behold, Eli was sitting on [his] seat by the road eagerly watching, because his heart

was trembling for the ark of God. So the man came to tell [it] in the city, and all the city cried out. 14 When Eli heard the noise of the outcry, he said, "What [does] the noise of this commotion [mean]?" Then the man came hurriedly and told Eli. 15 Now Eli was ninety-eight years old, and his eyes were set so that he could not see. 16 The man said to Eli, "I am the one who came from the battle line. Indeed, I escaped from the battle line today." And he said, "How did things go, my son?" 17 Then the one who brought the news replied, "Israel has fled before the Philistines and there has also been a great slaughter among the people, and your two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been taken." 18 When he mentioned the ark of God, Eli fell off the seat backward beside the gate, and his neck was broken and he died, for he was old and heavy. Thus he judged Israel forty years.

A man of Benjamin manages to escape. With great speed he reaches Shiloh. There Eli is beside the gate. The messenger runs by Eli. This is not the man he thinks first of to bring his sad message. Apparently, Eli is not involved in what is happening in the lives of the people. The man of Benjamin brings his message to the city. His torn clothes are a sign of the torn and divided and scattered people. The earth on his head points to the humiliation of the people. His appearance indicates that he is a messenger with bad tidings.

After the message there is a lot of crying in the whole city. All inhabitants will have family or friends in the army about whom they are in care. Especially the message about the ark will have landed hard. In any case, that is Eli's greatest concern, greater than the concern for his sons. What would happen to his sons is told him (1Sam 2:34).

Eli is blind, but not deaf. He cannot see the torn clothes and the earth on the head of the messenger, but he does hear the effect of the message. Although he does have an idea, he wants to know the right reason for the crying. Then the messenger also comes to Eli and tells him what happened. The report Eli gets is not from second hand, but from an eyewitness. Nor is it a report of an event in the far past, but of something that has happened this same day.

In a friendly way Eli invites him to report. He uses the fatherly "my son", so that the messenger will tell him everything that has happened, freely and openly, without omitting anything (cf. 1Sam 3:16-18).

In his report, the messenger briefly and forcefully mentions four cases, of which each is more serious than the previous one:

1. Israel has fled for its enemies. The fact that Israel has had to turn its back on its enemies is proof of the presence of a great evil. It points to a serious deviation from the LORD, Who promised the opposite if the people were faithful.
2. There has been a great massacre among the people. They could also have been defeated without much loss. Of the combative men, however, there are not many left.
3. His two sons are dead. As a father, it will have affected him even more than the thirty thousand others dead. Especially since there is little hope that they died in the peace of God.
4. The ark of God is captured. This is the most feared and most terrible message of all. Now God has left Israel and there is no hope for Israel to restore.

Only when there is mention made of the capture of the ark, Eli falls off his chair and dies. No matter how weak he may have been in maintaining the rights of the LORD, there was with him sincere care for the symbol of God's presence.

Verses 19-22 | Ichabod

19 Now his daughter-in-law, Phinehas's wife, was pregnant and about to give birth; and when she heard the news that the ark of God was taken and that her father-in-law and her husband had died, she kneeled down and gave birth, for her pains came upon her. 20 And about the time of her death the women who stood by her said to her, "Do not be afraid, for you have given birth to a son." But she did not answer or pay attention. 21 And she called the boy Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel," because the ark of God was taken and because of her father-in-law and her husband. 22 She said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God was taken."

In Eli's house is a God-fearing woman, the wife of the wicked Phinehas. Also to her the ark is the most important. The women around her do not understand her, just as Hannah was not understood. They do not understand what is going on in her with respect to the honor of God's people.

Her God-fearing heart knows what the ark means to Israel. For her, the ark represents the presence of God, which is now gone (Psa 78:60-61).

What is happening here, is definitive. The ark has gone into captivity and will never return to the tabernacle in Shiloh. Shiloh has been destroyed and the tent has not been used as a shelter for the ark anymore. The ark gets its place in the coming temple.

There are four captivities of Israel, which means that they are in captivity outside their country. Three times that is literally the case and once symbolic and that is here.

1. The first captivity is in Egypt. During this captivity, the people have deviated from God. Moses, raised by God, takes the people out of captivity, and brings them to the promised land. This will happen again to the people in the future.
2. In *1 Samuel* we see the second case. The people are given in captivity because of their unfaithfulness, this time in the ark that comes into Philistine hands. In the ark the people are symbolically captured. God leaves His people. History is then continued in what happens to the ark in the land of the Philistines. All the time the ark is gone, nobody seems to have cared about it. Only when David cares about it, the ark is brought back from captivity and brought to Zion.
3. The third captivity is the Babylonian, as the judgment over the decay among the kings. The glory of the LORD departs from Jerusalem, be it in phases (Eze 9:3a; 10:18-19; 11:22-23). The restoration – albeit a partial one – takes place under the high priest Jeshua and the prince Zerubbabel, who together are a picture of the Lord Jesus. This restoration is described in the book of Ezra (Ezra 1:1-3; 2:1-2; 3:2).
4. The fourth captivity – the scattering of Israel among the nations – is the result of the rejection of the Lord Jesus and continues still. This will be ended by the coming of the Lord Jesus Himself. Then comes the kingdom of peace, with no chance of a new captivity.

It is not just a prophetic history for Israel. The prophetic meaning is also important to us. Philistines are a picture of the nominal Christians. It is what we see especially in the church of Sardis (Rev 3:1-6). It presents Protestantism, as it has developed since the Reformation. We see as never

before that the ark has ended up in the dirty hands of the Philistines. It is the time of the bible criticism and the false teaching about the Lord Jesus. In Protestantism these errors are greater than in Roman Catholicism.

1 Samuel 5

Introduction

In 1 Samuel 5-6 all interest is shifted from Israel to the land of the Philistines because the ark is there. Where there is God's presence, there is the true center of interest. Shiloh, after three hundred years of the ark's presence, loses the symbol of God's presence (Jos 18:1; 19:51). This makes Shiloh the constant reminder of the sin of the people (Jer 7:12,14).

God does not allow His glory to be violated in the land of the Philistines. He takes care of that. He maintains His own honor. The ark has brought no blessing to the Philistines. In this way, bible-critical pastors ensure that the churches do not become full but deflate. Their preaching brings death and destruction. They do not all want to do that consciously, but that is the result.

Verses 1-5 | God and the Idols

1 Now the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. 2 Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it to the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon. 3 When the Ashdodites arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and set him in his place again. 4 But when they arose early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. And the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands [were] cut off on the threshold; only the trunk of Dagon was left to him. 5 Therefore neither the priests of Dagon nor all who enter Dagon's house tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

In this chapter we have a piece of history, not of Israel, but of the Philistines, because the symbol of God's presence is there. In picture it says that God's attention is in the place where His Son is seen. This does not mean that God has given up His people forever or no longer loves them.

God does not relinquish His honor, although sometimes it seems so. When God acts like this, it always turns out that He has an intention. The result is a greater glorification of His Name than would otherwise have

been possible. Thus we see that the Lord Jesus is glorified to His enemies precisely in the deliverance to His enemies and that in that therein God is “glorified in Him” (Jn 13:31).

In their folly the Philistines place the ark by their god Dagon. God and the idols cannot go together (2Cor 6:14-16a). God does not allow Himself to be mocked, but rather mocks Himself with the idol. The Philistines make an unsuspecting acquaintance with God. They think they have Him in their power, but He shows that they are in His power.

Dagon is probably a fish-god, half man, half fish. He represents an idol of insight (man) and crowd (fish). This is also the idol in Christianity. The religious man worships the human mind and large numbers. There is the reasoning that something cannot be wrong if many people do it.

The Philistines see conquering the ark not only as a victory over Israel, but also over the God of Israel. Gentiles multiply their gods; they add gods to the ones they already have. Israel’s actions are even worse because they exchange the true God for other gods.

The Philistines want to honor their god and belittle the God of Israel, but God maintains His majesty. He shows His presence and majesty above the god of the Philistines. It is no longer a matter between God and His people, nor between God and the Philistines, but between God and the idols. God’s presence judges the false gods (Jer 50:2; Isa 48:5).

If the people and/or priests wish to offer their god early the next morning, they find a god who has fallen in worship before the God of Israel, as it were (cf. Psa 97:7). They pretend it is an accident. Without further comment they lift their god and put him up again. It is a god without power. Idols, made by human hands, must always be carried (Isa 46:1-2). What a difference with the God of Israel, who carries His people (Isa 46:3-4). Isaiah impressively shows the contrast between the idols and God in the verses mentioned.

The Philistines learn nothing from the downfall of their god. The next night God breaks down the human characteristics. Only the bestial – as said Dagon is possibly a fish-man god – remains. In any case, this god is completely humiliated, both in his alleged intelligence – the head is cut off, what also speaks of authority, control – and in his alleged actions – the

hands are cut off. The contentment between the cut-off hands of Dagon and “the hand of the LORD” (verses 6,9,11) Who works things, is remarkable.

The consequence of the humiliation of their idol is an increase in their superstition. This is how blind is man who bends before idols. The custom they call respect is a lasting testimony to the powerlessness of their idol. Every time they step across the threshold, it is a reminder of their god’s downfall and of the exaltation of the God of Israel.

It is assumed, because of a verse in Zephaniah 1, that the idolatrous Israelites in the time of the prophet Zephaniah Dagon have accepted and worshiped as idol (Zep 1:9a). Stepping on the threshold means defilement. That is why they step over it. Or one falls for it and kisses the threshold. When Christianity became more and more corrupt, this worship of the threshold of the churches also took place. There have always been superstitious elements in Europe. The idols are accepted in roman-catholicism. It can be seen in the carrying of statues in processions. It is like carrying the trunk around.

Verses 6-12 | God and the Idolaters

6 Now the hand of the LORD was heavy on the Ashdodites, and He ravaged them and smote them with tumors, both Ashdod and its territories. 7 When the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, “The ark of the God of Israel must not remain with us, for His hand is severe on us and on Dagon our god.” 8 So they sent and gathered all the lords of the Philistines to them and said, “What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel?” And they said, “Let the ark of the God of Israel be brought around to Gath.” And they brought the ark of the God of Israel [around]. 9 After they had brought it around, the hand of the LORD was against the city with very great confusion; and He smote the men of the city, both young and old, so that tumors broke out on them. 10 So they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And as the ark of God came to Ekron the Ekronites cried out, saying, “They have brought the ark of the God of Israel around to us, to kill us and our people.” 11 They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines and said, “Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, so that it will not kill us and our people.” For there was a deadly confusion throughout the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.

12 And the men who did not die were smitten with tumors and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

After God has dealt with their idols, He will occupy Himself with the idolaters. He makes them feel His judgment. He smites them with tumors, for which we can think of hemorrhoids or ostentatious tumors. Smiting with tumors means the outbreak of folly. It makes it clear that God stands up for the honor of His Son. There has also broken out a plague of mice, through which God also hits the land and its proceeds (1Sam 6:5).

The city princes of the Philistines deliberate what to do with this God. They want to get rid of Him and send the plagues to someone else. Their rejection of the ark is reminiscent of the rejection of the Lord Jesus by the Gerasenes. These people beg the Lord Jesus to leave their territory, because they have lost their swine through Him. That there is an insane man healed, leave them utterly indifferent. They prefer the company of an insane man, and therefore of demons, and the swine, to that of the Savior (Mk 5:13-17).

The lords of the cities are still unwilling to give up their victory. In their short-sighted superstition they assume that it must have been local bad luck for Ashdod. The ark must go to Gath. The result of their deliberations is that the disasters come all over the Philistine community. It is like in Egypt again. God wants to show through plagues that He is there and He wants to force them to bring His ark – which here is always called “the ark of God”, also by the Philistines! – from the Philistine country back to His land.

The plagues are not only coercive. They are also warnings, calls to conversion. Yet the plagued man does not repent (cf. Rev 16:8-11). In the judgment there is no regard for the person. Small or large, rich or poor, young or old, woman or man, God strikes them all. So will also the great and small sinners stand before the great white throne and be judged (Rev 20:12).

After Gath they want to send the ark of God to a third city, to Ekron. Man always wants to put up others with problems he cannot solve himself. At first sight God uses this as a means for the ark to make a triumphal march (cf. 2Cor 2:14).

We see that plagues do not change the heart of man. The people want the ark to return to its own place. They point to the calamity that the ark brought them. Here we can learn the lesson that those who believe in superstition that they can lay a claim on Christ, as the roman-catholic church does, will be plagued by plagues (Rev 18:4-8).

1 Samuel 6

Verses 1-2 | What Should Happen to the Ark?

1 Now the ark of the LORD had been in the country of the Philistines seven months. 2 And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, "What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us how we shall send it to its place."

After seven months, a complete time, the Philistines seek advice from their brightest minds. Earlier the lords of the Philistines acted. Now their priests and diviners are called. Under no circumstances will the religious, natural man turn to the true God, the only source of light there is. After the political level, now comes the religious level. This combination is also seen in Pilate and the chief priests in the condemnation of the Lord Jesus, of whom the ark is a striking picture.

In any case, they want to get rid of the ark, which means as much as they want to get rid of God. This is what man always wants when he does not want to bow before the Lord Jesus, although he must acknowledge His majesty, for he cannot deny it. Someone can succeed in excluding God for some time, but not forever. The final meeting will take place and then they will be removed and sent to hell.

Verses 3-6 | The Ark Must Return With a Guilt Offering

3 They said, "If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty; but you shall surely return to Him a guilt offering. Then you will be healed and it will be known to you why His hand is not removed from you." 4 Then they said, "What shall be the guilt offering which we shall return to Him?" And they said, "Five golden tumors and five golden mice [according to] the number of the lords of the Philistines, for one plague was on all of you and on your lords. 5 So you shall make likenesses of your tumors and likenesses of your mice that ravage the land, and you shall give glory to the God of Israel;

perhaps He will ease His hand from you, your gods, and your land. 6 Why then do you harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? When He had severely dealt with them, did they not allow the people to go, and they departed?

Although they know nothing of service to God in Israel, they propose to make a guilt-offering. This indicates that something in their conscience has been touched. In their folly they believe that an image is sufficient. Their offense is not a bloody sacrifice either but consists of statuettes of their plagues. We recognize the use of statues today in roman-catholicism, where these things play a major role. The tangible is always preferred to what is not tangible, but spiritual. The illustrations also concern impurities.

In all respects their offering is an insult and horror to God. The proposal is in keeping with their idolatry, but not with God. They have no awareness of the true guilt offering. The Philistines are more concerned about their suffering bodies than about their sickened souls. They only act with a view to improving their living conditions. Their 'offering' goes no further than a memory of their torments.

They determine the offering on one tumor and one mouse per lord. The tumors have affected their bodies and the mice have affected their land. The mice have probably been the plague that has devastated their harvest, for it is harvest time (verse 13). They understand that both the tumors and the mice are sent by God. By making a likeness of each of them and sending it along as a guilt offering, they acknowledge that.

What happens to them reminds them of the events of the past in Egypt. However, it does not work their conversion, as it did not in the case of Pharaoh at the time. So is the nature of man. Without repentance they want to get rid of the plagues. The Egyptians also wanted to get rid of the Israelites as soon as possible and gave them gifts.

The part of the world in which we live is also ravaged by plagues. New diseases appear again and again. However, it does not make people realize that these plagues are a scourge from God. It is conceivable that the plagues that come over the Christian countries are, among other things, the result of the tainting by the theologians of the Lord Jesus and the Word of God.

Verses 7-12 | A New Cart and Milch Cows

7 Now therefore, take and prepare a new cart and two milch cows on which there has never been a yoke; and hitch the cows to the cart and take their calves home, away from them. 8 Take the ark of the LORD and place it on the cart; and put the articles of gold which you return to Him as a guilt offering in a box by its side. Then send it away that it may go. 9 Watch, if it goes up by the way of its own territory to Beth-shemesh, then He has done us this great evil. But if not, then we will know that it was not His hand that struck us; it happened to us by chance.” 10 Then the men did so, and took two milch cows and hitched them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home. 11 They put the ark of the LORD on the cart, and the box with the golden mice and the likenesses of their tumors. 12 And the cows took the straight way in the direction of Beth-shemesh; they went along the highway, lowing as they went, and did not turn aside to the right or to the left. And the lords of the Philistines followed them to the border of Beth-shemesh.

The Philistines now want absolute certainty that they are dealing with God. They do not want to bring back the ark themselves. They do not think they can either, because every move has brought them disaster. Their solution suits the natural man who does not possess the light of God.

It seems indecent and inappropriate for them to use something for the worship of God that has previously served a general purpose. Everything in the obeisance to God must be holy, separated from general custom and entirely dedicated to the service of God. That is why they use a new cart. They will not be punished for this, as is David later in the death of Uzzah, when Uzzah touches the ark (2Sam 6:3,6-7). As Israelites, they should have known better.

The Philistines still calculate with the possibility that everything has happened by chance. Such a thing will not be the case with a true Christian. The Philistines want certainties. And God does according to their thinking and makes it clear that He is at work. Yet it has no effect on their relationship with Him.

By using milch cows to pull the cart, it is humanly unthinkable that the ark will safely leave the country. This is evident from the facts described.

It concerns cows that

1. not being used to the yoke,
2. do not know the way to Beth-shemesh,
3. have none to guide them,
4. have the strong instinct of animals to return to their calves – hence their ‘lowing’ when they go – and
5. also have the instinct to go to their own stable.

Yet they go “the straight way in the direction of Beth-shemesh”. This proves that an invisible, strong hand leads them, the irresistible hand of their Creator. The natural motives are overcome by spiritual power.

“The cattle on a thousand hills” belong to God (Psa 50:10b). The animals do what He wants. A fish provides a coin when the Lord Jesus needs it (Mt 17:27). Similarly, a donkey is ready to carry him (Mk 11:2). He commands a fish to harbor Jonah for three days and three nights, and a worm to teach him a lesson (Jona 1:17; 2:10; 4:7). He uses a lion to kill a disobedient prophet and forbids this lion from devouring the prophet (1Kgs 13:24,28). He also keeps the lion’s mouse closed in the pit where Daniel is (Dan 6:23).

The city lords, who wanted to rule the ark, can only follow the ark as slaves of service. In that in which they have acted proudly, God has shown Himself as far above them. We can learn from the animals that are used by the lords of the city but are controlled by God.

Do we have so much spiritual insight that we are guided by God’s Spirit against our natural motives? It is God’s intention to bring the ark back to His people. He still does this spiritually today by letting the Lord Jesus preach, and for this He uses people who are guided by Him.

There may be little insight, but if there is surrender to Him, He will return the Lord Jesus to His people. Thus, God has always found people to make His Son the center of the church again. A revival means that His Son will once again be central to the heart of His own. When the Lord Jesus is no longer central, dedication disappears.

Verses 13-15 | The Ark Arrives in the Land

13 Now [the people of] Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat harvest in the valley, and they raised their eyes and saw the ark and were glad to see [it]. 14

The cart came into the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite and stood there where there [was] a large stone; and they split the wood of the cart and offered the cows as a burnt offering to the LORD. 15 The Levites took down the ark of the LORD and the box that was with it, in which were the articles of gold, and put them on the large stone; and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrificed sacrifices that day to the LORD.

The ark arrives in Beth-shemesh, a Levite city where the Kohathites live. It is precisely those Levites who are appointed by God to carry the ark (Num 3:29-31; Jos 21:10,16). There God brings the ark and not to Shiloh. God knows whom He can entrust the glory of His Son. When the ark arrives in Beth-shemesh, the inhabitants of the city, the Levites, are busy harvesting the wheat.

The Levites work here on land. They are busy with the wheat. Wheat speaks of the result of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus (Jn 12:24). This result consists of the believers, who are all who by faith in the Lord Jesus have received Him as their life. The Lord Jesus is the grain of wheat that fell into the earth and died. That is why a lot of fruit has come.

The ark comes where people are reaping in the harvest, where they are busy with the blessings God has given in the land. Something similar we see with Gideon (Jdg 6:11), with the shepherds who keep watch over the flock in the night of the Savior's birth and to whom the good news is proclaimed (Lk 2:8-10), and with the disciples who are also busy in their daily work when the Lord calls them (Mt 4:18-22). The inhabitants of Beth-shemesh are happy to see the ark (cf. Jn 20:20). But did they really miss the ark and seek it, like David later (Psa 132:3-5)?

It is therefore undeserved grace when the presence of the LORD returns. Without having searched for it, without having fought for it, without having paid a ransom, the ark, the symbol of God's presence, returned to them. They have never seen the ark, but from the description they know and its brilliance they must have known: this is the ark. So it will always be with faith.

The cows are sacrificed as burnt offering. They have been used to put the ark back into the hands of the people and are now sacrificed to God. The Levites have, in picture, offered the Lord Jesus to God as a burnt offering.

They have also brought offerings, which is a peace offering and speaks of fellowship. This fellowship may be particularly experienced at the Lord's Table as we celebrate the Lord's Supper.

The wood of the ark is split (cf. 1Kgs 19:21). The means that have been used to bring back the ark are also used to honor God. Now the wood serves to burn the sacrifices, so that they ascend to God as a sweet odor (Lev 1:7-9).

Verses 16-18 | The Lords Return Home

16 When the five lords of the Philistines saw it, they returned to Ekron that day. 17 These are the golden tumors which the Philistines returned for a guilt offering to the LORD: one for Ashdod, one for Gaza, one for Ashkelon, one for Gath, one for Ekron; 18 and the golden mice, [according] to the number of all the cities of the Philistines belonging to the five lords, both of fortified cities and of country villages. The large stone on which they set the ark of the LORD [is a witness] to this day in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite.

The expressions of joy and the offering of the animals take place under the watchful eye of the Philistines. We can see in this the image that being together at the Lord's Table and proclaiming His death is also watched by unbelievers. They have no part in it and turn away from it. They do not want to be part of it either. Their hearts have not changed, even though they have seen the clearest evidence of God's work.

Once again, the guilt offering is mentioned and what it consists of and on whose behalf it is given. The compensation in the form of this guilt offering is the result of their human wisdom. It will also be a constant testimony of their recognition that God is there, and of their refusal to bow before Him despite such clear evidences.

Verse 19 | The Holiness of the Ark

19 He struck down some of the men of Beth-shemesh because they had looked into the ark of the LORD. He struck down of all the people, 50,070 men, and the people mourned because the LORD had struck the people with a great slaughter.

There is an unexpected turn of events. Joy turns into mourning, for God's judgment affects them. His people have looked into the ark, something that

is strictly forbidden. Here we have the important principle that the more light someone or a community has about the things of God, the greater the judgment of God will be in case of a transgression. They know they are not allowed to look into the ark.

It may well be that the priests, the Levites, and the people in their enthusiasm have forgotten the holiness of God and have not thought of His precepts. But an understandable enthusiasm should never tempt us to consider the sacred as ordinary. God maintains His honor toward the Philistines in a way that suits them. Here He does so in the way that suits His people. He sanctifies Himself in those who approach Him (Lev 10:1,3,9).

Verses 20-21 | The Ark Is Unwanted

20 The men of Beth-shemesh said, "Who is able to stand before the LORD, this holy God? And to whom shall He go up from us?" 21 So they sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kiriath-jearim, saying, "The Philistines have brought back the ark of the LORD; come down and take it up to you."

The people react in the same way as the Philistines. They also want to get rid of the ark now that they have come into contact with its holiness. Is it sometimes the case with us also? Does it also make us feel oppressive when we remember that we are in God's presence continually and that He knows every thought, every word, and sees every action in our lives?

1 Samuel 7

Verses 1-2 | The Ark at Kiriath-jearim

1 And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took the ark of the LORD and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and consecrated Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the LORD. 2 From the day that the ark remained at Kiriath-jearim, the time was long, for it was twenty years; and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

Fear of the ark is not necessary if one does not look into the ark. The truth of the Lord Jesus is not to analyze, but to worship. Although the people are not ready to ask for the ark, the ark can go to some who appreciate it.

Why didn't Samuel pick up the ark? He sees how the people are doing. He understands that he lives in a transitional period. He knows that God in His time will bring the ark to the place He has chosen. Samuel is waiting for God's time, for David. David is, forty years later, the first one to look for and find the ark (Psa 132:6).

God Himself has delivered the ark from the power and land of the Philistines. He can only deliver His people from the power of the Philistines when they have taken their right place before Him. Before that time, twenty years elapse. After twenty years the people go to the LORD, not to complain, but to confess their condition. The absence of God often makes one feel the value of Him Whose presence one has not appreciated. All this time Samuel also waited. He has waited for the time when the Spirit of God can work among the people.

The first thing the Spirit does is to discover the people to themselves. Waiting time is not lost time. This work of God's Spirit will be the result of Samuel's constant intercession. Samuel remains in the shadows in the years of his life which, seen from his age, are for others, even today, the most ambitious.

The people do not ask for the ark as a symbol, but for the LORD Himself. With this they are the mass of modern Christianity with their longing for and trust in images of saints and other follies far ahead.

Verses 3-4 | The Israelites Serve the LORD Alone

3 Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "If you return to the LORD with all your heart, remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroath from among you and direct your hearts to the LORD and serve Him alone; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines." 4 So the sons of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashtaroath and served the LORD alone.

When the work of God's Spirit reveals itself, Samuel comes. Now it is time for action. Samuel speaks the word of the prophet. He points to the wrong things, which are the cause of the Philistines ruling over them. The Philistines are a rod of discipline in the hand of God for His people.

In what Samuel says to the people, we see that conversion has three characteristics:

1. the removing of the foreign gods, that is separation from evil,
2. direct the heart to the LORD to be taught by Him about the cause of evil and to come to the right mind of a broken heart and a defeated spirit and
3. to serve Him alone, that is, to dedicate oneself completely to Him.

If these characteristics are present, we can count on deliverance from the yoke of the enemies.

What happens here under the last judge, did not happen during the whole time of the judges. In Christianity something has been done away with that which is wrong, but by no means everything. This only happens in the case of such a complete self-judgment as Israel here. The people give up their wrong connections, break them and become free to do the work of the LORD, or better, to let this work be done first with themselves. We also see such an attitude in the beginning of the church.

Verses 5-9 | Samuel Prays for the People

5 Then Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah and I will pray to the LORD for you." 6 They gathered to Mizpah, and drew water and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day and said there, "We have sinned against the LORD." And Samuel judged the sons of Israel at Mizpah. 7 Now when the Philistines heard that the sons of Israel had gathered to Mizpah, the lords of the

Philistines went up against Israel. And when the sons of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. 8 Then the sons of Israel said to Samuel, "Do not cease to cry to the LORD our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines." 9 Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it for a whole burnt offering to the LORD; and Samuel cried to the LORD for Israel and the LORD answered him.

Now comes the next step. The people are called to "Mizpa", not to Shiloh. Here something new begins. Mizpa means 'watchtower'. The people will be focused on the new, what lies in the future, but of which they do not yet know what it means. The new begins with prayer. So it is always with a revival. The origin always lies in fervent prayer. Moses and Samuel are the great intercessors for God's people in the Old Testament (Psa 99:6; Jer 15:1a).

The man who speaks to the people on behalf of God is also the man who goes to God on behalf of the people. The man in whom the Word of God dwells and who uses it faithfully also knows how to use the privilege of priestly intercession. What he did first personally and in secret, he now wants to do in public with the whole. General need, general danger and above all a general turning to God brings the people together. All other meetings in this case are useless.

The drawing and pouring out of water are also something that has not happened before. That does not mean that it is wrong. It is not a sin offering, but the spirit of the sin offering is present in this act. We must be able to judge that, not whether something fits our idea of what is right. God's Spirit is free in His work (cf. Jn 3:8), and we should not want to impose our insights upon Him in doing so.

In 2 Samuel 14 the meaning appears: "For we will surely die and are like water spilled on the ground which cannot be gathered up again" (2Sam 14:14a; cf. 1Sam 1:15; Psa 62:9a; Lam 2:19). The poured-out water represents what man is naturally in his weakness. Once water is poured out, it cannot be gathered. In Psalm 22 it is applied to the Lord Jesus as He pours out His life in death (Psa 22:14). It then seems to be over with Him. But God has, as it were, gathered this water and raised Him up from the dead. By this we can now "joyously draw water from the springs of salvation" (Isa 12:3).

The confession “we have sinned against the LORD” is a general confession and therefore vague. Under that general confession, forms of specific evil may be hidden that have not yet been uncovered and have yet to be judged according to God’s holy Word. This is what Samuel then does when he leads them. He leads by declaring the Word of God to them. The praying Samuel is also the teacher. His teaching is supported by his prayer.

The Philistines misjudge totally what is happening in Israel. They think that the people gather to fight against them. But Israel is afraid of the Philistines. Although the enemy judges it wrong and cannot do anything else, they are also right. Humbling before God is also a declaration of war to the enemy. Humility impresses the enemy; he has no control over it. Humility cannot be overcome, for in it the Lord is on the side of His people.

The enemy becomes active when the people of God connect with God. The enemy does not tolerate any action that puts the people of God in a position that acknowledges God. In their need, the Israelites call upon the prophet of God and the intercessor with God to pray for them. They have a strong faith in Samuel’s intercession because they know that he is a holy man of God. They appeal to an intercessor because they understand that intercession will be more useful to them than the largest army.

Samuel has already prayed, but the people want him to continue. They know and recognize the power of the “prayer of a righteous man”, for it “can accomplish much” (Jam 5:16b). They know that their salvation must come from the LORD, that He alone can save them and that He must be sought for it. They recognize the connection of Samuel with the LORD.

This is a much better attitude than when in their pride they thought they could fight and use the ark for that (1Sam 4:1-3). Now they see their own powerlessness and resort to prayer. Similarly, a praying Josaphat, surrounded by women and children (2Chr 20:3-5,13) and a praying Hezekiah, dressed in a sackcloth (Isa 37:1) are more dangerous to the enemy than when they are surrounded by soldiers dressed in war costume.

Samuel brings a burnt offering. It is a suckling lamb, a newborn lamb that still drinks from its mother, a picture of extreme weakness. The only other place where it is still found is in a scene describing the kingdom of peace (Isa 65:25a). Because of this suckling lamb Samuel approaches God to in-

tercede for the people. The lamb is also offered to restore the people and bring them back into the favor of God.

The Lord Jesus is “crucified in weakness” (2Cor 13:4). We needed Someone so insignificant because we were so insignificant. God does not despise the weakness of faith but descends in grace to our level of weakness. The Lord Jesus lived in complete dependence on God, completely dedicated to Him, and as a Baby He was dependent on His mother’s care. This is the way by which God has prepared salvation for man.

Verses 10-14 | The Philistines Subdued

10 Now Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, and the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day against the Philistines and confused them, so that they were routed before Israel. 11 The men of Israel went out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, and struck them down as far as below Beth-car. 12 Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpah and Shen, and named it Ebenezer, saying, “Thus far the LORD has helped us.” 13 So the Philistines were subdued and they did not come anymore within the border of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. 14 The cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even to Gath; and Israel delivered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. So there was peace between Israel and the Amorites.

The enemy attacks when the offering is brought. At the same time, for this very reason, God intervenes and acts for the benefit of His people, who do not have to do anything themselves. The enemy does not know God’s thoughts about His Son. God appears in majesty when, in the picture of the burnt offering, the glory of the Lord Jesus is presented to Him and He sees His people in His Son.

The people may be quiet and see the salvation of the LORD, just as with the passage through the Red Sea (Exo 14:13-14). The LORD acts with a mighty thunder for His people, an action of which Hannah prophesied (1Sam 2:10). His voice confuses the enemy. The victory is that of the LORD. He is to be honored for this, and not to the people.

The people may receive the results of the work God has done for them. “Beth-car” means “house of the lamb”. Until that place the enemy is de-

feated. It shows in the picture that victory extends as far as the power of the sacrifice of the lamb goes. In practical terms, this means that the enemy will be kept more and more at a distance if we learn to know Christ, from Whom this lamb speaks, better and better. There the peace of the house is found for which the lamb laid the foundation. In that house the lamb is the basis and in that house the lamb is central.

“Ebenezer” means “stone of help”. With this name Samuel indicates that they have experienced God’s help with every step they have taken in God’s way. This stone becomes a remembrance of the help of the LORD. The erection of the stone is like the testimony Paul gives for Agrippa: “So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day” (Acts 26:22). This may also be our testimony every time we realize that with God’s help, we have again overcome difficulties on the way of faith.

The place where first the ark was captured by the Philistines and they defeated Israel (1Sam 5:1), is now the place of testimony for the LORD because He defeated the Philistines for them. The Philistines might think that a man in prayer is the same as a people who superstitiously bring the ark into the army. But Samuel is not Hophni and Pinehas. The faith of the man of God in the offering represents the people to God in the value of that offering. It is not an outward sign, but inner faith. With this God connects Himself and by virtue of this He delivers His people from their enemies.

There is probably no victory by Israel as special as this one. The LORD had humiliated them, nearly exterminated them. All trust in their own strength was gone. And now, through a wonderful intercession of Samuel, He exalts them, and humiliates the proud oppressors in the dust. God brings peoples and individuals to the extreme humiliation to show them His grace and mercy. He does so by a sudden release from their destruction when all human help has clearly failed.

As long as Samuel is in power, the hand of the LORD is against the enemy. In picture this shows us that if we submit to God’s Word, the Lord will fight for us against the enemy, so that he will have no chance to harm us. And not only that. We also receive back certain spiritual blessings that we have lost through our unfaithfulness. That is what we see here in Israel. Israel is getting back lost territory.

That they make peace with the Amorites, however, is not a matter of faith. They have returned to God, but their works are unfortunately not perfect. An excuse that times have changed does not apply if God has determined a matter to be wrong (Deu 7:1-2).

Verses 15-17 | Samuel Judges Israel

15 Now Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. 16 He used to go annually on circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpah, and he judged Israel in all these places. 17 Then his return [was] to Ramah, for his house [was] there, and there he judged Israel; and he built there an altar to the LORD.

Samuel is not characterized by sitting on a chair, as we read from Eli (1Sam 4:13). He works diligently and has no time to become fat like Eli. Like a father to his people, he visits his children in different places. He teaches them for the good of their souls.

The four cities mentioned here are, as it were, the four stations in the life of the people of God. Our life also take place between these 'stations'.

1. Bethel" means "house of God". In this we recognize "the household of God, which is the church of the living God" (1Tim 3:15), in which we find ourselves. It is the house where God lives and where we may live with Him (Eph 2:19). The awareness of His presence will sanctify our lives. His house is characterized by holiness. In Bethel Jacob met God (Gen 28:10-19; 35:1-15). Do we know this truth and is it always in our minds? It is a truth which concerns all believers, all saints.
2. Gilgal" means "rolled away" (Jos 5:9). Every year Samuel comes and preaches there. This shows us in picture that the people are told that they must constantly live in self-judgment. We must remain aware that "nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh" (Rom 7:18a). We put the meaning of 'Gilgal' into practice by rolling away the reproach of the world, which means that we give up every connection with it. It is our realizing that we have been judged in the judgment that has come over Christ: "in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Col 2:11). That is also where the judgment of the world was carried out. This should be expressed in the prophetic service.

3. "Mizpa" means "watchtower" and suggests that after each decay God is gracious to make a new beginning. We must not stand by what has been removed, the flesh, otherwise we will slide back into its power. That is why Mizpa follows Gilgal. We must remain vigilant and sober, so that the enemy does not take us by surprise again. God offers a view – the function of a watchtower is to look forward – to a new beginning, a wonderful future. Mizpa teaches the believer to look forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus and to organize their lives accordingly.
4. "Rama" means 'height'. Samuel does not travel there, but lives there. It shows that it is about living on the spiritual heights we have in the letter to the Ephesians. In practice, it means that we keep seeking "the things above" (Col 3:1). To this place of residence, we must come after our journey along the previous places. It leads to a separated heavenly walk on earth, "for our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil 3:20).

In the place where he lives, he builds an altar. Samuel is also a real priest. He is not so busy with his service that he forgets his personal fellowship with God in worship and prayer and intercession. This spirit that works in the people of God can only be a blessing.

Service is important and necessary but is only fruitful if it comes from personal fellowship with God. Otherwise service in an activity of the flesh. In that case success is followed by pride and if success fails discouragement and abandonment will follow. It is to be desired that every servant of Christ has his 'altar' in connection with his work for God and His people.

1 Samuel 8

Introduction

Here begins a new phase in the book. After the priest Eli and the prophet Samuel, a new person comes on the stage: the king.

Verses 1-3 | The Sons of Samuel

1 And it came about when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons judges over Israel. 2 Now the name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; [they] were judging in Beersheba. 3 His sons, however, did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice.

Samuel has appointed his sons as judges and that is not right. Nowhere in Scripture does it appear that anyone becomes judge because his father is a judge. Judge becomes someone not by hereditary succession. A judge is given by God. Samuel appoints his sons when he is old. With this appointment he will certainly have had the interest of the people in mind. Yet his act is an independent one. Is God not able, just as He once did with Moses, to support him in his old age for his task, until God Himself has appointed a successor? We see Samuel act several times later. His age is therefore not such that he is incapable of serving and that therefore immediate follow-up seems necessary.

Our concern for the future of God's people can also easily lead us to wrong acting. Maybe, however well-meaning we may be, we want to arrange things in the church according to our insight. However, our arrangement ensures that for the next generation we will eliminate the trust in the Lord. The hand of the creature does not need to grab the ark to prevent it from falling (2Sam 6:6-7), for God is mighty to take care of that himself.

"Joel" means "the LORD is God" and "Abiah" means "my father is the LORD". These names show what Samuel and his wife wanted for these sons. They hoped that their lives would bear witness to what their name

means. It is possible that Samuel had this in mind when he made his two sons judges in Berseba to judge there.

Berseba is situated in the south (1Sam 3:20), far away from the places where he exercises his service as a judge and prophet. That means that they are judge in a limited area and not over the whole people. Most Israelites have nothing to do with them at all. Normally the behavior of Samuel's sons would not interest them either, but now they can use it to motivate their own carnal desires.

It seems Samuel has overlooked the fact that the office of judge is not an office that can be transferred from father to son. Something else seems to have escaped Samuel's attention and that is that his sons cannot cope with this task. He does not see the faults of his sons, while the people have an eye for it. In it he is reminiscent of Eli and his sons.

We should not compare Samuel's mistakes with the mistakes Eli made with his two sons. Because of what Eli did, the priesthood failed completely. However, this does not alter the fact that the prophet Samuel also makes such a mistake. He too does not see the mistakes of his sons. There is always the danger that we will easily perceive the mistakes of others, while equally easily overlooking the mistakes of our own children.

We may wonder why such a God-fearing father has such bad sons. Could that be because of his many trips and therefore his long absence? God's Word does not express itself about it. We find more often, both in Scripture and in daily life, that God-fearing parents have children who do not follow in the footsteps of their parents' faith. It is not always clear why. In any case, let us be cautious in criticizing the education.

The sins of Samuel's sons are threefold.

1. They turn aside after dishonest gain. God's Word warns those who care for God's people not to seek financial gain (1Pet 5:2).
2. They take bribes. As a result, their jurisdiction does not become a fair one. The best-paying or most bidding person is found to be in the right.
3. As a result of the two preceding points, they pervert justice.

By this practice they show the features of an ungodly man (Pro 17:23; Exo 23:6,8; Deu 16:18-20).

Verses 4-5 | The People Want a King

4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah;
5 and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations."

The desire to have a king is expressed by "all the elders of Israel". The leaders, the fathers of the people, lead the people. Wisdom is not always to be found with the older, as Elihu says: "The abundant [in years] may not be wise, Nor may elders understand justice" (Job 32:9). It is a general wish. In the wickedness of Samuel's sons, the people found an excuse to desire a king. To give a reason for their desire for a king, the people misused Samuel's mistake in the appraisal of his sons. It is proof that they are blind to their own failure and to the fact that a king will not do better. In verse 7 the LORD says what the real reason is, and this is that they no longer want to listen to *Him*.

This is also the real reason for introducing all kinds of offices into Christianity. Religious man wants visible dominion. The invisible guidance of the Holy Spirit does not meet the wishes of man. Man must be able to point to a qualified pastor or a pope with his staff. The church must learn from business. The church has become a business that has to be run. There is a product that needs to be sold.

Things must be recognizable to all people, to believers and unbelievers. The unseen God is too far away and must be brought closer, made tangible, perceptible to man's senses. You must be able to smell, hear, see, and experience Him.

The elders substantiate their request for a king with two arguments. The first is that Samuel is old, and the second is that his sons are bad. If these were real arguments, they should have complained earlier about Eli's age, who was much older, and about the behavior of his sons, who were much worse. We do not hear that they have ever complained about that. That is why they are utility arguments. If you want something, you will always find a reason.

It has been calculated that Samuel must have been here between sixty and seventy years old. Then you are at an advanced age, but not really old. There is no evidence that he became forgetful or began to show other signs

of old age. He was still powerful. This becomes clear when he later chops Agag with the sword in pieces (1Sam 15:33). There is a third reason why the people want a king. That will come to light later (1Sam 12:12).

The desire to have a king is not wrong in itself. God wants to give His people a king, they may even ask for it (Deu 17:14-20). But the people want one according to their own taste, to be able to compete with the nations. They do not want a king who reveals to them the will of God and rules according to His will. Nor do they want to wait for God's time and God's choice. They want a king and they want him now. Therefore their question here is wrong and not according to God's will. It is not only about what one asks, but with what purpose and in what mind. They want something visible, something for which they can prostrate.

Their desire stems from what they see in the nations around them. They want to be "just like all the nations". They have a king, so they also want a king. This word must have been particularly painful for the LORD because He separated them from all the other nations to be His people, a people that proclaims His excellencies. It is their fame that they are not like the other nations (Num 23:9).

Verses 6-8 | Samuel Must Listen to the People

6 But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD. 7 The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them. 8 Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day—in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also.

The LORD's answer in verse 7 gives reason to think that Samuel's personal feelings have been hurt and that he does not like the people's request. Yet that is only a guess. If there is any hurt at all, Samuel does not allow himself to be led by it. He brings these things to the LORD. Samuel's reaction is prayer. This may be the reaction for every disappointment that can happen to someone in life. He is the spiritual leader and is put aside, but he does not complain or sue the people – unlike Elijah (Rom 11:2b).

He does not feel offended either. A man with his spirit and mind can bear that. He has never sought himself. He has not claimed his position either. It is the position the LORD has given him. He did not suddenly appear as a prophet but grew in this position. Everyone has been able to observe his whole life. He also did not use the death of Eli and his sons to become the leader of the people. He has always waited for God's time and God's command. That the people reject this man is not to be excused.

The LORD soothes Samuel's displeased feelings by reminding him of the people's continued ingratitude to Him Himself. God therefore tells Samuel that by asking for a king as all nations, the people in fact reject Him as their King. God is wronged more by His people than they wrong Samuel. This answer of the LORD is also an encouragement for Samuel in case he should wonder if they reject him because he somehow failed. The spiritual minded person will first examine himself in such situations.

Samuel must listen to the voice of the people. He must show them what they ask, although they do not ask in accordance with God's will. They need to learn what it is like to have a king to their own taste. Only when they have experienced this, God gives them the king to His heart. In the book of Hosea God comes back to their request here. There we hear that God has given them a king in His anger (Hos 13:10-11).

Listening to the voice of the people is democracy. We find this in politics and in the church. Nothing is more unclear and fickle than the will of the people (cf. Acts 19:32; Lk 23:23). If man absolutely wants something, God sometimes gives what he demands (Psa 106:15; 78:26-31). Sometimes God withholds something in His love and sometimes He gives us something in His anger.

God tells how the people constantly rejected Him. Samuel is now gaining the same experience. The rebellion of the people has also proved itself in more than one occasion towards Moses and Aaron. The desire to have a king is the lowest point of centuries of dissatisfaction with the place where grace has brought them. In His grace God connects Samuel to Himself and lets him share in the reproach that the people have done to Him over and over again (cf. Mt 10:24; Jn 15:18,20). Paul longed for such conformity to Christ (Phil 3:10-11).

Verses 9-18 | The Conduct of the King

9 Now then, listen to their voice; however, you shall solemnly warn them and tell them of the procedure of the king who will reign over them." 10 So Samuel spoke all the words of the LORD to the people who had asked of him a king. 11 He said, "This will be the procedure of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and place [them] for himself in his chariots and among his horsemen and they will run before his chariots. 12 He will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and of fifties, and [some] to do his plowing and to reap his harvest and to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. 13 He will also take your daughters for perfumers and cooks and bakers. 14 He will take the best of your fields and your vineyards and your olive groves and give [them] to his servants. 15 He will take a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards and give to his officers and to his servants. 16 He will also take your male servants and your female servants and your best young men and your donkeys and use [them] for his work. 17 He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his servants. 18 Then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day."

God wants Samuel to present to the people the full responsibility of what they desire. He did the same at the Sinai, when the people said they would do everything He would ask. In response He has given His people the law. As a faithful and obedient prophet Samuel transmits all the words of the LORD to the people. He proposes to the people, what the king they desire, will ask of them, what they will have to give to him. How else could the splendor of the kingship they desire be preserved? In the days of Israel's greatest prosperity, the burdens become unbearable, so that we hear them say to Solomon's son: "Your father made our yoke hard" (1Kgs 12:4).

Their king will ask all of them, he will take from them. They will lose their personal freedom and will no longer possess their goods or their children. Taking the fields and so on means that he will claim the income from them. The land remains in the possession of the inhabitants. We see that as Ahab wants to have the vineyard of Naboth (1Kgs 21:2-3). Their sons and daughters will serve him. All kinds of burdens will be imposed on the people. They will only have duties and no rights. And what will the first king do with all that the people had to give him? He uses everything against the man to God's heart. Saul is anything but the king God wants to give.

Six- or seven-times Samuel tells them that their king will “take”. This is a great contrast to *Gods* king, who will give them everything for their well-being. When the Lord Jesus has satiated a crowd, it is not surprising that they want to make Him king (Jn 6:15a). This is a blessing for man after centuries of living under royal greed and oppression. In Christ he found Someone Who does not take but gives. However, Christ does not want to receive the kingship from the hands of men or from the hand of Satan. He takes it only from the hand of God. When that moment comes, the long-time of prosperity and peace will begin.

Samuel also tells them how they will wail over their king. Not much later will they say that they have sinned by coveting a king (1Sam 12:19). Then it is too late, and they must continue with the king they have coveted. In Christianity it has been the same. They have chosen themselves leaders, people who speak what they like to hear. With this, God has been put aside, that He will not have the say. This choice will find its lowest point in the antichrist. Saul is a picture of the antichrist who persecutes the man of God, David.

God gives leaders, pastors in the church (Heb 13:17; Heb 13:7). We must acknowledge them (1Thes 5:12-13a) and be grateful for them. Whoever raises himself to this task or functions according to human choice will in many cases be a plague for God’s people. The pope is such a leader, but also many humanly appointed pastors. God can give a certain blessing through such people, for example as a dam against evil. Yet that is no justification whatsoever for the position of these people.

Christianity is not satisfied with the invisible guidance of God through the Holy Spirit. God can bless through things that completely contradict Him. It is sad that the prophet Samuel is being replaced by Saul because of the choice of the people. Do we want only those leaders who have been given to us by God or do we make leaders ourselves?

Verses 19-20 | The People Stick to Their Choice

19 Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, “No, but there shall be a king over us, 20 that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.”

The people stick to their choice and express themselves more strongly. What started with a request (verse 5) has now become a demand. They feel safer towards a visible enemy with a visible leader than with an invisible leader. Saul has not been able to work this safety. He himself becomes a victim of the enemy he must fight. No judge has ever been killed in the fight against the enemy he has to fight.

Verses 21-22 | The Choice of the People Is Confirmed

21 Now after Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the LORD's hearing. 22 The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to their voice and appoint them a king." So Samuel said to the men of Israel, "Go every man to his city."

Samuel goes again with everything he hears from the people to the LORD. Later Hezekiah does something similar with letters from the king of Assyria, about which he also speaks with the LORD and spreads them out for Him (Isa 37:14). Samuel does not speak like Moses of "rebels" (Num 20:10) but remains gentle.

The LORD answers Samuel for the third time that he must listen to the people (verses 7,9,22). It seems to indicate that Samuel has great difficulty to do the will of the people. Samuel then sends the people home without a word of accusation. The matter has been settled so far that Samuel is from now on waiting for the LORD.

1 Samuel 9

Verses 1-2 | Saul, His Origin and His Stature

1 Now there was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Becorath, the son of Aphiah, the son of a Benjamite, a mighty man of valor. 2 He had a son whose name was Saul, a choice and handsome [man], and there was not a more handsome person than he among the sons of Israel; from his shoulders and up he was taller than any of the people.

Saul comes from the tribe of Benjamin. From this tribe also comes the New Testament Saul or Paul (Phil 3:5). They bear the same name but are further in many things the opposite of each other. The first Saul is the choice of the people, the second Saul is God's choice. The name Benjamin means 'son of my right hand'. The exercise of judgement is associated with that name (Gen 49:27). Benjamin is by birth from the same mother connected to Joseph, the suffering son. However, Saul does not know about Joseph. Like a hard Benjamite he only knows the judgment.

Saul's ancestry is given in five generations. "Saul" means 'asked' or 'coveted'. He represents the desire of the people for a king and is the ideal of it. "Kish" means 'entangling', that is what the nature of a human being does. "Abiel" means 'my father is God', this is a confession, which in the case of Saul is only a lip confession.

His origin is impressive. His father is a wealthy man. Saul himself also makes great impression: choice, handsome, strong. God's Spirit notes that no one among the Israelites is more handsome than he. God knows exactly what corresponds to the taste of the people. If there had been other candidates and an election had been held, the whole people would have elected him.

In his work, we also see non-external characteristics come forward at the beginning of his performance, which appear sympathetic to the human eye. Thus he speaks modestly and there is affection for his father. His father also cares about him, as appears from verse 5. It shows that the family relationship is good. We also see that he treats his servant with respect.

If we compare Saul with Samuel and we do so with the eyes of the people, we can conclude that Saul is the right choice. The appearance of Samuel will have been will scantily in the light of the great shape of Saul. Nor are the relationships in Samuel's family the same as they seem to be at Saul's home. Samuel is old, at least in the eyes of the people, and Saul is young. For those who only look at the appearance, there is no need to think long about who they will choose. In the whole appearance of Saul there is everything that meets the taste of man.

Let us not be too harsh on the people. If we are honest, it is often difficult for us not to look at people. Even Samuel falls a little later in that error and must be corrected by the LORD (1Sam 16:6-7).

Verses 3-5 | Saul Seeks Donkeys

3 Now the donkeys of Kish, Saul's father, were lost. So Kish said to his son Saul, "Take now with you one of the servants, and arise, go search for the donkeys." 4 He passed through the hill country of Ephraim and passed through the land of Shalishah, but they did not find [them]. Then they passed through the land of Shaalim, but [they were] not [there]. Then he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they did not find [them]. 5 When they came to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant who was with him, "Come, and let us return, or else my father will cease [to be concerned] about the donkeys and will become anxious for us."

The history of Saul begins with donkeys. Later we see that David's history starts with sheep. Saul does not feed the donkeys; he has lost them, and he cannot find them after his search. David goes after the lost sheep, finds it, and brings it back. He also delivers it from the mouth of the lion and the bear at the risk of his own life. Here we immediately see the distinction between the ruler according to the wishes of man and the one according to God's heart.

The donkey is an unclean animal. A person is compared with an unclean donkey (Exo 13:13). Man and donkey are on the same level (cf. Job 11:12). Man is a wild donkey that has run away from God. Who could think that a search for lost donkeys would bring Saul into connection with Samuel, yes, with the throne of Israel?

Verses 6-8 | Proposal to Ask Samuel for Advice

6 He said to him, "Behold now, there is a man of God in this city, and the man is held in honor; all that he says surely comes true. Now let us go there, perhaps he can tell us about our journey on which we have set out." 7 Then Saul said to his servant, "But behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? For the bread is gone from our sack and there is no present to bring to the man of God. What do we have?" 8 The servant answered Saul again and said, "Behold, I have in my hand a fourth of a shekel of silver; I will give [it] to the man of God and he will tell us our way."

This chapter is full of details about Saul. In his long and fruitless search, the Holy Spirit shows what kind of a man Saul is. He is a man full of inability, but also full of unfamiliarity with the things of God. Not Saul, but his servant noticed that they are near a man of God and suggests the idea of visiting him. The servant takes the initiative. He knows of the man of God and gives a good testimony of him, of his honor among the people and of the trustworthiness of his words. Samuel is really a "letter, ... known and read by all men" (2Cor 3:2), but apparently not by Saul.

Saul does not seem to know about Samuel's existence. That sheds a questionable light on his mindset. It seems that he has never heard of Samuel, or at least has shown no interest at all. Saul does not know the universally known prophet, while Samuel lives not far from him, about forty kilometers.

On all his tours Samuel never visited the estate of Saul's father and never enjoyed hospitality there. Saul will not have left the farm for the first time but will have had contacts somewhere more often. The subject of conversation may have been Samuel. His servant knows quite a bit about it. But in the whole history of Saul we see nowhere that he has a personal relationship with the LORD.

Saul also depends on his servant for the development of the proposal, while he should lead his servant. He does not lead but is led. He believes that a service of the prophet of God should be paid for. The poor, ignorant man is not able to rise above the idea of payment. An appeal to mercy is unknown to him. The flesh has no understanding of God as Giver.

Verse 9 | Prophet and Seer

9 (Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he used to say, "Come, and let us go to the seer"; for [he who is called] a prophet now was formerly called a seer.)

Suddenly, as it seems, the writer says something about the difference between a prophet and a seer. The word "seer" appears here for the first time in the Bible. The difference between a prophet and a seer is that a prophet sends a message from God to the people, while a seer sees what other people do not see. A seer has insight into God's thoughts, he receives revelations, even in cases as earthly as lost donkeys. A seer communicates what he sees (cf. Eze 13:3).

A seer is always a prophet, but a prophet is not always a seer. With "seer" the emphasis is more on the result, with "prophet" more on the source. Samuel is both. Saul and his servant ask for the seer (verse 11). They are more interested in the result than in what God thinks of it.

Opposite the seer is the blind Saul. When we see the Lord Jesus in glory (Heb 2:9), we have something to communicate. If we are "seers" in this respect, we can also be "prophets". If we are blind to the glory of the Lord Jesus, we cannot pass on anything about Him.

Verses 10-14 | Girls Show Saul the Way

10 Then Saul said to his servant, "Well said; come, let us go." So they went to the city where the man of God was. 11 As they went up the slope to the city, they found young women going out to draw water and said to them, "Is the seer here?" 12 They answered them and said, "He is; see, [he is] ahead of you. Hurry now, for he has come into the city today, for the people have a sacrifice on the high place today. 13 As soon as you enter the city you will find him before he goes up to the high place to eat, for the people will not eat until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterward those who are invited will eat. Now therefore, go up for you will find him at once." 14 So they went up to the city. As they came into the city, behold, Samuel was coming out toward them to go up to the high place.

Saul is convinced by his servant. They go on their way to the city where Samuel is. To get to the city they must climb a hill. We can see in it the symbol that Saul must reach a certain spiritual height to receive certain revelations.

To find the way to Samuel, Saul again depends on others, this time on girls they meet on the way. In a spiritual sense it appears that he does not know the way to God's Word, represented in Samuel. The girls know where Samuel is and what he is going to do. They tell about it with enthusiasm.

The girls are on their way to draw water. That speaks of getting refreshment from the Word as the preparation to testify of the man of God. They are familiar with the source and the sacrifice, about which they also tell. Girls represent weakness, humility and dependence, the right characteristics to be able to draw from the source. Thus can young believers, men and women, if they are dependent on the Lord, be used by Him to testify of Him through what they have drawn from God's Word (2Kgs 5:2-3).

Saul and his servant follow the instructions of the girls. Then the meeting takes place between the future king and the prophet. This meeting takes place at the very moment that a public sacrifice is being held. That is no coincidence. It indicates that the basis of government is sacrifice. What is known for the whole city, turns out to be unknown for Saul. It seems as if he is hearing of the sacrifice for the first time.

Verses 15-17 | Samuel Is Informed About Saul

15 Now a day before Saul's coming, the LORD had revealed [this] to Samuel saying, 16 "About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over My people Israel; and he will deliver My people from the hand of the Philistines. For I have regarded My people, because their cry has come to Me." 17 When Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, "Behold, the man of whom I spoke to you! This one shall rule over My people."

The meeting with Saul is no surprise for Samuel. The LORD has informed him of this meeting. He has "revealed to Samuel's ear", as it is literally written. So Samuel also spoke "in the LORD's hearing" (1Sam 8:21). The Hebrew expression reads: He discovered Samuel's ear, that is: He took off the cover. This is the way God reveals Himself to us. He does not speak only, but discovers our ear, He opens our ear. If God wants to reveal Himself to a soul, He discovers the ear by saying: ""Ephphatha!" that is, "Be opened!" (Mk 7:34).

The LORD always holds the matter in his hand. He directs meetings and determines the path along which they take place (Psa 139:2). He leads His own in that way and makes clear to them what they should do (Acts 10:19-20). He also sends the unbelievers into a way where they encounter His Word, like here Saul.

Samuel had to listen to the voice of the people, but God directs it so that the people will learn from their own choice. He knows His people and therefore knows exactly which man suits them best. God's hand is in the choice of Saul, whom He also means as the answer to the call of His people for help. He knows the cause of their appeal for help, that it is not because of the need of their sins, but because they want to be like the nations. Yet we read in these verses four times that the LORD speaks of "My people".

When Samuel sees Saul, the LORD confirms the word that he has spoken. He tells Samuel that this is the man he has spoken about. It may be that the LORD gives this confirmation to Samuel because there is a question in his heart if this is the man he means. The Lord sees all the unspoken questions, and He answers them.

Verses 18-19 | Saul Meets Samuel

18 Then Saul approached Samuel in the gate and said, "Please tell me where the seer's house is." 19 Samuel answered Saul and said, "I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today; and in the morning I will let you go, and will tell you all that is on your mind.

When Saul stands for Samuel, it turns out that he does not know Samuel. Because Samuel was informed by the LORD of the coming of Saul, he also knows what to say to Saul. He can tell Saul what lives in his mind, what will happen to him, and what he should do. To this end, he invites Saul to go for him to the heights and eat with him. The height is the right place and the meal the right occupation to communicate these things to Saul.

Verses 20-21 | The Amazement of Saul

20 As for your donkeys which were lost three days ago, do not set your mind on them, for they have been found. And for whom is all that is desirable in Israel? Is it not for you and for all your father's household?" 21 Saul replied,

“Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak to me in this way?”

Before Saul can ask his question about the lost donkeys, Samuel tells him they have been found. Samuel knows not only that the donkeys were lost and have been found now, but also how long they have been looking for them. But, Samuel adds, what do some donkeys mean to a future king who will have at his disposal all that is desirable in Israel? As king he will take it, as Samuel told the people in the previous chapter.

“That is desirable in Israel” can also refer to Saul himself. In Saul everything that Israel considers desirable takes shape. He answers to everything they desire. This is the man who provides what they imagine to be a king. Saul is in this a great contrast to the Lord Jesus. When the Lord Jesus comes, there is nothing desirable in Him for the unbelieving people (Isa 53:2).

Saul must have noticed something of the special content of what Samuel says. That is clear from his answer. Why these honors to someone like him who comes from the least family of Benjamin? We do not know what he has been thinking in his heart. It is one thing to think small of yourself compared to others, it is something else to take your true place in the presence of God. Humility in comparison with others can be something you are forced to do. Sometimes you can only honestly admit that you are not as big as the other, but that does not prove that you are convinced of your own failure against God.

Verses 22-27 | Samuel Eats and Speaks With Saul

22 Then Samuel took Saul and his servant and brought them into the hall and gave them a place at the head of those who were invited, who were about thirty men. 23 Samuel said to the cook, “Bring the portion that I gave you, concerning which I said to you, ‘Set it aside.’” 24 Then the cook took up the leg with what was on it and set [it] before Saul. And [Samuel] said, “Here is what has been reserved! Set [it] before you [and] eat, because it has been kept for you until the appointed time, since I said I have invited the people.” So Saul ate with Samuel that day. 25 When they came down from the high place into the city, [Samuel] spoke with Saul on the roof. 26 And they arose early; and at

daybreak Samuel called to Saul on the roof, saying, "Get up, that I may send you away." So Saul arose, and both he and Samuel went out into the street. 27 As they were going down to the edge of the city, Samuel said to Saul, "Say to the servant that he might go ahead of us and pass on, but you remain standing now, that I may proclaim the word of God to you."

To Saul's question "Why then do you speak to me in this way?", Samuel answers in the form of a sacrificial meal, with guests also present. Saul and his servant get the places of honor. Samuel has the sacrifice ready. As soon as he has received the communication of Saul's coming from the LORD, he has prepared for the reception of Saul, a reception based on the sacrifice.

If Saul had known the meaning of the sacrifices, it would have spoken to his heart. The breast of the sacrifice is not mentioned, there is nothing to see of it. There is only leg. The leg speaks of strength, the breast speaks of love. Saul receives what is left of the sacrifice, the remainder, but the most essential is missing. There is power in Saul, but no love.

We do not know the subject of the conversation between Samuel and Saul. The conversation took place on the roof. The flat roofs are used as places to retreat for a conversation. Therefore there must also be a fence on the roof (Deu 22:8). Saul seems to have spent the night on the roof.

When the night is over, the morning of the anointing has come. A new day, a new period, is dawning for Israel. The question is whether it will be a beautiful day. Samuel orders Saul to get up. He wants to proclaim to Saul the Word of God. It is one of the last acts of Samuel. The time of his stepping back is coming. He does not complain, but faithfully does to the end what the LORD tells him.

Samuel commands Saul to listen to God's Word. This should prepare Saul for the fact that the meetings Samuel is going to predict are not random encounters, but that they have a meaning. They are signs. The signs are not explained what to Saul means he must turn to the LORD for their meaning.

1 Samuel 10

Introduction

This chapter has two parts. Both parts deal with the designation of Saul as king. We see how God is very busy with Saul throughout the preparation for this.

In the first part (verses 1-16) Saul is prepared for kingship in secret by Samuel, that is, by God, while no man in Israel yet knows of his kingship. Saul was not rejected by God from the beginning. God has prepared him in such a way that Saul has every opportunity to get to know God and know how to govern. This preparation is also important for every believer because the Lord has a service, a task, for every believer.

In the second part (verses 17-27) Saul is openly appointed. It is not Samuel who appoints him so that it does not seem that he is behind the appointment, but God appoints him. God does so in a way that the people can attribute the choice of Saul to none but themselves.

Verse 1 | Saul Anointed King

1 Then Samuel took the flask of oil, poured it on his head, kissed him and said, "Has not the LORD anointed you a ruler over His inheritance?"

Saul is anointed from a flask, David from a horn (1Sam 16:13). A flask is fragile. It is here a symbol of the kingship of Saul that is nothing more than human work and will finally be broken. Oil speaks of the Holy Spirit. God indicates that He wants to use Saul, but that Saul must let himself be guided by the Holy Spirit. Later Saul is also led by the Spirit, but only externally (verse 10). The horn from which David is anointed is not fragile but speaks of strength (1Sam 2:10). The horn comes from a clean animal that was first sacrificed to God, and therein lies the power. Exercise of the kingship can only take place based on the sacrifice.

There is no jealousy with Samuel (cf. 1Cor 13:4b), but respect. He submits to the new king with a kiss of love. He does not do so in public, but in this personal conversation, as an expression of his heart. He was the first to

recognize Saul as his new king from that moment on. Here we see a love that “does not seek its own” (1Cor 13:5b; cf. 1Cor 10:24). In a world full of selfishness, the joy of another person’s prosperity, for example the promotion of a colleague, is rare.

Samuel acts in the Name of the LORD and anoints Saul king over the “inheritance” of the LORD, that is His land. That means a great responsibility. He must protect that inheritance, take care of it, manage it for the LORD and render account to Him.

Verse 2 | The Sign at the Tomb of Rachel

2 When you go from me today, then you will find two men close to Rachel’s tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say to you, ‘The donkeys which you went to look for have been found. Now behold, your father has ceased to be concerned about the donkeys and is anxious for you, saying, “What shall I do about my son?”’

The three events that Samuel then predicts are three signs (verse 9). It is much more than fortuitous events. These are events with a meaning attached to them, from which Saul must learn something. A certain place or location is linked to each event. We can call these places ‘memorial places’. Such places play a decisive role in the life of the believer because he learns important things there. Every servant is shaped thereby.

The first memorial place is “Rachel’s tomb” at Zelzah. There Saul will meet two men. Rachel’s grave determines us with Rachel as Saul’s ancestor and her death. Rachel dies when she gives birth to Benjamin (Gen 35:16-19), from whom Saul is a descendent. Benjamin was born out of the need of his mother, to the joy of his father. Samuel also says that Rachel’s tomb is in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah. Benjamin’s heritage finds its beginning in the tomb of Rachel. “Zelzah” means “protection against the sun”.

Any true service can only begin well and continue well if we consider ourselves to be dead to sin (Rom 6:11). This provides protection against the heat of the desire to shine ourselves. This makes room for the true life, the life of God, to reveal it.

All good for God comes from death, for by this the new can reveal itself and the old can be forgotten. The communication of the donkeys connects

to this. It is not necessary to think of the past, because the earlier efforts have proved fruitless. We learn this at the tomb, the place of death. The man who has worked in vain in his search for the donkeys, must also learn that everything has already been accomplished without him. "Two men" tell him that. This indicates a reliable, credible testimony, for "every fact is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses" (2Cor 13:1).

Verses 3-4 | The Sign at the Oak of Tabor

3 Then you will go on further from there, and you will come as far as the oak of Tabor, and there three men going up to God at Bethel will meet you, one carrying three young goats, another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a jug of wine; 4 and they will greet you and give you two [loaves] of bread, which you will accept from their hand.

The first sign is for Saul personally. The second sign shows Saul that there are people in Israel who want to serve the LORD in faithfulness. Three faithful men are on their way to God to visit Him in His own house. "Bethel" means "house of God". These men are a remnant in which faith is present and they are proof that God is still working in Israel. If Saul has an eye for it, he will discover it and be encouraged by it.

The three men do not just go to Bethel, but really to meet God. It says of them that they are "going up to God". Is that the reason for us to go to "God's house", to the meetings of the church, of which we may know that the Lord Jesus is in the midst (Mt 18:20)?

Saul's meeting with these three men takes place at "the oak of Tabor". The oak is a symbol of strength and durability. An oak can grow very tall and old and is very shady. "Tabor" means 'height'. After Rachel's death and the tomb near Zelzah, the oak of Tabor speaks of the power of spiritual life that is experienced in the knowledge of fellowship with God and with others.

After seeing our own weakness, we must learn where to find God's power. Living in fellowship with others gives strength. This happens in the "household of God, which is the church of the living God" (1Tim 3:15). After the personal lesson in the previous sign, we must then see that we are not alone. God we can find in His house. In practice, this is in the church, as it meets locally (1Cor 1:2).

The three men also have something with them. They have three young goats, which is one for each. A goat is the animal that is mainly used as a sin offering. This teaches us that we come to God in the awareness of who we are by nature, but that God can accept us on the basis of the work that the Lord Jesus has done as the true sin offering for our sins. They also each have a loaf of bread with them. They can share this bread with others, what they do in the next verse. One jug of wine can be brought as drink offering.

It speaks of us taking spiritual food with us when we go to the meeting of the church to share it with others. Together we can offer our gratitude and joy, of which the wine speaks, to God. All based on the sin offering.

Samuel also says that these men, without them knowing Saul, will ask him about his welfare and give him two loaves of bread. He can use the bread on his further journey. They go to Bethel to give the sacrifice to the priest. It is as if they invite Saul to go with them. It is important to get to know priestly service. There is no goat for Saul. He does not ask for it either.

A few verses further on Saul meets prophets in a way that even is asked whether Saul is among the prophets. Still later he becomes king. We see God connecting Saul with the priesthood, prophecy service, and kingship. But what impact does that have on his life? He will only act as king. To what extent he is king according to God's thoughts without knowing anything of divine service and true prophetic service, his history will show.

Verses 5-6 | The Sign on the Hill of God

5 Afterward you will come to the hill of God where the Philistine garrison is; and it shall be as soon as you have come there to the city, that you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, and a lyre before them, and they will be prophesying. 6 Then the Spirit of the LORD will come upon you mightily, and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man.

After the meeting with the *two* men in Zelzah and the *three* men at Tabor, Samuel says that Saul will meet a *group* of prophets. This will happen at "the hill of God". There is the "Philistines garrison". When he is there, he is almost home, because it is near his house (verse 26). After the presence

of God in Bethel, Saul now comes into the presence of the enemy. There he also receives important education.

On the hill of God lies a city that is not occupied by the Philistines, but where they do have a garrison. Where the glory of God must be seen, the power of the enemy is seen. The sign Saul receives here is so much to say that, to drive out the enemy, he will receive the Spirit of God. After teaching about self-judgment at the tomb and encouragement in connection with the house of God, Saul is taught in this sign the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is accompanied by music, with expressions of joy that people may experience in the presence of God, in the face of the enemy.

The fact that Saul is seized by the Spirit does not mean that he has been born again or that he is being born again at this moment. Even unbelievers can be seized by the Spirit on occasion by the sovereign power of God. We see this with the unbelieving high priest Caiaphas (Jn 11:51) and the unbelieving Balaam (Num 24:2). Unbelievers who participate fully in a church, are during their stay in this Christian fellowship where the Spirit works "partakers of the Holy Spirit" (Heb 6:4b).

In such cases, however, there is no question of the indwelling of the Spirit in the person. The change of Saul "into another man" has only to with the outward. Also the change of his inner self is only a change of feeling. There is no question of conversion. He will reveal himself as a stubborn enemy of God's anointed king (David) and die in complete darkness.

Verse 7 | God Wants to Be With Saul

7 It shall be when these signs come to you, do for yourself what the occasion requires, for God is with you.

Throughout Saul's preparation for the kingship, God made it clear that He was on his side. Saul was not rejected from the outset, nor was Israel rejected from the outset. Only when the people, despite all the admonitions of God, have shown their obstinate refusal to serve Him, does He reject them, and send them into exile.

After God, through all these signs, has shown Saul that he is under His special guidance, God gives him the extra assurance that he does not have

to be afraid to do what the occasion requires. The first thing what the occasion requires is the battle in the next chapter.

All these signs are meant to make him think about his life and the task God has for him. He must have had the impression that Samuel is a man of God who has spoken what God has put in his mouth. If everything happens exactly as Samuel predicted, it should certainly have made him realize that God wants to use him. Asking for the meaning of events and parables reveals the true disciple (Mk 4:10-12).

What happens to Saul shows that God tells us to use our sanctified, sober mind. First, He shows us that our lives are completely open to Him. The events are announced. But He leaves the reaction to this to us. It is like with Peter once he's delivered from prison. He then consults with himself what he will do (Acts 12:11-12). One of the most Divine abilities we have is to form judgment after deliberating for and against. That is something else than the reliance on signs.

Verse 8 | Saul Must Go to Gilgal and Wait There

8 And you shall go down before me to Gilgal; and behold, I will come down to you to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice peace offerings. You shall wait seven days until I come to you and show you what you should do."

After the prophecy of the signs Samuel orders Saul to go to Gilgal and wait for him there. Gilgal is the place where the circumcision took place (Jos 5:2-9). Circumcision is a picture of the judgment of the flesh of the believer that Christ underwent on the cross (Col 2:11). With this assignment Samuel ensures that he stays in touch with Saul. This instruction must give Saul the constant awareness that he must act only according to God's Word, of which Samuel is the personification. The assignment is an exercise in patience. How Saul deals with this is described in 1 Samuel 13.

Verses 9-12 | The Signs Happen

9 Then it happened when he turned his back to leave Samuel, God changed his heart; and all those signs came about on that day. 10 When they came to the hill there, behold, a group of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him mightily, so that he prophesied among them. 11 It came about, when all who knew him previously saw that he prophesied now with the prophets,

that the people said to one another, "What has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" 12 A man there said, "Now, who is their father?" Therefore it became a proverb: "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

When Saul leaves Samuel, God gives him another heart. This does not mean that He gives Saul new life, but He gives him the inner ability or wisdom to govern His people and make good decisions. It connects to verse 6 where Samuel tells Saul that the Spirit of the LORD will become mightily upon him, transforming him into another man. The farmer's son will become aware of his royal dignity. This will be visible to him and will be evident from his deeds.

This shows that God makes everything available to Saul to make him competent for his task. However, they are only external characteristics, without any new life. New life is only given if there is repentance of sins and conversion to God with confession of sins. That never happened with Saul.

All signs happen as was said to Saul. To the third sign the Holy Spirit goes into more detail because of the particularities associated with it. It becomes clear that spiritual manifestations are a completely strange thing for Saul. Others observe that he behaves 'spiritually' and mock his attitude. What they see now is amazing for them. They do not know Saul like that. Saul is therefore only a prophet outwardly; he behaves like a prophet among them. His life they have seen so far has nothing in common with that of the pupils of the prophets.

It is clear that Saul is not characterized by any fear of God or faith in Him, but God's Spirit shows what Saul should have been. To be king according to God's heart, the guidance of God's Spirit is needed. It is not about a new attitude, but about new life through new birth.

"A man there" (verse 12) is someone from Gibeon or someone from the crowd standing around the prophets. The question "who is their father?" – and not 'who is their president or chairman?' – may mean a question about their ancestry, how they should be seen. This question can also mean: 'Is their father also a prophet?' i.e. 'Do they have the prophetic spirit by virtue of their birth? When "father" means the head or leader of the prophets (cf. 1Chr 25:6; 2Kgs 2:12), the question means: "What kind of leader do they have that they allow a person like Saul into their company?"

The proverb says a lot about Saul. The proverb is used to describe a totally unexpected and inexplicable phenomenon. It expresses the amazement about a person who appears in an atmosphere of life in which he has until then been completely strange, in which he has never shown himself.

Verses 13-16 | The Uncle of Saul

13 When he had finished prophesying, he came to the high place. 14 Now Saul's uncle said to him and his servant, "Where did you go?" And he said, "To look for the donkeys. When we saw that they could not be found, we went to Samuel." 15 Saul's uncle said, "Please tell me what Samuel said to you." 16 So Saul said to his uncle, "He told us plainly that the donkeys had been found." But he did not tell him about the matter of the kingdom which Samuel had mentioned.

Saul finishes prophesying. He also leaves the company of the prophets. He has been under the spell of it for a while, but the result is not permanent. His life continues on the same footing as before. He comes to his uncle, who asks where they have been. Saul answers. The fact that he was with Samuel is reason for his uncle to ask further questions. Did he feel something of what is going to happen to Saul?

Saul does not tell untruths in his answer, but he is not complete. He is holding something back. Saul is silent about the kingship. The reason for this is not mentioned. We can interpret this positively and attribute it to Saul's humble attitude. We can also interpret it negatively, as a desire for power and fame which he does not yet want to tell about, because he does not yet consider the time has come.

Verses 17-24 | Saul Presented as King

17 Thereafter Samuel called the people together to the LORD at Mizpah; 18 and he said to the sons of Israel, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'I brought Israel up from Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the power of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.' 19 But you have today rejected your God, who delivers you from all your calamities and your distresses; yet you have said, 'No, but set a king over us!' Now therefore, present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your clans." 20 Thus Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. 21 Then he brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its families,

and the Matrite family was taken. And Saul the son of Kish was taken; but when they looked for him, he could not be found. 22 Therefore they inquired further of the LORD, "Has the man come here yet?" So the LORD said, "Behold, he is hiding himself by the baggage." 23 So they ran and took him from there, and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. 24 Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? Surely there is no one like him among all the people." So all the people shouted and said, "[Long] live the king!"

After God's private actions with Saul in secret, Saul is now introduced to the people. Samuel therefore calls upon the people to come to the LORD at Mizpah. The people are placed in the presence of God. Samuel acts as the representative of the LORD. He reminds the people once again of Who God is and what He has done for them. On the other hand, he states that they now reject their God, Who has been so good to them, and that in His place they choose a man as leader.

Saul is designated by lot. In this way any suspicion of a preconceived plan by Samuel, or the thought of a secret agreement between Samuel and Saul, is made impossible. It is clear to everyone that the LORD designates Saul. "The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD" (Pro 16:33). "The [cast] lot puts an end to strife" (Pro 18:18a).

If one wants to bring Saul forward, he turns out to be untraceable. Could that inhibit the people in their enthusiasm? Would they return to their steps? It seems to be a last attempt of the LORD to make His people to repent.

If Saul cannot be found, the LORD is asked whether the man has come. This will undoubtedly have happened through the high priest through the urim and the tummim (Exo 28:30; Num 27:21; cf. Jdg 20:27-28). At such an important assembly of the people where a king is elected, the high priest will certainly have been present, although this is not explicitly mentioned. The main character is not the priest, but Samuel who is the prophet of the LORD and oversees this meeting.

The LORD answers and makes known that Saul has hidden himself by the baggage. Saul seems to have become a piece of baggage, something that is dragged by others, while there are useful things in it. Is this hiding an act

of modesty or an act of fear? Does he upheaval against the responsibilities of the kingship?

He knows in advance that he will be appointed by lot. Yet he runs away. However, you cannot run away from God. To run away is not good, nor does it work for the good of God's people. It comes from thinking about yourself and not about the interests of God and His people. The ultimate result is that man is exalted and not God.

The Lord Jesus also once withdrew himself from the crowd when they wanted to make Him king (Jn 6:15). With Him, His perfection becomes manifest by this. He does not want to be the king according to the fleshly wishes of the people. At that moment it is not the time of the Father to reveal Himself as King. First, He had to achieve the glorification of His Father on earth completely.

When Saul stands among the people, Samuel does not speak of Saul as the choice of the people, but as the choice of the LORD. This is not to take away the responsibility of the people, but because no one knows better what the choice of the people is than the LORD. Therefore He has chosen a man with whom no one can compete. The man completely corresponds to the taste of the people.

When the people see him, they are all deeply impressed by this wonderful man and they applaud him. Saul is a man of whom every inch is king. He stands out from the people with his head and shoulders. But ... with which he rises above the people, will be cut from him at his death (1Sam 31:8-9). The New Testament Saul also stands out above his peers (Gal 1:14; Phil 3:4b-6). However, he is made small in an encounter with the glorified Lord. The man who sat high in the saddle "fell to the ground" (Acts 9:4).

The Israelites compare their king to themselves and not to the LORD. That comes down to comparing ourselves with ourselves (cf. 2Cor 10:12b). We do this namely when we compare ourselves with other people. The others are as human as we are.

Verses 25-27 | Reactions to the Appointment of Saul

25 Then Samuel told the people the ordinances of the kingdom, and wrote [them] in the book and placed [it] before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the

people away, each one to his house. 26 Saul also went to his house at Gibeah; and the valiant [men] whose hearts God had touched went with him. 27 But certain worthless men said, "How can this one deliver us?" And they despised him and did not bring him any present. But he kept silent.

Samuel records in a book what is important in connection with the choice of the people. Earlier he told what the king will do (1Sam 8:11), now he presents to the people the ordinances of the kingdom, the laws, and statutes for the people. It is not unthinkable that Samuel on this occasion simply copied the royal law (Deu 17:14-20). He lays down what he has written "before the LORD", that is, beside the ark (Deu 31:26). After these events Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his house, to the own, familiar environment.

Saul also goes to his house and not yet to the throne. The cheering is silenced. The people have the king they want, but the connectedness to him does not seem to be great. Only those whose heart God has touched go with him. They acknowledge Saul as appointed over them by God. Maybe otherwise no one would have gone along with the newly elected king at all. David, too, will later acknowledge Saul, as Samuel did.

There are also people who see nothing in Saul. That is not because they expect more from the LORD than from this man. They simply do not resign themselves to the God-given king, possibly out of jealousy that he and not they have been elected leader. Every choice of God reveals the thoughts of hearts. They should have asked their question (verse 27) when it was about God. Now it is a wrong question. Saul responds to these utterances in a good way. We can take an example of this when to us ugly things are said.

1 Samuel 11

Verses 1-4 | The People Are Afraid of Nahash

1 Now Nahash the Ammonite came up and besieged Jabesh-gilead; and all the men of Jabesh said to Nahash, "Make a covenant with us and we will serve you." 2 But Nahash the Ammonite said to them, "I will make [it] with you on this condition, that I will gouge out the right eye of every one of you, thus I will make it a reproach on all Israel." 3 The elders of Jabesh said to him, "Let us alone for seven days, that we may send messengers throughout the territory of Israel. Then, if there is no one to deliver us, we will come out to you." 4 Then the messengers came to Gibeah of Saul and spoke these words in the hearing of the people, and all the people lifted up their voices and wept.

The first enemy Saul faces is not the Philistines, but the Ammonite Nahash. Nahash means 'snake'. David will have to do with the son of Nahash (1Chr 19:1-4). The threat that Nahash made audible is one of the reasons why the people wanted a king (1Sam 12:12).

Nahash besieges Gilead. Gilead is not in the promised land, but at the wilderness side of Jordan. This is the area that is first threatened if hostile forces want to invade the land. The men of Jabesh propose the enemy to make a covenant with each other. In return, they must submit to the enemy. There is no thought of a call to God. So much the inhabitants of the city are alienated from God.

Nahash wants to go along with this proposal, but he comes up with an idea. He imposes a condition, which will further humiliate the people. His condition to gouge out the right eye will eliminate the people, because then they can no longer shoot with the bow. Nahash, however, is not just talking about a reproach for Jabesh alone, but about the reproach it brings to "all Israel".

The snake has more awareness of the unity of God's people than the inhabitants of Jabesh. In Judges 21 Jabesh wanted to be neutral (Jdg 21:8-9). As long as it concerns others, one does not care about it and wants to remain neutral. With this reproach on Jabesh the whole people will be affected,

there will be a reproach on all Israel. This answer of Nahash is perhaps meant as revenge on Israel for the shame of the defeat Jephthah inflicted on the Ammonites (Jdg 11:32-33).

Under this threat Jabesh sees, now it concerns himself, the unity of God's people and seeks his support in it. The elders of Jabesh ask for a postponement and indicate the reason of it. They want to send out a call for help to Israel. When others needed the help of Jabesh, Jabesh did not help. Now that they are in need themselves, they want others to help them.

Nahash, convinced of his own strength and the weakness of Israel, gives Jabesh occasion to call on others to help. Israel must have been very weak that Nahash can act so self-assured. It also seems that Israel did not have any central authority at that time. We can also conclude that neither Nahash nor the people of Jabesh heard of Saul's election as king. This becomes even clearer when the messengers arrive in verse 4 in the Gibeon of Saul and present their case to the people, without directly appealing to Saul.

In their mission to gain support in their defense against Nahash, the messengers also come to Gibeon, where here the name of Saul is linked to. When Gibeon hears of their situation, they weep about it. Their weeping is not of sadness, by which they turn to God, but of cowardice, because they are afraid of the enemy. It seems that they too know nothing about Saul, anointed king. At least they do not ask if Saul wants to come.

Verses 5-11 | Saul Strikes Down Ammon

5 Now behold, Saul was coming from the field behind the oxen, and he said, "What is [the matter] with the people that they weep?" So they related to him the words of the men of Jabesh. 6 Then the Spirit of God came upon Saul mightily when he heard these words, and he became very angry. 7 He took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent [them] throughout the territory of Israel by the hand of messengers, saying, "Whoever does not come out after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done to his oxen." Then the dread of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out as one man. 8 He numbered them in Bezek; and the sons of Israel were 300,000, and the men of Judah 30,000. 9 They said to the messengers who had come, "Thus you shall say to the men of Jabesh-gilead, 'Tomorrow, by the time the sun is hot, you will have deliverance.'" So

the messengers went and told the men of Jabesh; and they were glad. 10 Then the men of Jabesh said, "Tomorrow we will come out to you, and you may do to us whatever seems good to you." 11 The next morning Saul put the people in three companies; and they came into the midst of the camp at the morning watch and struck down the Ammonites until the heat of the day. Those who survived were scattered, so that no two of them were left together.

Saul is still the farmer's son. He comes from the field when he hears of the humiliation and threat. His reaction belongs to the beginning of his life as anointed king that we can consider the best part of his kingship. The Spirit of God seizes him. His indignation is great, but human anger also seems to play a role, perhaps out of anger at Jabesh' cowardice.

To make Israel ready for action, he sets a terrifying example. The words he speaks here are characteristic. He speaks not of a coming out behind the LORD, but only of a coming up behind him and Samuel. It is also remarkable that he calls himself first and therefore takes the first place. He does not ask if Samuel agrees. Samuel himself has never claimed a place next to the king. Despite all these negative features, God uses it anyway. He lets fall His dread upon the people.

The turnout is enormous. If God acts, something amazing can happen. No man will have stayed at home. Although Israel is still a whole, here the Spirit already points to a distinction between Israel and Judah. After the encouraging turnout, the messengers of Jabesh are promised salvation. When they come home with this message, there is joy in Jabesh, but towards Nahash they persevere in their hypocrisy.

The trip from Bezek probably started the night before. When they have reached Jabesh at the dawn of the morning, Saul divides the people into three armies. This has proved to be a tried and tested strategy with Gideon (Jdg 7:16,20-22). Saul and his men have a great victory because the LORD is acting here. There are no two enemies together, which means that the enemy is completely powerless. It is the proof for Saul that the LORD is with him.

The victory of the king over the flesh over the flesh can be compared to the orthodox doctrine that keeps the wrong doctrine out of the door. Or also with certain forms of legalism that keep worldly influences out of the door,

while there is no life out of God. 1 Samuel 15 shows that Saul has learned nothing from this victory.

Verses 12-13 | The Victory Is From the LORD

12 Then the people said to Samuel, "Who is he that said, 'Shall Saul reign over us?' Bring the men, that we may put them to death." 13 But Saul said, "Not a man shall be put to death this day, for today the LORD has accomplished deliverance in Israel."

In the intoxication of the victory, the people want to slaughter their own people as well, so enthusiastic they are through the victory under the leadership of Saul. They turn to Samuel, with whom they acknowledge him as their leader.

In the sincerity that a natural person also can have, Saul keeps the people from their intention. It is to his credit that he gives the LORD the honor of victory. To all these things a natural man can come, while his heart is still far from God.

Verses 14-15 | Samuel Renews the Kingdom

14 Then Samuel said to the people, "Come and let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there." 15 So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they also offered sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

Samuel makes use of the cheering mood among the people. He judges that this is the time to renew the kingship. For this he wants to go to Gilgal, the place where the circumcision the "reproach of Egypt" was "rolled away" by the LORD of his people (Jos 5:9a). "Gilgal" means "rolled away". "So the name of that place is called Gilgal" (Jos 5:9b). When the land was possessed, the people returned there after every battle. Spiritually it represents the place where the judgment of the flesh is accomplished (Col 2:11).

After the circumcision in Gilgal Joshua learned Who the real Leader of the people is (Jos 5:13-15). By understanding what happened in Gilgal, Saul too would have to learn that God is the real King and that he, Saul, is it for God and not in the place of God. Seven times in these two verses Gilgal is

mentioned, either by name, or by the reference “there” by which Gilgal is meant.

The people offer sacrifices of peace offerings. This is the second time Saul has taken part in a peace offering. Earlier he participated with Samuel (1Sam 9:24). The great joy of Saul and all the men of Israel is the joy in the LORD for the victory He has given. Saul will also have thanked the LORD for it.

People can thank God, even without new life. In a way it is the thanksgiving of the Pharisee. If a man has not yet learned that nothing good dwells in him, that is in his flesh, he can rejoice in God, while he will be without Him forever.

1 Samuel 12

Verses 1-2 | Samuel Announces His Resignation

1 Then Samuel said to all Israel, "Behold, I have listened to your voice in all that you said to me and I have appointed a king over you. 2 Now, here is the king walking before you, but I am old and gray, and behold my sons are with you. And I have walked before you from my youth even to this day.

The people are still in Gilgal (1Sam 11:14). There Samuel gives his farewell speech. Saul has become king and has already acted as such and does not go back to his cattle. Samuel's task is over, and he steps back. That does not mean that he is without work, but this will continue to take place in silence. That is how it goes with older believers. They withdrew more from the public service, but the task to pray remains (verse 23).

Samuel addresses the people for the last time. He also wants with his speech to prevent the people from accusing him afterwards of having given them a king. He has appointed him, but it is at their request. Man is always inclined to blame others. This has been the case since Adam and Eve.

Samuel points out their king to the people. He says of himself that his time is up. He only says of his sons that they are with them. He mentions it as fact, as a neutral matter, without value judgement. This remark about his sons may also mean that he has deposed them again and that they are back as ordinary citizens among the people.

He can say of himself that he has gone before them, something he does not say of his sons. Now Saul will go out for them. But what is a great difference between the leading of Samuel and the leading of Saul? Samuel can say that from his youth he did this in full loyalty to the LORD. They know him from a long stay among them, in which he has always served them. Of Saul the people know nothing yet. They only judge him by his appearance because he still must prove everything.

Saul, who is already king, has yet to prove himself, while David has already done so before he becomes king.

Verses 3-5 | Selflessness of Samuel

3 Here I am; bear witness against me before the LORD and His anointed. Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? I will restore [it] to you.” 4 They said, “You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man’s hand.” 5 He said to them, “The LORD is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day that you have found nothing in my hand.” And they said, “[He is] witness.”

Samuel asks them if they can accuse him of something. Why does he ask that? He has listed in 1 Samuel 8 what kind of king their king will be, what he will ask of them (1Sam 8:11-17). Now he asks, as it were: “Have I been so? Are you better off now? Will you king be so?” Samuel has walked in humility and subservience; Saul will walk in self-will and self-enforcement.

When he speaks these words, he brings himself and the whole people “into the presence of the LORD”. That makes it a serious event. The questions he asks must touch the hearts and conscience of the people. He also speaks his words in the presence of “His anointed”, that is Saul.

The servant puts himself entirely at the service of God’s people, without asking anything of them, or even giving the impression of being profit-seeking and seeking self-enrichment. Similar words as here from Samuel we also hear from Nehemiah (Neh 5:15) and Paul (Acts 20:33-34). How important it is for a servant to be able to say that. It is about giving oneself away for the people and not taking anything from them. It is about giving. True service has clean hands. Has there ever been a Head of State or Minister in any part of the world who was able to say so when he resigned and to count on the general agreement of the whole people?

Samuel asks for evidence whether he has taken someone’s ox or donkey. We can apply this spiritually. We steal someone’s ox when we offer God the sacrifice of the thanks of our lips for what He gave in the Lord Jesus, but use the words of another person, that is to say, parrot others. It seems beautiful but is not his own. Words can be stolen (Jer 23:30). We can make the same application when it comes to taking someone’s donkey. The don-

key is the animal of service. We can demand a service that is due to another person. This is a way Paul has kept far from himself (2Cor 10:13).

The other things that Samuel asks the people to accuse him of, can also be applied in this way. Oppression means to impose the law on another, to take away his freedom in Christ (cf. Gal 5:1; cf. Isa 58:6). Taking a gift means giving preferential treatment. Then we turn a blind eye to evil. Accepting a gift can also be done by opening up for flattery. Whoever flatters us, we may like, and we will favor.

Of all the things Samuel mentions, the people must admit that there is nothing wrong with him in this respect. He has not been hard on them, has recognized each in the dignity that fits and has never adopted anything that would make him lose his independence. Samuel confirms their affirmation and so do the people.

The testimony of our neighbors and especially the testimony of our own conscience, that we have lived honestly and sincerely in our place and vocation, will encourage us if we are scorned. Demétrius is a happy man, because he “has received a [good] testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself” (3Jn 1:12).

Verses 6-11 | Righteous Deeds of the LORD

6 Then Samuel said to the people, “It is the LORD who appointed Moses and Aaron and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt. 7 So now, take your stand, that I may plead with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LORD which He did for you and your fathers. 8 When Jacob went into Egypt and your fathers cried out to the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron who brought your fathers out of Egypt and settled them in this place. 9 But they forgot the LORD their God, so He sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the army of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them. 10 They cried out to the LORD and said, ‘We have sinned because we have forsaken the LORD and have served the Baals and the Ashtaroth; but now deliver us from the hands of our enemies, and we will serve You.’ 11 Then the LORD sent Jerubbaal and Bedan and Jephthah and Samuel, and delivered you from the hands of your enemies all around, so that you lived in security.

After Samuel was declared completely righteous in his actions by the people, he did not begin to blame them for their stupidity in deposing him. He seeks only the honor of God. Therefore he gives an overview of what they have experienced with God and God with them.

To bring the people to a deeper knowledge of their sin Samuel emphasizes what the LORD has done for them. It is He who called Moses and Aaron, and it is He who delivered their fathers from Egypt by them. If therefore the LORD did this then, and He is now present as a Witness at the declaration of Samuel's selflessness and impartiality, then the people have seriously sinned by now coveting a king themselves. In the person of Samuel they have rejected the LORD their God (1Sam 8:7), Who has given them leaders.

Samuel is the last judge and the first prophet (Acts 13:20b). It is the conclusion of an old and the beginning of a new era. He devotes his last words to the righteous deeds of the LORD for His people. He tells them the cause of their misery and the way to be delivered from it. With "all the righteous acts of the LORD" He means all the benefits which the LORD has bestowed on His people. These deeds are the result of His faithfulness to His covenant. On that account He has fulfilled His promises to His people.

The first righteous acts of the LORD that Samuel mentions are the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt and their bringing into the land of Canaan. That is what the LORD did through Moses and Aaron. Moses and Aaron have delivered the people from Egypt, but they have not become king. They have been God's instruments to carry out His will. And when God calls Moses "king in Jeshurun" (Deu 33:5a), He does so Himself and not the people.

Samuel then shows the reaction of the people to the blessings of God. He starts with "but" (verse 9). This indicates a contradiction on the part of the people. The people have always responded with unfaithfulness to the blessings of God. Because of the unfaithfulness of the people, their forsaken of the LORD, He has surrendered them into the power of the enemy. Over time, they have then discovered that these enemies are hard masters and have begun to cry out to the LORD. And always He has answered and given salvation. Thus hath the LORD been their liberator from Egypt till now.

The righteous deeds of the LORD are evident both from the fact that He had to surrender them into the hands of enemies because of their waste from Him and from the deliverance of the people from the hands of their enemies. These deeds can be found in the book of Judges. Samuel refers to some events in that book.

It shows that God always uses whomever He wants. He is sovereign. Samuel acknowledges that he is only one of several. God can redeem by whomever He wills, also by one or more. None of these saviors has become king. Gideon even explicitly refused it if asked (Jdg 8:22-23).

Verses 12-15 | Call to Serve the LORD

12 When you saw that Nahash the king of the sons of Ammon came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' although the LORD your God [was] your king. 13 Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen, whom you have asked for, and behold, the LORD has set a king over you. 14 If you will fear the LORD and serve Him, and listen to His voice and not rebel against the command of the LORD, then both you and also the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God. 15 If you will not listen to the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the command of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you, [as it] was against your fathers.

Here Samuel exposes the true reason of the people in their desire for a king. The direct threat of Nahash has made the desire rise in them for a visible leader, as is the case with the peoples around them. At the same time Samuel speaks to their conscience when he speaks of the LORD as their King.

He points the people to their choice, and to the LORD Who accepted it, and gave them the king they asked for. In the deeds of His people God carries out His counsels. Man cannot understand that. The fact that God uses the deeds of man does not make man any less responsible. Only God can explain this. It is wrong that the people have made that choice and rejected God, while God achieves His goal through it (cf. Acts 2:23).

Samuel has relieved his heart. He has presented to the people their past and their choice in the present. Now he speaks about the future (verses 14-15). He no longer speaks about Saul, but to the people as well as to Saul. If

both the people and Saul are obedient, they will experience God's blessing despite their failures in the past and the present. But if they turn away from Him, His hand will be against them. God always remains faithful to Himself, both in blessing and in discipline.

Verses 16-18 | A Great Wickedness

16 Even now, take your stand and see this great thing which the LORD will do before your eyes. 17 Is it not the wheat harvest today? I will call to the LORD, that He may send thunder and rain. Then you will know and see that your wickedness is great which you have done in the sight of the LORD by asking for yourselves a king." 18 So Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

Samuel emphasizes his words with a special deed, bringing him to the level of Moses and Elijah. It is not the rainy season, hence the reference to the wheat harvest, the time when it rains least. That it will now rain with thunders, is a miracle. This miracle must show the people that they have done evil.

Samuel, by his miracle, places the full responsibility of the wrong choice of the people on their shoulders, as Moses did. There is also the thunder with Moses with the result that the people are afraid. The people fear the impressive majesty of the LORD. They also fear Samuel because they understand how much power from God he has.

Verse 19 | The People Ask for Prayer

19 Then all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, so that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins [this] evil by asking for ourselves a king."

The people ask Samuel to pray for them. They never asked their king Saul for anything like that. When conscience is touched, the prayers of God-fearing people are sought. Moses was also an intercessor for the people, as was Elijah. These were the men who knew God and loved the people. They had a special relationship to heaven, as if they could dispose of it, but they acted with the knowledge of heaven. David, Solomon, and Hezekiah also

prayed for the people. Nowhere do we read that Saul prayed, neither for himself nor for the people.

Even before Saul has failed, the people come to the recognition that they have sinned. But God knows them and keeps them to their choice.

Verses 20-22 | The LORD Shall Not Leave His People

20 Samuel said to the people, "Do not fear. You have committed all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart. 21 You must not turn aside, for [then you would] go after futile things which can not profit or deliver, because they are futile. 22 For the LORD will not abandon His people on account of His great name, because the LORD has been pleased to make you a people for Himself.

Samuel reassures the people. He takes nothing away from their wrong choice and tells them that they have done evil, but he also tells them the way out. There is always a way back and God will never definitively give up His people. Samuel emphasizes the great danger of futile idols. They are things of nothing. They benefit nothing.

Opposite to that is the guarantee of the LORD Who will not leave His people. He does not stay with His people because of their faithfulness, for they are an unfaithful people. He stays with His people because of His own great Name. He pleased to make these people His people. Therefore He will never leave them forever, but will take care of them.

Verse 23 | Samuel Continues to Pray for the People

23 Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you; but I will instruct you in the good and right way.

In Scripture we have no indication whatsoever that Saul prayed. A true servant of the Lord carries God's people on his heart, invisible, in prayer. Samuel interceded for the people until the end of his life. Jeremiah recalls this hundreds of years later (Jer 15:1a). God can only bless us by virtue of the intercession, unknown to us, of the unknown many who know His thoughts about His people.

There remains for the people a "good and right way", despite the crooked way that Saul will go. Samuel will teach them that way, that God's will

may be done. He says that as long as he is with them, he will show them what the real serving of God is. It is the way of happiness and to heaven. It is the right way – there is nothing bad in it. It is the right or straight road – there is no twist in it.

This example of Samuel is a wonderful example for all leaders, that they do not have to turn away from those they serve when these become unfaithful. They should not give up their interest and commitment to their wellbeing, but work for them with even more perseverance.

Verses 24-25 | Last Admonitions

24 Only fear the LORD and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you. 25 But if you still do wickedly, both you and your king will be swept away."

Samuel indicates how they can secure the blessing of the LORD. That is to be faithful to the LORD, to fear Him, that is to know Him, and to have respect for Him, and to honor Him. Let them serve Him and consider themselves His servants. He calls upon them to always be honest and sincere and to always do the work of obedience with love, not out of mere duty.

There are countless reasons to serve the LORD out of love. They and we only need to look at all the great deeds He has done in our lives. Look at the history of our fathers, look at our own lives. See how God has repeatedly intervened for our benefit in power, mercy, grace, goodness, and truth. Does He not overload us daily with His favors?

Samuel ends his penetrating speech with a final serious warning both to the people and to Saul. After all he has explained, the people and Saul can no longer be excused if they do evil. Then they do it against their better judgment, and the LORD can do nothing but sweep them away.

1 Samuel 13

Verse 1 | Saul Reigns

1 Saul was [thirty] years old when he began to reign, and he reigned [forty] two years over Israel.

In this chapter Saul is put to the test. Verse 1 gives a translation difficulty. In the first part of the verse the number [thirty] is not in the original, which is indicated by the square brackets, as is also the case with the number [forty]. Both numbers are added by the translators. Literally it says: "Saul was ... years old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years over Israel." That he reigned two years over Israel, means that he is in government for two years when what is then described takes place.

It is God's intention to save His people from the power of the Philistines through Saul. The test is whether Saul wants to do this in dependence on Him. The point is not so much whether he can do it, but whether he will do it the right way. Why is he tested? To show what is in him: faith or self-enforcement.

This is often the reason why we are tested. Why do not all the servants of the Lord fall? Because in those who remain standing the second man, Christ, is seen. Those who fall live after the first man, Adam who fell in sin. Saul falls because he lives after the first man. He falls because he has no real faith in God and therefore comes under the power of circumstances.

Verses 2-4 | Jonathan Smites the Philistines

2 Now Saul chose for himself 3,000 men of Israel, of which 2,000 were with Saul in Michmash and in the hill country of Bethel, while 1,000 were with Jonathan at Gibeah of Benjamin. But he sent away the rest of the people, each to his tent. 3 Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of [it]. Then Saul blew the trumpet throughout the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear." 4 All Israel heard the news that Saul had smitten the garrison of the Philistines, and also that Israel had become odious to the Philistines. The people were then summoned to Saul at Gilgal.

Saul has formed an army of 3,000 men he has chosen himself. It is the royal guard, an army of special forces. From this army he forms two sections, one of 2,000 men and one of 1,000 men. He keeps the ward of 2,000 soldiers under his command, while he gives the command of the ward of 1,000 soldiers to his son Jonathan. Saul and his men are in Michmash and Jonathan and his men are in Geba. Both places are strategically important to ward off possible attacks from the Philistines.

Saul had three major confrontations with the Philistines (1 Samuel 13; 17; 31). Saul does not win in any of the three confrontations. The first confrontation was a victory, but Jonathan won it. The second also brings a victory, but that comes on the name of David. The third confrontation leads to defeat and his death.

Jonathan is mentioned here for the first time. He enters without further introduction. It is as if we have known him for a long time. Saul is in this chapter and the following chapters opposite his son Jonathan. Jonathan is a very different person from his father. Saul means 'coveted' (by man), Jonathan means 'the LORD has given' or 'given by grace' (by God). Saul should have been what his son Jonathan is. How he should have been, he could have learned from his son. Due to the failure of Saul, the kingship passes Jonathan by. What we do has a major impact on our children.

In Jonathan we meet one of the most pleasant characters in the Bible. He is a man who has beautiful characteristics, of which we can be jealous and of which we wish we also have them. The first act mentioned of him is that smites the garrison of the Philistines in Geba. He does not wait for the Philistines to open the attack; he takes the initiative himself. In so doing, he takes away the threat from that side.

At the same time his action calls on the Philistines to take revenge. But not only the Philistines are in motion. When Saul hears of his son's action, he blows the trumpet so that "the Hebrews hear it". His action does not come from faith, but from fear. He does not turn to God, but places his hope in the "Hebrews", as he calls God's people. He mentions God's people by the name used by the Philistines (1Sam 14:11).

Because Saul announces the news of the defeat of the Philistines, he gets the honor for something his son did. Yet the people are not happy with the

victory. They are so in the grip of the Philistines, that the fear is deep in them. They fear retaliation. The people answer Saul's call and come to him. What is the people of God, that is now the church of God, deeply sunk when they are afraid to become odious to the nominal Christians – of which the Philistines are a picture.

Verses 5-7 | Fear of the Philistines

5 Now the Philistines assembled to fight with Israel, 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen, and people like the sand which is on the seashore in abundance; and they came up and camped in Michmash, east of Beth-aven. 6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait (for the people were hard-pressed), then the people hid themselves in caves, in thickets, in cliffs, in cellars, and in pits. 7 Also [some of] the Hebrews crossed the Jordan into the land of Gad and Gilead. But as for Saul, he [was] still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

Indeed, the Philistines want revenge for the defeat inflicted upon them. They mobilize a large crowd to fight against Israel. They camp in Michmash, where Saul was with his corps of special forces just before. Saul went to Gilgal to wait for Samuel, as Samuel ordered (verse 11; 1Sam 10:8). Now it comes down to how Saul will react when the trial rises.

When the men of Israel see the superiority of the enemy, there is no courage left. On a previous occasion, they went as one man behind Saul against the enemy (1Sam 11:7). There is nothing left of that courage. When they run into difficulties and are threatened, they do not call to the LORD, but a number hide “in caves, in thickets, in cliffs, in cellars, and in pits”. Wherever they think they are safe from the enemy, there they hide (cf. Jdg 6:2).

Those who stay with Saul tremble. The confidence in their hero has diminished to such an extent that he can no longer inspire them to fight against the enemy with the assurance of victory. The faith that was still there at Saul's first action has now disappeared. If there is no faith, previous experiences do not give strength. Everything that happens here is because the hand of God is in it. He puts Saul to the test. That happens at Gilgal.

Here the Israelites are called “Hebrews” because they leave the land of God and give up the ground of faith (1Sam 14:21). The situation is com-

pletely contrary to God's intention. His people leave the country and the Philistines live there.

Verses 8-12 | Saul Is Impatient and Offers

8 Now he waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattering from him. 9 So Saul said, "Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering. 10 As soon as he finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him [and] to greet him. 11 But Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "Because I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the appointed days, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, 12 therefore I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the LORD.' So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering."

Saul must wait seven days in Gilgal. That is what Samuel told him. This will be the great test, as the great test of faith is always patience, waiting for God's time. Much of God's work does not come about through impatient, premature action by man. It is about perseverance or patience having "a perfect work" (Jam 1:4). However, the flesh is impatient. Waiting is hard for us. We are often in a hurry. Just look at the highway, where we as believers race over and annoy ourselves when someone does not let us pass by. Saul cannot wait because he has nothing of the LORD in him.

By having to wait for Samuel it is also clear that Samuel is still the real connection between God and His people. Saul, the soldier, who is ready for battle, must wait for the prophet of God who will tell him what to do. Saul is waiting. Until he sees that as time goes by, the people become more and more afraid and start to run away. He sees his army shrinking. As the army shrinks, so does his patience to wait for Samuel.

Patience can be an accomplishment of the flesh. Saul can bring it up to keep the prescribed commandment and waits seven days. To wait longer, faith is needed (Jam 1:3) and that Saul does not have. He orders that the burnt offering and the peace offerings be brought to him so that he can offer.

Although he is not a priest, he offers. He thinks that as king he has the right to do so. It is an act of boldness. Such an act cost the later king Uzzia dearly, for God punishes him with leprosy on his forehead. He keeps this leprosy until the day of his death (2Chr 26:16-21).

Why does Saul offer and does not go without sacrificing to the enemy? It seems that he wants to keep up a semblance of religion. Thus many believers go to church or to the meeting and do what is appropriate, only to keep up the outward appearance, while within there is nothing directed at the Lord. It is only for others.

When Saul has brought the burnt offering and is about to bring the peace offerings, Samuel appears on stage. Saul leaves the offerings for what they are and goes to Samuel to greet him. He knows how much he needs Samuel and he is also aware that he has done something Samuel said he will do himself.

Before Saul can say anything, Samuel asks Saul the question, "What have you done?" It is the question of the spiritual condition of the person addressed. This question should lead someone to speak honest about his actions. It is a next question God has asked a man. The first question is to Adam: "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9). The question 'what have you done', God asks Cain, after he has killed Abel (Gen 4:10).

Saul's three excuses show that he does not count with God, but only according to his own possibilities. If God does not take a place in a person's thinking, he will sit down and think himself and then come to intellectual conclusions that lead him to wrong decisions.

1. He sees people leaving him. Because his trust is in men and not in God, he comes to an act of unbelief. By the way, could he win the war with people who have as little faith as he does?
2. His lack of faith becomes public when he sees that Samuel does not come to the right time. Indirectly he accuses Samuel of breaking his word.
3. His eyes are on the power of the enemy, while he should have seen God; his eyes should have been on God's power.

Man's thinking always seeks ways out. He presents God as a God Whose favor must first be obtained, as if it were an idol. Saul has the courage of the

flesh that lifts itself up to action. He blames the circumstances. Actually, he says: 'I was forced to act like this because of the circumstances. I didn't want to do it, but I couldn't do anything else when I saw the Philistines coming towards me.' We are all inclined to speak in the same way. When we have spoken a hard word or done a stupid action or refused to obey, we also easily blame the circumstances.

Saul wants to cover all his actions with the good deed he believes he has done in offering the burnt offering. Hypocrites place a great emphasis on outward acts of a religious nature and are therefore of the opinion that they should be exonerated from a violation of the law.

Verses 13-15 | Samuel Reproaches Saul

13 Samuel said to Saul, "You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. 14 But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you." 15 Then Samuel arose and went up from Gilgal to Gibeah of Benjamin. And Saul numbered the people who were present with him, about six hundred men.

Here it says that Saul would always have remained king if he had not sinned. The fact that God had David in mind does not change the failure of Saul. It is his own fault that his kingdom is taken away from him. An act of disobedience can have major consequences, both for the person and for his or her offspring. We also see this with Adam. The kingdom of Saul is not immediately taken away. The rejection of Saul goes in stages. Only in 1 Samuel 15 is the kingdom taken away from him (1Sam 15:26). Here the *hereditary* kingdom is taken from him by saying to him that he will have no successor.

After Samuel has said to Saul that his kingdom would not endure, he is in fact thereafter speaking talking about the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is the true Man after God's heart. Of Him David is a foreshadowing. At second instance Samuel speaks about David, who is also a man after God's heart, but turns out to be fallible. David is the successor of Saul.

Samuel leaves Saul. It does not seem that Saul is doing his best to keep Samuel with him. Nor does it seem that Saul is touched by Samuel's words. In any case, we do not notice any conversion or humiliation because of his disobedience. The only thing Saul can think of is how big his army is. That is why he counts it. His army appears to consist of about six hundred men, still twice as many as Gideon had at the time. It would be more than enough for faith.

Verses 16-18 | Philistine Raiders

16 Now Saul and his son Jonathan and the people who were present with them were staying in Geba of Benjamin while the Philistines camped at Michmash. 17 And the raiders came from the camp of the Philistines in three companies: one company turned toward Ophrah, to the land of Shual, 18 and another company turned toward Beth-horon, and another company turned toward the border which overlooks the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness.

Saul and Jonathan and the men went, just like Samuel in the previous verse, to Geba of Benjamin. The Philistines camp in Michmash. They follow a tactic that wreaks havoc in Israel. From their central camp in Michmash raiders go through Israel in three groups.

The first group takes the northern direction, the second one goes west and the third one goes east. These groups put Israel in fear and impoverish it. The Philistines, on the other hand, are encouraged and enriched. We see the hand of God in the work of the enemy, as Isaiah questioned: "Who gave Jacob up for spoil, and Israel to plunderers? Was it not the LORD, against whom we have sinned?" (Isa 42:24).

Verses 19-22 | No Blacksmith in Israel

19 Now no blacksmith could be found in all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, "Otherwise the Hebrews will make swords or spears." 20 So all Israel went down to the Philistines, each to sharpen his plowshare, his mattock, his axe, and his hoe. 21 The charge was two-thirds of a shekel for the plowshares, the mattocks, the forks, and the axes, and to fix the hoes. 22 So it came about on the day of battle that neither sword nor spear was found in the hands of any of the people who [were] with Saul and Jonathan, but they were found with Saul and his son Jonathan.

The Philistines have declared the blacksmith's profession a prohibited profession (cf. 2Kgs 24:14; Jer 24:1; 29:2). As a result, the misery and defenselessness of Israel has become great. Israel's poor army is also without weapons, or at least they can no longer make them or have them repaired.

A blacksmith is someone who can make weapons that others can use. In a spiritual sense, a blacksmith is a brother who can teach us how to use the Word of God as a weapon. A blacksmith is someone who teaches us about God's thoughts to defeat the enemy. If all this is absent, our faith will not be able to increase, but we will become a prey of the enemy.

This was cunningly thought up by the Philistines. Not only do they prevent Israel from manufacturing weapons, but they also make Israel dependent on them even for the agricultural tools. The Israelites must go to the Philistines to have their agricultural tools ready for use. For the services rendered, the Philistines charge their price.

For the use of plowshare, mattock, axe, and hoe, all means by which the land is worked to obtain food, God's people depend on the enemy. The spiritual lesson is clear when we consider that the Philistines are a picture of nominal Christians or Christians without Christ. What kind of food does a Christless Christianity give to her members? What a misery when we are at the mercy of name Christians for our spiritual food. What a misery when we are overwhelmed by intellectual reasoning to understand the Bible.

It is tragic when God's people depend on the Philistines for the proceeds of the fruit of the land God has promised and given His people. Because of the Philistines' tactics, none of the people has a weapon (cf. Jdg 5:8). Without sword, to kill the opponent nearby, and without spear, to kill the enemy on a distance, the people cannot resist. The absence of these weapons makes the people a defenseless prey for the enemy.

Verse 23 | The Philistines Come in Action

| 23 *And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the pass of Michmash.*

The history of the next chapter begins with this verse. The Philistines come in action. That is a challenge for faith. Jonathan takes up this challenge.

1 Samuel 14

Introduction

In 1 Samuel 13 the failure of Saul has become clear. In 1 Samuel 15 Saul fails even more dramatically. Between these two chapters, which contain a double testimony of the failure of the king of the people's choice, 1 Samuel 14 tells the story of a man of faith who overcomes. This chapter is a great encouragement to anyone who sees how the official authority of God's people fails, but who continues to believe in the power of God himself. In this chapter, the Holy Spirit opposes two men. We see Saul, the man of the flesh, opposite his son Jonathan, the man of faith.

The first part of this chapter (verses 1-23) leads to a climax through Jonathan's faith. The second part (verses 24-46) leads to an anticlimax by the foolishness of Saul, which forbids the people to eat anything before the evening.

Jonathan means 'the LORD has given'. He is a gift from God to His people at a time of great weakness. He is a flower that God makes blossom in the wilderness that Israel is spiritually at this time.

Verse 1 | Jonathan's Proposal

1 Now the day came that Jonathan, the son of Saul, said to the young man who was carrying his armor, "Come and let us cross over to the Philistines' garrison that is on the other side." But he did not tell his father.

Jonathan can no longer remain indecisive as the Philistines brutally move through God's land. He decides to attack the Philistines' garrison. This is not impulsive action. He has thought about this and has been in prayer for it, and one day he is ready for it. The motive for this action lies in his faith. It is not so, that Jonathan has more military insight than his father. Saul is a good soldier. In the battle of God's people, it is not about military insight, but about faith. Faith decides the outcome and not military insight. In 1 Samuel 17 we see this also in the fight between David and Goliath.

With Saul we see no action. He is waiting. That is different from what the people wanted. After all, they wanted a king who goes ahead of them to

fight. Jonathan cannot accept that his father is so indecisive. He knows his father. He knows it makes no sense to ask him if he can go or even to inform him that he will go. He knows that two can only go together if they have agreed (Amos 3:3) and that this is not the case with his father. Saul, who will see it as a reckless undertaking, lacks the faith to do so. Therefore he goes without telling his father, although he should have. Yet this is not rebellion, but an action worked by God.

Verses 2-3 | Saul and Those Who Are With Him

2 Saul was staying in the outskirts of Gibeah under the pomegranate tree which is in Migron. And the people who [were] with him [were] about six hundred men, 3 and Ahijah, the son of Ahitub, Ichabod's brother, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eli, the priest of the LORD at Shiloh, was wearing an ephod. And the people did not know that Jonathan had gone.

While Jonathan proceeds to act, Saul sits under a tree. He prefers to take a wait-and-see attitude rather than take the initiative to fight. What should he do with his six hundred men against a numerous enemy? Where faith is lacking, there is no strength for battle.

Saul was not only surrounded by an army of six hundred men, but he also had the priest with the ephod in his company. It is a priest from the rejected priestly family of Eli who was set aside by God in 1 Samuel 2-3 (1Sam 2:27-30; 3:11-14). Because the setting aside did not take place immediately, we find here a rejected priest with a rejected king. Military and religious, everything is at Saul's disposal. The great absent is God. Therefore, all external displays have no effect whatsoever. Appearance does not give any strength and it does not give any insight into how the battle should be fought.

Saul does not know that Jonathan left, nor does the people of Saul. The struggle of faith is outside Saul and outside those who are connected to Saul.

Verses 4-5 | The Terrain to Cross

4 Between the passes by which Jonathan sought to cross over to the Philistines' garrison, there was a sharp crag on the one side and a sharp crag on the other

side, and the name of the one was Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. 5 The one crag rose on the north opposite Michmash, and the other on the south opposite Geba.

The description of the place Jonathan must cross makes it clear that he is embarking on a risky venture. God's Spirit shows these things to teach us that following a path of faith can present us with enormous difficulties. Faith does not make blind to these difficulties but considers them.

Faith is not reckless. It overlooks the terrain and sees the difficulties. All the difficulties that are noticed are brought to the Lord by faith. Faith then sees that there are no difficulties for Him. Faith is not overconfident, but prudent and trusting. It turns the eye to God and then takes courage.

Verses 6-7 | Faith of Jonathan and His Servant

6 Then Jonathan said to the young man who was carrying his armor, "Come and let us cross over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; perhaps the LORD will work for us, for the LORD is not restrained to save by many or by few." 7 His armor bearer said to him, "Do all that is in your heart; turn yourself, [and] here I am with you according to your desire."

After Saul's attitude is shown and the way of faith to go, Jonathan repeats in verse 6 the word of faith of verse 1. Nothing can be expected of Saul and the way is full of dangers. In his repetition of this great word of faith he goes even further than what he said in verse 1. He no longer speaks of "the Philistines", but now he calls them "these uncircumcised". This shows that he sees them as God sees them. They are people who have no connection with God.

Saul's army is not large, but at least he still has 600 men. Jonathan is alone with his armor bearer. He does not need the six hundred men, because he knows that he and his armor bearer are going with God. If you have God at your side, the greatest army has no chance. God can redeem as much by few as by many (2Chr 14:11; Jdg 7:7).

His armor bearer shows the same faith as Jonathan. It is a special blessing to fight the battle of faith with someone who faces the battle with the same confidence in God. The words of his armor bearer are an encouragement and confirmation for Jonathan.

Both men are young. To go a path of faith and perform acts of faith, it is not necessary to be elderly or to have much experience. It is about trust in God. Scripture gives an abundant testimony of young men who have acted in faith. Think of men like Elihu, David, Daniel and his three friends and Timothy.

Verses 8-10 | The Plan

8 Then Jonathan said, "Behold, we will cross over to the men and reveal ourselves to them. 9 If they say to us, 'Wait until we come to you'; then we will stand in our place and not go up to them. 10 But if they say, 'Come up to us,' then we will go up, for the LORD has given them into our hands; and this shall be the sign to us."

Jonathan presents his armor bearer his plan. He speaks of "us". It is a bold plan. The fight must be done with consultation. Faith does not take away the fact that we work with consultation, but it is the consultation of faith and not that of the rational calculation of probability. The reaction of the Philistines will determine their action, for they see in the reaction of the Philistines what God makes clear to them. He suggests that they will show themselves open and exposed to the enemy. The enemy will not expect that.

Jonathan anticipates two reactions. One reaction is that the Philistines say they will come down themselves. In that case they will stay where they are. The other reaction is that the Philistines will stay where they are, but they will say that Jonathan and his armor bearer must climb up to them. That will be a dangerous climb, where they will have to expose themselves completely. The Philistines will feel supreme and will not see any danger. It is precisely this dangerous command to climb up that will be the sign that the LORD has given them in their power.

Verses 11-14 | The Execution of the Plan

11 When both of them revealed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines, the Philistines said, "Behold, Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden themselves." 12 So the men of the garrison hailed Jonathan and his armor bearer and said, "Come up to us and we will tell you something." And

Jonathan said to his armor bearer, "Come up after me, for the LORD has given them into the hands of Israel." 13 Then Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet, with his armor bearer behind him; and they fell before Jonathan, and his armor bearer put some to death after him. 14 That first slaughter which Jonathan and his armor bearer made was about twenty men within about half a furrow in an acre of land.

Jonathan and his armor bearer put the deed to the word and show themselves to the Philistines. By showing themselves, they are vulnerable to the arrows of the Philistines. The Philistines do not shoot their arrows at them, but words of contempt. However, they do not harm the two heroes.

Then the men from the garrison call on Jonathan and his armor bearer to climb up to them. The Philistines are certain of their case. They will have a good time with these two Israelites. For Jonathan this is the proof that the LORD has given them in his power.

Yet he says not that the LORD will give them in *his* power, but in the power of *Israel*. This is the language that David also speaks later when he is alone opposite Goliath (1Sam 17:46-47). Saul, on the other hand, speaks of "my" enemies. The victory that Jonathan and his armor bearer will achieve is a victory for all Israel. Jonathan is certain of victory by this command of the Philistines. In what he says to his armor bearer in verse 12, there is no longer a "maybe" (verse 6), but the certainty that the LORD will do it.

Jonathan climbs up on hands and feet. This means that he cannot protect himself in any way. He needs all his agility to reach the top. He cannot even keep an eye on the enemy. The way of faith goes up but is not easy. Yet the goal of faith is achieved. When Jonathan and his armor bearer are above, the Philistines are knocked down man after man by Jonathan and killed by his armor bearer. There is a fluid cooperation between the two men.

The number killed is not impressive when counted. They have defeated only twenty men. But God connects Himself to Jonathan's faith. The area where the victory is won is described as "about half a furrow in an acre of land".

This indicates the result of a victory: an area is released that can be ploughed. The piece of land can again fulfill God's purpose for His people

and that is that His people enjoy the blessing of the land. Thus every spiritual victory lays the foundation for enjoying the spiritual blessings God has given to His people.

Verses 15-16 | Consequences of Jonathan's Deed

15 And there was a trembling in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. Even the garrison and the raiders trembled, and the earth quaked so that it became a great trembling. 16 Now Saul's watchmen in Gibeah of Benjamin looked, and behold, the multitude melted away; and they went here and [there].

If Jonathan has done what he can do, God will do what Jonathan cannot do. What God does is an extension of what Jonathan has done. God makes Jonathan's small victory a great one. He multiplies this victory, just as He multiplies a little bit of food. The report of the defeat is like a running fire and God's terror comes over the Philistines.

Saul's watchmen see the consequences of Jonathan's victory, that is, of God's underlining of Jonathan's faith performance. If faith acts, the enemy quivers and trembles. The watchmen observe this. They report this to Saul.

Verses 17-22 | Saul Shares in the Victory

17 Saul said to the people who [were] with him, "Number now and see who has gone from us." And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armor bearer were not [there]. 18 Then Saul said to Ahijah, "Bring the ark of God here." For the ark of God was at that time with the sons of Israel. 19 While Saul talked to the priest, the commotion in the camp of the Philistines continued and increased; so Saul said to the priest, "Withdraw your hand." 20 Then Saul and all the people who [were] with him rallied and came to the battle; and behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, [and there was] very great confusion. 21 Now the Hebrews [who] were with the Philistines previously, who went up with them all around in the camp, even they also [turned] to be with the Israelites who [were] with Saul and Jonathan. 22 When all the men of Israel who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines had fled, even they also pursued them closely in the battle.

Saul assumes the possibility that men have left his army and that they have done something with the Philistines. He has an investigation carried out to

know who and how many are gone. It turns out to be only Jonathan and his weapon bearer. For Saul, however, this cannot be the reason for the movement among the Philistines. He does not think further because there is no faith in him.

Saul can also be a pious man, he can question God, although he has no faith. To question God, he wants the ark to be brought. "Ark" (verse 18) presumably must be ephod. With the ark one cannot question God. It is more likely that Saul will have asked Ahijah to clothe himself with the ephod and to ask God.

When Saul notices how the Philistines are becoming more and more chaotic, Saul says that Ahijah should not do anything more. He decides that no more time should be lost in questioning God. Action is needed. You should not spend any effort and time on religion if you see that the situation is, in your opinion, ripe to act. So is Saul.

When Saul arrives at the battlefield, he does not have to do anything. God has worked for him and thus gives Saul the enemy in his hands. He does so because of Jonathan's faith (cf. 2Chr 20:22; Jdg 7:22).

Another consequence of Jonathan's victory is that Israelites who have put themselves in the service of the enemy – and who are also called "Hebrews" by the Holy Spirit here – return to the army of Saul and Jonathan. Traitors and cowards now choose the side of God's people because they see that that is where the victory lies. Such people only want to benefit, but never take part in the real battle.

Faith initiatives are taken by only a few. If it then becomes apparent how much this is blessed, others who have seen it first will join in and do not participate in that faith. Great revivals have always started with a few.

Verses 23-26 | Saul Prohibits to Eat Food

23 So the LORD delivered Israel that day, and the battle spread beyond Beth-aven. 24 Now the men of Israel were hard-pressed on that day, for Saul had put the people under oath, saying, "Cursed be the man who eats food before evening, and until I have avenged myself on my enemies." So none of the people tasted food. 25 All [the people of] the land entered the forest, and there was honey on the ground. 26 When the people entered the forest, behold, [there was]

a flow of honey; but no man put his hand to his mouth, for the people feared the oath.

It is clear that the LORD is at work and that He has redeemed Israel. This is the highlight of this history. We see Him standing up for His people in grace, while the people have turned their backs on Him.

The army moves on to defeat the Philistines. Saul turns it into a prestige case for himself. He speaks about “my enemies”. Saul does not speak of the LORD, not of Israel, but only of himself. He enchants because of his own revenge feeling that the people will not eat before he has avenged himself. Saul swears several times in this chapter (verses 24,39,44) and every time he has not kept to what he has sworn.

The character of Saul’s folly is legalism. By this he imposes a commandment on the people who rob them of their strength. That is how the people are being worn out. Faith and the taking to oneself of what God gives, gives new courage and strength. A legal mind and a constant talk about commandments and prohibitions paralyzes the people of God. People who do that, also have no room in their thinking for faith acts like that of a Jonathan. They do not like that either, because it is outside the old familiar paths.

The issuance of this severe injunction is:

1. Non-political and unwise. It may seem as if time is gained that is otherwise spent on food, but in reality, the people lose the strength for pursuit.
2. Lordly and unfriendly to the people. If the people had wanted to have a feast, there would have been something to say for the ban, but to forbid them to use food, although they are hungry, is cruel.
3. Godless, because Saul connects the Name of God to it through a curse and an oath. This is not the way of governing. Those who are in reign over others may reprimand and punish, but they may not curse their subjects. When David speaks of one of his enemies as someone “who loved the curse” (Psa 109:17-18), he may mean Saul.

The people are obedient to Saul’s command, but what a torment it is when they come into the forest where they see honey on the ground. This means

a great temptation for the people. However, the fear for Saul is so deep in them that they do not even dare to taste the honey for fear of Saul's curse.

Saul, through his legal performance, has closed the path of the people to the blessing of the land. Canaan after all is a land that flows from honey. Here we have an example of it. They can, as it were, suck honey out of the rock (Deu 32:13b). The sweetness will quickly give them new energy. We see that with Jonathan.

Verses 27-30 | Jonathan Takes Honey

27 But Jonathan had not heard when his father put the people under oath; therefore, he put out the end of the staff that [was] in his hand and dipped it in the honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth, and his eyes brightened. 28 Then one of the people said, "Your father strictly put the people under oath, saying, 'Cursed be the man who eats food today.'" And the people were weary. 29 Then Jonathan said, "My father has troubled the land. See now, how my eyes have brightened because I tasted a little of this honey. 30 How much more, if only the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found! For now the slaughter among the Philistines has not been great."

Jonathan has not heard the curse and is therefore free to eat the honey. He does. He is out of the reach of the curse. This is a picture of faith and law excluding each other mutually. Jonathan is like the Lord Jesus who drank from the brook along the way (Psa 110:7). Jonathan enjoys, in picture, a short moment of earthly things, not worldly things. Legalism is also forbidding each other to enjoy the earthly things. We should not exaggerate the enjoyment of earthly things either, as if enjoying them is the only thing that life consists of.

With Jonathan we see how it can be done. He tastes the honey on the way, while his eye remains focused on the battle. He does not sit down at ease to eat his belly full of honey. He tastes "a little" (verse 29; Pro 24:13; 25:16,27; cf. Jdg 7:6). The battle remains the goal. On the one hand we must learn to avoid the folly of Saul and on the other hand we must learn from Jonathan how to enjoy the earthly blessings.

As soon as Jonathan has eaten, he is told about the curse his father has made. It is said that the curse of his father is the cause of the exhaustion

of the people. Curse does not give strength to do what is asked, but rather has a paralyzing effect. Jonathan is not ashamed to point out his father's stupidity. Instead of leading his people into battle and providing them with all the means to do so, Saul places the people under a law. In so doing he plunges the people into trouble. The same is said of Achan (Jos 7:25).

Jonathan talks about how much greater the blessing would have been if his father had not acted so foolishly. Our spiritual blessing would also be greater if many among us were not so legal or worldly-minded. The danger comes from both sides. Oppression or freedom prevents a great victory.

The use of a little honey has given Jonathan strength again. This allows him to see clearly again. Honey speaks of the sweetness of natural bonds. How good can it be when a warrior in the work of the Lord takes a moment of rest and enjoys his family, his wife, his children. This gives him the strength to continue his fight. Of the commandment of the LORD it also is written that the eyes are enlightened to know what must happen (Psa 19:9b). It indicates that true enlightenment is found on the path of obedience to God's Word.

Verses 31-35 | The People Eat Meat With the Blood

31 They struck among the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. And the people were very weary. 32 The people rushed greedily upon the spoil, and took sheep and oxen and calves, and slew [them] on the ground; and the people ate [them] with the blood. 33 Then they told Saul, saying, "Behold, the people are sinning against the LORD by eating with the blood." And he said, "You have acted treacherously; roll a great stone to me today." 34 Saul said, "Disperse yourselves among the people and say to them, 'Each one of you bring me his ox or his sheep, and slaughter [it] here and eat; and do not sin against the LORD by eating with the blood.'" So all the people that night brought each one his ox with him and slaughtered [it] there. 35 And Saul built an altar to the LORD; it was the first altar that he built to the LORD.

Although the people are exhausted, they gain the victory over the Philistines. But precisely because of this exhaustion, the people forget God's law concerning the prohibition to eat meat with his blood. Thus, one sin of Saul causes another sin of the people. When evening has fallen, the people

shoot to the other side and eat meat with blood. Instead of total abstinence from food, they surrender unrestrainedly to their desire to eat. The same can sometimes be seen with children who are raised under the law. Once they stand on their own feet, they surrender to a dissolute life.

When Saul is told what the people are doing, he suddenly becomes the pious Saul again, who seems to care about God's commandments. He disgraces that the people are sinning. That he is the cause of it does not occur to him. He does not seek the fault in himself. He does have a solution to this problem, but without any self-judgment.

Saul is the lawful man in the full sense of the word. If such a person sees something that is outwardly unsound, he makes powerful accusations about it. The solution that such a person offers is also a solution of its own making. He makes himself the center of a religious event. The great sacrificial stone must be brought to him and the animals to be slaughtered must also be brought to him.

Then Saul builds his first altar, which is probably also his last. A rejected king builds an altar together with a rejected priest. He is not a young believer, but an older man who has never done this before. That is tragic.

Verses 36-37 | Saul Gets No Answer From God

36 Then Saul said, "Let us go down after the Philistines by night and take spoil among them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them." And they said, "Do whatever seems good to you." So the priest said, "Let us draw near to God here." 37 Saul inquired of God, "Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will You give them into the hand of Israel?" But He did not answer him on that day.

Saul sees his chance to take maximum advantage of the situation and maximize the defeat for his enemies. He wants to continue the night with going down after the enemies. The people seem to react resigned, quite different from Jonathan's armor bearer in verse 7. The priest thinks that it is better to ask God first. Earlier, Saul prevented him from doing so at the last minute (verse 19).

Saul accepts the priest's proposal. He asks God if He will go after the Philistines and if God will give them into the hand of Israel. His questions

sound good, but his mind is not subdued. He wants an immediate answer and he wants an answer that satisfies him. Now there is no answer from God. Before Saul did not want, now God does not want. God's patience comes to an end. A man can come to God in a mind to which God cannot respond (Jam 4:3). Someone who comes with sincere repentance will always receive an answer from God, for that God takes all time.

Verses 38-44 | Jonathan Taken as Guilty

38 Saul said, "Draw near here, all you chiefs of the people, and investigate and see how this sin has happened today. 39 For as the LORD lives, who delivers Israel, though it is in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die." But not one of all the people answered him. 40 Then he said to all Israel, "You shall be on one side and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side." And the people said to Saul, "Do what seems good to you." 41 Therefore, Saul said to the LORD, the God of Israel, "Give a perfect [lot]." And Jonathan and Saul were taken, but the people escaped. 42 Saul said, "Cast [lots] between me and Jonathan my son." And Jonathan was taken. 43 Then Saul said to Jonathan, "Tell me what you have done." So Jonathan told him and said, "I indeed tasted a little honey with the end of the staff that was in my hand. Here I am, I must die!" 44 Saul said, "May God do this [to me] and more also, for you shall surely die, Jonathan."

Even from this silence of God Saul does not ask himself why. He does not think about himself as a cause at all. He is completely blind to it. He does say that the LORD delivers Israel. This is always the mixture with religious people: willfulness and the expression of truths.

Just like Jephthah (Jdg 11:30,34-35) Saul is prepared to sacrifice his child to his legalism in the conviction that this is right for God. The people do not react to Saul's threats to tell the cause of God's silence. The people do not want to betray Jonathan.

If Saul does not find out through the people, he tries through lot. In doing so, he does not go tribe after tribe, but immediately separates himself and Jonathan on the one hand and the people on the other. He does not seem to want to waste too much time following complicated procedures, although these are according to God's will. Here, too, the people reside in the will of Saul.

Saul commands God to bring the truth to light. God does not allow Himself to be commanded, but He does govern lot. Lot designates Saul and Jonathan. That is how the people escape. God spares His people. Saul then orders that lots be thrown between him and Jonathan. He knows it cannot take him, but for the form he lets the lots throw. Jonathan is indeed appointed.

Then Saul orders Jonathan to tell what he has done. Jonathan is full of dedication. He bears witness to what he has done. Jonathan does not apologize by saying that he did not hear Saul's commandment. This ignorance is not brought forth either by Jonathan or by the people. Jonathan is ready to die. His attitude is beautiful. He does not defend himself, nor does he start to attack his father because of his folly. He acknowledges his deed, but not as sin.

After the 'confession' of his son Jonathan Saul bursts loose. Saul's evil heart is ready to kill his son. In his folly he is willing to kill the only man of faith among them. He has sworn it and so he will keep his word. How far away is Saul from grace! He has no part in it himself and therefore knows of no mercy towards others, not even towards his own son who has won such a great victory for Israel.

Verses 45-46 | The People Rescue Jonathan

45 But the people said to Saul, "Must Jonathan die, who has brought about this great deliverance in Israel? Far from it! As the LORD lives, not one hair of his head shall fall to the ground, for he has worked with God this day." So the people rescued Jonathan and he did not die. 46 Then Saul went up from pursuing the Philistines, and the Philistines went to their own place.

Then Jonathan gets support. The people stand up for him. The people testify of Jonathan's deed as "worked with God" and release him. The people see Jonathan's deed as an act in which he has joined the side of God and has been engaged with Him in the same work. His disobedience to his father is negated by this. It should also have something to say to the people that they are testifying here against their king, a king who they just so desired it and whom they have hailed.

A performance like Jonathan's is only possible if someone is aware of God's thoughts and joins them. The worker then works like God, he follows the way of God. We see this also with the first Christians in the book of Acts.

That Saul must give in because of the people must have been a humiliation for him, just as many things in his life have been humiliating for him. If only he would have admitted that. We do not hear Saul acknowledging that he was wrong. In him we see how the flesh works. Flesh does not distinguish the will of God and has no compassion for those who clearly live with God. It turns victory into defeat and disgraces God-given authority by its extreme commands. It turns joy into mourning and indignation.

In the same way, in many houses hard legalism has jumbled God-given authority, and the exercise of discipline is nothing more than carnal posturing. In such cases it is not surprising that 'the people rise and speak'.

It seems that Saul does not complete the pursuit of the Philistines. His defeat before his own people has diminished his desire to continue his efforts to pursue and destroy the enemies. Therefore, the defeat of the Philistines is not complete, and he gives them the opportunity to return to their own homes. There they can prepare for new attacks on Israel.

Verses 47-48 | Deeds of King Saul

47 Now when Saul had taken the kingdom over Israel, he fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, the sons of Ammon, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Philistines; and wherever he turned, he inflicted punishment.

48 He acted valiantly and defeated the Amalekites, and delivered Israel from the hands of those who plundered them.

Here we hear about some war operations of Saul. The history of Saul is a moral history, not just of facts. Especially his wars and not his government are described. His victories are all imperfect. So it is with defeating the Amalekites in the next chapter.

A complete victory over spiritual enemies is not achieved by a (pretended) confession to be in connection with God. A discussion about (Christian) values and norms can offer a certain protection, but ultimately has no effect in eliminating intolerance from society.

Verses 49-51 | The Family of Saul

49 Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan and Ishvi and Malchi-shua; and the names of his two daughters [were these]: the name of the firstborn Merab and the name of the younger Michal. 50 The name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam the daughter of Ahimaaz. And the name of the captain of his army was Abner the son of Ner, Saul's uncle. 51 Kish [was] the father of Saul, and Ner the father of Abner [was] the son of Abiel.

In these verses announcements are made that are important for understanding the rest of history. Saul's daughter, Michal, will be connected to David. Abner is his nephew, who will also play a prominent role in the coming histories.

Verse 52 | Saul Fights Against the Philistines

52 Now the war against the Philistines was severe all the days of Saul; and when Saul saw any mighty man or any valiant man, he attached him to his staff.

Saul remains a soldier with an eye for all those who can help him in war. He knows how to form his army, but he lacks faith. Therefore, all his efforts, in themselves good, will not have a lasting result. David is not surrounded by the best of Israel, but with them is faith.

The final rejection of Saul comes in the next chapter.

1 Samuel 15

Introduction

1 Samuel 15 is in a way the last chapter about Saul. Here the king himself is rejected after the kingdom has previously been taken from him (1Sam 13:14). With 1 Samuel 16 begins a new phase in God's people, in which David is in the foreground.

God does not simply push Saul aside. The kingdom may be taken away from him, but his person gets another chance. God does this by giving him a task that is easy to carry out. He must completely destroy an archenemy of Israel. Anyone who loves God and His people must hate this terrible enemy. Whoever thinks like God should not have the slightest difficulty in exercising this judgment on Amalek. God gives Saul this new, but at the same time last chance. Unfortunately, we will see that Saul fails.

The task can be simple, but at the same time is serious. To see the seriousness of it and to realize that the consequences of failure are serious, we need to know who Amalek is. Amalek is mentioned for the first time in Exodus 17 (Exo 17:8). There he attacks Israel as soon as the people are delivered from Egypt. It is the first enemy the delivered people will face. Amalek attacks the place where God's people are weakest and when they are exhausted. In Amalek we can see a picture of the flesh and of Satan, who controls the flesh.

God has announced that He will destroy Amalek (Exo 17:14). But God also has patience with Amalek. In the book of Numbers, we find a second clue of the judgment on Amalek (Num 24:7b). The downfall of Amalek is related there to the arrival of the great King. As a foreshadowing thereof David, and not Saul, will completely defeat Amalek. Thus will the Lord Jesus let cast the devil into the abyss and accept His reign (Rev 20:1-6). In his farewell speech Moses recalls the extermination of Amalek (Deu 25:19). As Moses points out, the picture shows that the flesh will work easily and that we will then be an easy prey for Satan when we are weak.

Verses 1-3 | The Command to Exterminate Amalek

1 Then Samuel said to Saul, "The LORD sent me to anoint you as king over His people, over Israel; now therefore, listen to the words of the LORD. 2 Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I will punish Amalek [for] what he did to Israel, how he set himself against him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt. 3 Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.'"

Samuel comes to Saul. He first reminds Saul of his anointing. This anointing was not Samuel's own initiative. He anointed Saul on the explicit command of the LORD. Anointing is done with a view to a service for the LORD, to which obedience to the words of God is directly linked. Samuel says directly to Saul that he must listen to the words of God.

Anointing and obedience to God's Word belong together. That also applies to us. We are anointed as well, with the Holy Spirit. We may be held accountable for what we are.

Samuel passes on the words of the LORD who presents Himself as the LORD of His hosts. He gave Saul command of the Israel's hosts. He is the true King, both over all that is on earth and over the hosts and a kingdom higher than the earth. He reminds Saul of what Amalek did to Israel and how He judges that (Deu 25:17-18). Amalek stood in Israel's way when the people were freed from Egypt by him.

God has long patience with His enemies and those of His people, but once comes the reckoning. Now the judgment must be exercised, and that judgment must be total. Nothing but the absolute authority of God justifies this judgment. This fight will not enrich Israel: all people and animals must be killed.

Verses 4-7 | Saul Defeats the Amalekites

4 Then Saul summoned the people and numbered them in Telaim, 200,000 foot soldiers and 10,000 men of Judah. 5 Saul came to the city of Amalek and set an ambush in the valley. 6 Saul said to the Kenites, "Go, depart, go down from among the Amalekites, so that I do not destroy you with them; for you

showed kindness to all the sons of Israel when they came up from Egypt." So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. 7 So Saul defeated the Amalekites, from Havilah as you go to Shur, which is east of Egypt.

Saul is preparing for the battle. It seems that he obeys the LORD. He calls the people and a large army comes up. That is something else than the six hundred men he had with him some time ago in his fight against the Philistines (1Sam 14:2). Jonathan's victory and its results have given the people the courage to go to battle again.

Saul counts them at Telaim, which means 'lambs'. He counts them as lambs. He is not overconfident either but works with consultation. The setting of an ambush indicates this. Before attacking Amalek, he does a favor to the Kenites.

The Kenites belong to the Midianites. From there also came the father-in-law of Moses (Jdg 1:16; Num 10:29). The Kenites have been connected to Israel by Moses and have proved to the people a blessing in the person of Jethro. Saul acknowledges the friendliness that their ancestors have proven to Israel when they came from Egypt. Jethro and his family have helped and served Israel in their journey through the wilderness (Num 10:29-31).

From this we can learn that those who come after us can benefit from our good works when we are no longer there. God is not unjust to forget even one kindness that has been shown to His people (Heb 6:10). He will reward every good deed, if it is not already on earth, then certainly in the resurrection.

Another lesson is that it is dangerous to be found in the company of God's enemies. Here the Kenites are warned to leave. This warning is still valid today. It is our duty and our interest to depart from any company that does not put the Lord Jesus in the center, so that we do not have fellowship with the sins of that company and do not receive the plagues that come upon it (Rev 18:4). The Jews have a saying: Woe to the wicked, and woe to the neighbor.

When the Kenites departed from the Amalekites, Saul defeats Amalek. It is more a killing of convicted criminals than a war against fighting enemies.

The result cannot be questionable, because the matter is fair, and the vocation is clear. Saul executes the LORD's command.

Verses 8-9 | Saul Spares Agag and the Best of the Cattle

8 He captured Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. 9 But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were not willing to destroy them utterly; but everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.

Saul's obedience is not complete. He kills all the people of Amalek, but he spares their king. The people are also disobedient, but Saul is mentioned first in not fully executing God's command. He confirms the serious truth of Romans 8 (Rom 8:7-8) .

The best is spared. Saul and the people do not want to judge this. It is a question of their will. It is a picture of a man in the flesh who wants to do away with the worst excesses, but spares everything that seems to be good. That is a denial of the depravity of the flesh and disobedience to the Word of God.

No one shall condone drunkenness or fornication doctrinally. But when it comes to religious rituals and legal formalism or an unequal yoke with an unbeliever in the work of the Lord, one talks differently. All of that can be spared, on the pretext that it can be devoted to the Lord's service.

The sin of Saul and of anyone who deals with these things in this way is giving an own interpretation of what God has said. Such interpretations are always given with an eye to one's own desires and the desires of the people of God, while ignoring God's explicit command.

Verses 10-11 | The Regret of the LORD

10 Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, 11 "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands." And Samuel was distressed and cried out to the LORD all night.

Then comes the word of the LORD to Samuel. The LORD tells Samuel of Saul's disobedience and what is the consequence thereof. He decides to reject Saul and announces this to Samuel. The LORD says that He regrets that He has appointed Saul king.

If God regrets anything, it is not because He must come back to a wrong decision made by Him. Regret in God is not what it is in us. In us it is a change of meaning and will, but with Him it is a change in His method. He does not change His will, but He wants a change. His regret is not the result of an act of Himself, but of man's actions. God's regret shows that He is deeply sad about what man has done with what He has given him, not about what He Himself has done. He never needs to revoke anything (verse 29). Although God knows everything in advance, including the evil that will happen, He is full of sadness when that evil happens.

Samuel's reaction to what the LORD tells him shows that he is a true man of God. He gets angry with Saul and at the same time he calls to God all night for this one man. anger and grief can go together, as we read of the Lord Jesus (Mk 3:5a). There is anger about sin and grief about the sinner. Samuel is the great prayer who has said that he will not cease to pray for the people (1Sam 12:23). His calling to God indicates a deep inner involvement and a great movement of mind.

Verses 12-15 | Saul's 'Obedience'

12 Samuel rose early in the morning to meet Saul; and it was told Samuel, saying, "Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set up a monument for himself, then turned and proceeded on down to Gilgal." 13 Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "Blessed are you of the LORD! I have carried out the command of the LORD." 14 But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" 15 Saul said, "They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; but the rest we have utterly destroyed."

Samuel must convey the message of God to Saul. He did not sleep that night but called to God. From that fellowship with God he goes to Saul. Before he meets Saul, he is told where Saul is, what he did and where he then went. God supports His servant in his task.

The fact that Saul has erected a monument for himself shows that he is looking for his own honor (cf. 2Sam 18:18). The word “monument” is literally “hand”, symbolizing his actions, what he has accomplished. Now he is in Gilgal. Samuel follows him until there. There everything becomes public.

Saul does not take the place that suits him against the man of God. He does not wait until Samuel starts. He does not ask what Samuel comes for, but immediately takes the floor, to praise himself and to tell how obedient he has been. Saul deceives his own conscience through his words. He takes the initiative because he feels that he has not been obedient. The presence of a man of God like Samuel can only make him restless about his incomplete execution of the command. This is how it is when we come to someone who lives with the Lord, while we fill in our lives with the Lord in a loose way.

Samuel is not deceived by the elation with which Saul meets him and the testimony he gives about himself. First, Samuel is informed by the LORD of the reality of Saul’s actions. Secondly, Samuel points to the evidence that Saul was not obedient. He hears the bleating of sheep and the lowing of the oxen. How is this possible when he has exterminated everything according to the LORD’s command?

Saul’s pompous talk of devotion to the LORD is being denied by the noise of the spared sheep and oxen. Anyone who says that he is full of the Lord but does not read the Bible or thinks he does not need the upbuilding of his faith in Christian meetings, shows the same contradiction. The deeds show the lie of the words. What is spared of the flesh contradicts a confession of devotion. There is the same arbitrariness with such believers as with Saul. Later on, we see Saul does thoroughly act against Abimelech, whom he suspects of sympathy for David. He spares nothing from him (1Sam 22:19).

The bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen are like the rust of gold and silver (Jam 5:3a). The beautiful confession is contradicted by the practice. It is nothing new that beautifully looking confessions of obedience to God’s commandments are at odds with giving in to the flesh and love of the world. If the beautiful confession sounds that nothing on earth has value but the Lord Jesus, while we live in large and luxuriously furnished houses and drive expensive cars, that confession is not worth much.

Saul not only presents things better than they are, but he also lies. He has spared the best himself (verse 9), but he blames others by saying that the people did it. This is the old shear-off system. It has already been put into practice by Adam and Eve. He also speaks three times about “the LORD your God” (verses 15,21,30). Indeed, it is not his God, but only Samuel’s. He has no bond with God.

How David reacts very differently when the sword of judgment hangs above the people (2Sam 24:17). Moses also wanted to be exterminated out of God’s book himself, and that for a disobedient people (Exo 32:32). Above all, the Lord Jesus reacted very different, who says: “If you seek Me, let these go their way” (Jn 18:8).

Verses 16-19 | Samuel Confronts Saul

16 Then Samuel said to Saul, “Wait, and let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night.” And he said to him, “Speak!” 17 Samuel said, “Is it not true, though you were little in your own eyes, you were [made] the head of the tribes of Israel? And the LORD anointed you king over Israel, 18 and the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, ‘Go and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are exterminated.’ 19 Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD, but rushed upon the spoil and did what was evil in the sight of the LORD?”

Samuel has enough of Saul’s justifications and silences him. He must tell what God said to him last night. Saul gives in and gives Samuel the opportunity to speak. Samuel does not go directly to the heart of the matter. He introduces the actual message by reminding Saul of a few things. He recalls him his humble beginnings and how he was then in his own eyes and how he had become the head of the tribes of Israel. He also reminds Saul that this was a matter from the LORD.

The act of anointing was done by Samuel, but Samuel did it on behalf of the LORD. All that Saul has become he is through the LORD. This is in stark contrast to the monument he erected for himself. He has seen himself gradually grow bigger. As he has grown in his own eyes, the LORD has disappeared from his field of vision.

The anointing by the LORD means that he depends for everything on the LORD and that he receives his commands from Him. Thus the LORD has given him the clear command to exterminate the Amalekites. For this he would have to fight, but in doing so he could have count on the strength of the LORD.

After Samuel has recalled Saul of what the LORD has done with him, and of the clear commission which the LORD has given him, he asks Saul a question. The question is not whether he has carried out the command, but why he has not carried it out. Disobedience is established and no longer needs to be proved or acknowledged. It is about whether Saul wants to acknowledge his disobedience honestly and repent of his disobedience. Samuel paints the disobedience in bright colors. He states that Saul was “rushed upon the spoil” and that he did “did what was evil in the sight of the LORD”.

Verses 20-21 | Excuses of Saul

20 Then Saul said to Samuel, “I did obey the voice of the LORD, and went on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and have brought back Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21 But the people took [some] of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal.”

It appears that the conscience of Saul is no longer reachable. He defends himself against Samuel’s clear charges. He points out once again that he has carried out the LORD’s task. He destroyed the Amalekites, didn’t he? The fact that he has saved Agag is not allowed to have a name. Only a grumbler like Samuel pays attention to that.

Except to belittle his disobedience and in fact to wave it away, Saul refers again to the people, to what they have done. Indeed, they did not quite do what God said, but they did it with the best intentions. They have spared the best of the cattle to bring it to the LORD. Do you see that they have thought of the LORD?

But what impression does one have of the holiness of God? Saul acts according to the principle: “Let us do evil that good may come” (Rom 3:8). We act on this principle if we want to justify what is clear disobedience.

Verses 22-23 | Why Saul Is Rejected

22 Samuel said,

*“Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices
As in obeying the voice of the LORD?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
[And] to heed than the fat of rams.*

23 *“For rebellion is as the sin of divination,
And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
He has also rejected you from [being] king.”*

Samuel tells Saul that the LORD is not interested in his sacrifices, but in his obedience to Him and his listening to Him. This is a timeless principle. It applies anytime and anywhere. Our whole relationship with God begins with listening and our whole relationship with God is maintained by listening. This listening must be done in an attitude, a mind of obedience.

Samuel starts with obeying. Only when there is a willingness to obey there can and will also be listened to and understood what God says. God does not want our good intentions, because they stem from our own ideas about serving Him. We think that He can be very satisfied with our sacrifices, mentally or physically. It is important that we make these sacrifices to Him, but the one question is what our motive is. It is not only important that we do something. It is especially important that we do what He wants and that we do it because He says it. That also determines the time of our acts.

Scripture never says that appearance is unimportant. The sacrifice is important. However, it has no meaning for God if the inner being is not in agreement with it. God wants both, but first He wants obedience. He prefers obedience to sacrifice, for He despises all sacrifices if the heart is not obedient. If the heart is obedient, He accepts the sacrifices with great joy. The fat of rams is the best of the sacrificial animal, but listening is much better.

It is much easier to bring a cow or a lamb to be burned at the altar than to act with every high thought as it is written: “Destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and [we are] taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2Cor 10:5) and

subject our will to His will. Obedience is the fame of the angels (Psa 103:20) and is also our fame.

If God is pleased with us and our services, then we are happy, then we have reached our goal. However, if we follow our own will, believing that we are serving Him, He says to us: “What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me?” (Isa 1:11). Now we are clearly told here that humble, sincere, and meticulous obedience to the will of God is more pleasing to Him than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. Careful listening and doing what He says is more pleasant to God than to perform all kinds of religious acts (Ecc 5:1; Mic 6:6,8; Hos 6:6; Mt 9:13; 12:7).

Saul was not obedient, but rebellious and insubordinate. He resisted the will of God. God has given him a command, and he has not fulfilled it. Samuel calls rebellion a “sin of divination,” for rebellion against God means turning away from God and turning to demons. Saul has also been insubordinate. He did not allow himself to be corrected. Samuel calls it “iniquity and idolatry”. If one sets one’s own standard higher than that of God, it is idolatry, for one’s own self is worshipped, not God. One’s own will is placed above the will and honor of God. Offers from such a person mean nothing to God.

Disobedience is rebellion and is intricately linked to satanic powers of sorcery. Thus, Satan enchanted Eve and made her to revolt against God. Because of this behavior, which clearly showed that Saul rejected the word of the LORD, Saul is rejected from being king.

Verses 24-25 | Saul Asks for Forgiveness

24 Then Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice. 25 Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me, that I may worship the LORD.”

Saul acknowledges that Samuel’s command was a command of the LORD. He acknowledges that he has sinned, but it is not accompanied by a sorrow that is according to the will of God. We also see such a confession with Pharaoh and with Judas, who both said: “I have sinned” (Exo 10:16; Mt 27:4), but without them doing repentance for sin.

Saul does not take full responsibility for the debt. He still blames the people for fear of the consequences of his actions. He is afraid of the people and listens to their voice instead of God's voice. He fears the people instead of God. Such a person is unfit to rule. "Fear of man [someone] lays a trap" (Pro 29:25).

Saul has no personal relationship with God. He looks at what is in view and seeks support from Samuel. If Samuel would forgive his sin and wants to return with him, he will put it right again with God.

Verses 26-29 | Saul Rejected as King

26 But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel." 27 As Samuel turned to go, [Saul] seized the edge of his robe, and it tore. 28 So Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to your neighbor, who is better than you. 29 Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind."

Samuel does not allow to be manipulated. He sticks to what God has told him and repeats this for Saul as the reason for his decision. Samuel remains at the side of God. When Samuel wants to leave, Saul seizes the edge of his robe. He wants to keep Samuel with him by force.

This again self-willed act of Saul causes a tear in Samuel's robe. Samuel connects to the tearing of his robe directly a message from the LORD. He explains the tearing of his robe as a symbolic act for the fact that the LORD has taken away the kingship of Saul. Samuel adds that the kingship will be given to a "who is better than" he. Samuel does not mention a name, but we know it is David.

Samuel then gives a testimony about the incorruptibility of God and the immutability of His intentions. God is the Unchanging of His people. He does not have to come back to anything because He would have made a wrong decision. He does not have to return here to the judgment of Saul, as if He had passed judgment too quickly. He is not a man who would lie about a decision He has made or should regret (Num 23:19).

A human being makes mistakes. As a result, he may have consequences that he would like to undo but cannot. This is not the case with God. God knows what He does. God perfectly oversees all the consequences of His actions. This has nothing to do with probability, but with His perfect knowledge of the person He Himself created. God knows what He can hold man responsible for and what He can expect of him. He does not overpower man.

If man fails in his responsibilities, it is due to man himself. God's knowledge that man will fail is related to His omniscience. He is God. The failure of the human being does not overtake him. Man's failure is not the result of God's wrong decision, but of man's wrong decisions. That God also uses man's failure to fulfill His plans of grace is a matter that we humans cannot explain. In this God asks us to trust Him.

Verses 30-33 | Samuel Kills Agag

30 Then he said, "I have sinned; [but] please honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and go back with me, that I may worship the LORD your God." 31 So Samuel went back following Saul, and Saul worshiped the LORD. 32 Then Samuel said, "Bring me Agag, the king of the Amalekites." And Agag came to him cheerfully. And Agag said, "Surely the bitterness of death is past." 33 But Samuel said, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women." And Samuel hewed Agag to pieces before the LORD at Gilgal.

Once again Saul pronounces that he has sinned (verse 30; verse 24), but again because of the consequences and not because of the deed. Also here it appears why he wants Samuel to go with him. He is only interested in his own honor for the people. He wanted to keep himself high. The people look high up against Samuel. If he could secure Samuel's company, his position with the people would be guaranteed. Saul seeks external, human grip and then promises to worship the LORD.

Remarkably enough we read that Samuel meets Saul's wishes. Is it because he has a weakness for Saul? In the next chapter we see how much Samuel is attached to Saul. It resembles the weakness Paul has for his Jewish brothers who are zealots for the law and in which Paul is persuaded to act below his position as a believer delivered from the law (Acts 21:20-26). Saul also

keeps his word and worships before the LORD. But what is the point of this tribute to the LORD if the heart has not really changed?

It is also possible that Samuel goes with Saul to finish what Saul should have done. He orders that Agag, whom he calls “the king of the Amalekites”, be brought to him. It seems as if Agag is coming whistling because he thinks he will be spared. It is impossible to determine whether such a thought is stupidity or overconfidence on the part of Agag. In every fall his optimism is unfounded. His optimism also shows the complete lack of repentance for his atrocities.

Before Samuel passes judgment on Agag, he tells him his crimes. Then Samuel, the old prophet, does what Saul should have done, to his shame, and cuts Agag into pieces. It says that he does it “before the LORD at Gilgal”. Samuel acts in accordance with God’s thoughts and not out of vengefulness.

Agag reaps what he has sowed. He is rewarded for his deeds. The spiritual lesson is clear. With “the sword of the Spirit, that is the Word of God” (Eph 6:17b), the flesh is hewn down in its most beautiful and royal form, in which it is so often spared. Here all ‘Sauls’ of all generations fail. The powers that exist destroy what is wrong to a certain extent, but they do not judge as God judges. The sword can only be stretched over Agag by the hand of a prophet.

Verses 34-35 | Saul and Samuel Definitively Separate

34 Then Samuel went to Ramah, but Saul went up to his house at Gibeah of Saul. 35 Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death; for Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD regretted that He had made Saul king over Israel.

Then the ways of these two men separate. The man who represents the Word of God must turn away from him who has made himself totally unworthy of his company and the trust placed in him.

The farewell will be final. Samuel will not see Saul until the day of his death. For Samuel it is a farewell that hurts him and about which he is sad. Samuel really loved Saul. He sees how this hope of Israel has failed and has been rejected by God.

Humanly speaking, it is understandable, but here too God must reprimand him, as we see in the first verse of the next chapter (1Sam 16:1a). That does not mean, however, that, again humanly spoken, the LORD is not touched. Finally, we read once again that He regrets that He has appointed Saul king over Israel. The LORD grieves over the end of Saul's life.

1 Samuel 16

Introduction

Here begins the history of David, a man who, with his sword and his pen, served the honor of God and the interests of Israel. It is the man who has been previously described as “the man after God’s heart” (1Sam 13:14; Acts 13:22) and who as Saul’s neighbor is “better” than he (1Sam 15:28). David means ‘loved’, ‘beloved’. He is not so for his brothers; but he is it of the LORD. The LORD, that is the Lord Jesus, is the root of David (Rev 22:16; 5:5). David is rooted in Him and comes forth from Him. David came forth from the heart of God.

There are a few statements that shows God’s choice of David in a special way. Thus he is “the man” who is “sought” by the LORD (1Sam 13:14a). He is “found” by the LORD as “My servant” (Psa 89:21), he is “selected” by the LORD as “king” (1Sam 16:1) and “has appointed him as ruler over His people” (1Sam 13:14b). David is in many ways a wonderful type of the Lord Jesus. Time and again we will be reminded of Him in His history.

David is the third protagonist of this Bible book. Of the two other main characters, Samuel and Saul, a lot has already become known to us. Samuel and Saul are both prayed of the LORD, they are asked for. For Samuel is asked of the LORD by a God-fearing mother (1Sam 1:11,20). Saul has also been asked for and this by a whole people, although a people who deviated from God (1Sam 8:5). The name Saul means ‘asked’ or ‘coveted’.

Saul is the man after the heart of the people. By giving him God has given the people what they have asked for. The desire to have a king was not wrong, for God had it in His heart to give them a king. However, they do not ask about God’s time and motives, nor about God’s man. They want a king because they want to be like the nations. However, God uses their question to show the contrast between their taste and His taste. He first meets their desires and then shows them who meets His desires. Here we see the principle: “The spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual” (1Cor 15:46).

David forms a great contrast with both Samuel and Saul. No one asked for David. He is even forgotten. Nobody thinks of him (cf. Ecc 9:14-15). Only God thinks of him (1Sam 13:14). He is therefore God's sovereign gift according to the wishes of His heart. The LORD says that He has chosen David (1Sam 16:1), David is his choice. This contrasts with the way in which Saul became king. He is the choice of the people. Saul responds to their search for their own honor. David will answer to the honor of God.

Verse 1 | Samuel Must Go to Anoint David

1 Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons."

Samuel has a hard time saying goodbye to Saul. He knows God's thoughts about Saul. However, that does not make him happy, but sad. His grief is not superficial. God's rejection of Saul makes a deep impression on him and he grieves over it. He is aware of how much Saul has deviated. How is he to go with the people? God sees his grief. He does not tell him not to grieve but reprimands him for having grieved long enough.

God tells Samuel why he can stop grieving. It is the decision of God. All his prayers and tears cannot incite God to revoke it (cf. 2Sam 12:22-23). The fact that God had to reject Saul has to do with his acts with him because of his behavior. God could not go on with him. He had to reject him and could not keep him as king over His people. Now God wants David to be anointed as the substitute for Saul. This must be done in secret and must also be kept secret. It is not God's intention to make David an insurgent who, after his anointing, forcibly scares Saul and takes his place.

God shares His thoughts so that we may see things as He sees them and feel them as He feels them. If grief prevails, God cannot continue. When He says it is enough, He offers a new perspective at the same time. Samuel is ordered to fill his horn with oil. He must go to anoint someone.

The horn speaks of strength (cf. Lk 1:69). For what Samuel must do, spiritual strength is needed. The horn comes from a sacrificial animal. It reminds us that the kingship of David is based on the sacrifice of the Lord

Jesus, to which every sacrifice in the Old Testament refers. The whole basis of David's anointing is hugely different from that of Saul. Saul is anointed from a flask (1Sam 10:1), which represents fragility.

For the anointing Samuel must go to Bethlehem. He must go to Jesse, because one of his sons has been chosen by God to be king. The name of David is not mentioned by God. "Jesse" means "Yahweh exists". In Bethlehem, the foundation of the generation is laid. Boaz dwelt there (Rth 2:4). Jesse is the son of Obed and Obed is the son of Boaz and Ruth (Rth 4:21-22). David is the great-grandson of Boaz and Ruth.

Bethlehem is located in the area of the tribe of Judah. After the prophecy of Jacob, the Messiah comes forth from this tribe (Gen 49:10; Mic 5:1a). Bethlehem means 'bread house'. That is the place where blessing comes from. The Lord Jesus is "the living bread" (Jn 6:51). The house of the Father is the true 'bread house'. The Lord Jesus came to earth to open its store-rooms and to respond to the spiritual hunger on earth with the Father's abundance.

Verses 2-3 | Samuel Has Objections

2 But Samuel said, "How can I go? When Saul hears [of it], he will kill me." And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' 3 You shall invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for Me the one whom I designate to you."

Samuel has objections. He has sorrow and soul pain because of Saul's rejection, and at the same time he is afraid of Saul. He became an enemy for Saul, but Saul did not become an enemy for him. With Samuel there are no feelings of enmity against Saul.

Samuel has not shown the slightest fear in previous meetings with Saul. He fearlessly told Saul that God is taking the kingship from him and giving it to his neighbor. Perhaps Samuel has already had to deal with a tantrum of Saul, as we see such later in this chapter. If it turns out that he anointed another king, Saul's rage is predictable.

The LORD does not blame Samuel for his fear but comes to meet him. He gives him protection: a sacrificial animal as a peace offering. The sacrificial animal that Samuel must take with him is not only for himself.

It also serves to have a sacrificial meal with it, for which he must invite Jesse. During that meal God will tell who should anoint Samuel. With His indications about the sacrificial animal God – in picture – brings His Son to Samuel and Jesse and his family to show what the basis is on which He deals with him and them.

Verse 4 | Samuel Comes to Bethlehem

4 So Samuel did what the LORD said, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the city came trembling to meet him and said, "Do you come in peace?"

Samuel follows the LORD's command and goes to Bethlehem. When he appears there so unexpectedly, the elders become afraid. This indicates that the people did not expect his coming (cf. Mt 2:3). Their reaction seems to indicate that things are not right. Why else should they be so afraid at the coming of the man of God?

We naturally love the government of the flesh – of which Saul is the type – because it gives us a deceptive rest. As soon as something of God's Spirit comes, it becomes restless and we become afraid. It is with it as with the appearance of Paul in Corinth, through his letter. His letter also reveals that many things are not right. He even threatens to come with the rod (1Cor 4:21).

Verses 5-10 | The Sons of Jesse

5 He said, "In peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." He also consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. 6 When they entered, he looked at Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before Him." 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God [sees] not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." 8 Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either." 9 Next Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either." 10 Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these."

The coming of Samuel is peace, for he comes with a peace offering, and his goal is to anoint David. The offering is for the LORD, and the meal is for Jesse and his sons. To be able to participate in it, consecration is necessary. They need to clean their clothes and themselves. That is what Samuel commands. He takes up the consecration himself. By this act he sets them apart from all the other people of Bethlehem to keep the sacrificial meal with them.

Jesse lets his sons come in one by one. He starts with the oldest and tallest. When Samuel sees him, he is clearly impressed by this appearance (cf. 1Sam 10:24). We see here that even prophets who speak under Divine guidance are as subject to mistakes as other people. We see that also with Nathan (2Sam 7:2-5). Here we see that Samuel is in fact looking for a second Saul.

Eliab's tall stature is reminiscent of Saul. Our natural hearts are quickly impressed by what we see. We must learn that God has never chosen the first born after the flesh. On the contrary, it is precisely they who are under the judgment of death. He chose not Cain, but Abel, not Ishmael, but Isaac, not Esau, but Jacob.

God tells Samuel how He looks at people. It is not about the appearance, but about the heart. This lesson is difficult for us to learn, but it is necessary. The Lord sees the heart that He also knows completely (Jer 17:10; 1Chr 28:9; Psa 7:10; Jer 11:20; 20:12).

After teaching about how God looks at people, the next sons of Jesse pass Samuel by. Every time the LORD says that He has not chosen him. Samuel can happily intercept the voice of the LORD of his own preference. The first Saul has failed. Every next Saul will also fail. We need a man after a completely different model. Even Samuel has yet to learn that. God sees the heart. He knows the heart of David, which is a heart like His own.

So seven sons pass by. In the number seven we see how the complete glory of what man is passes by to make way for the eighth. The number eight speaks of a new beginning. [Here we read that Jesse has eight sons, however in the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 2 only seven are mentioned (1Chr 2:13-15).]

Verses 11-13 | David Anointed

11 And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are these all the children?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and behold, he is tending the sheep." Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here." 12 So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him; for this is he." 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel arose and went to Ramah.

When all the sons have passed by Samuel, he must say that the LORD has not chosen any of them. Then he asks Jesse if he has shown all his sons. Jesse answers that there is another son, the youngest. He did not think of him. None of the seven brothers has thought of him either. They all forgot him. Jesse does not even mention the name of his son, David, but speaks of him as "the youngest". It is clear that David is not the choice of men. Thus the Lord Jesus was passed by, people forgot Him, and did not pay attention to Him. "For not even His brothers were believing in Him" (Jn 7:5).

Jesse says what David is doing at that moment: "behold, he is tending the sheep." In faithfulness he takes care of the few sheep of his father. Samuel gives the order to get David. The way in which Samuel's first meeting with David takes place is very different from Samuel's first meeting with Saul. David is with the sheep, while Saul was looking for lost asses that he also did not yet find. David is literally taken from behind the sheep to become king (Psa 78:70).

Jesse obeys and sends for David. That indeed must be, because without David there will be no meal. He is the main character. When he enters, he comes as it were from nowhere. His name is not even mentioned. However, his beauty is being described. The beauty of David is different from that of Saul. He resembles the Lord Jesus (Song 5:10a). He is ruddy, reddish, something special in Israel. He also has beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. This is where his moral characteristics come to expression. His eyes point to his insight which is shaped through his relationship with God. His appearance relates to his behavior, his actions, in which he is also led by God. Samuel must anoint him.

David is anointed in the midst of his brothers. Saul is anointed when he is all alone. David is anointed twice more after this: in the midst of his tribe, Judah (2Sam 2:4), and over all Israel (2Sam 5:3). Here, as the Lord Jesus is anointed at His baptism, he takes His place amid the remnant. In Psalm 89 (Psa 89:20-21) we see the connection between election and anointing in words that apply to the Lord Jesus in their fullness (cf. Isa 61:1; Lk 4:18-21; Psa 45:7-8; Heb 1:8-9).

We too are anointed with the Holy Spirit (2Cor 1:21; 1Jn 2:20) We have not only received the Holy Spirit in us by faith, but there is also talk of the Holy Spirit Who is upon us. This is especially the case when it comes to do a service for God. There is a direct link between anointing and service. In this context, the Lord Jesus speaks of being “clothed with power from on high” (Lk 24:49).

At the anointing of Saul Samuel spoke a few words (1Sam 10:1). At the anointing of David, he says nothing, at least not something that is recorded. That is not to say that David did not know the meaning of his anointing. The emphasis is on the fact of anointing.

The true king is anointed now. But it pleases God that the way of climbing the throne will be as special as his election as king. Who has ever made such a journey to the throne after being anointed, except the Lord Jesus, of whom David is an example in so many ways? David is made fit for government, while at the same time the people become public in their anger. God uses that anger to prepare His chosen vessel for the throne. He teaches David by trusting him alone. David is probably around twenty years old here. He is thirty when Saul dies. So he suffered from Saul during about ten years.

When Samuel has anointed David, he returns to Ramah. After this we read of him only twice (1Sam 19:18; 25:1). He retreats to Ramah to die there in peace, as it were. To have seen his eyes, so to speak, in David, the salvation (cf. Lk 2:27b-30), in whom the scepter came into the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10).

Verses 14-17 | An Evil Spirit of God on Saul

14 Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him. 15 Saul's servants then said to him, "Behold now,

an evil spirit from God is terrorizing you. 16 Let our lord now command your servants who are before you. Let them seek a man who is a skillful player on the harp; and it shall come about when the evil spirit from God is on you, that he shall play [the harp] with his hand, and you will be well.” 17 So Saul said to his servants, “Provide for me now a man who can play well and bring [him] to me.”

While the Spirit rests upon David from the anointing, He departs from Saul. When the Spirit of the LORD departs from Saul and an evil spirit of the LORD terrorizes him, it does not mean that Saul is a believer first and then no longer. Saul has not been a believer. Nor is it about the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Saul is the anointed king, and as such God has been with him. Because Saul rejected God, God withdraws from him.

In the empty place comes an evil spirit, for what God does not fill, the devil fills. In agreement with His spirit, God sends an evil spirit which, like all evil spirits, is also subject only to God and is used by Him to achieve His purpose. Satan is always limited in his actions and can only act within the limits set by God (Job 1:12; 2:6).

It goes with Saul just like once with Pharaoh. Saul has so often rejected God that now is the moment when God cannot help him. No doubt the evil spirit will have given him the feeling that he has been abandoned by God and no longer has His approval. An evil spirit processes spiritual suffering and brings extreme despair and finally suicide. He makes a person incapable to perform his normal activities because he only makes him busy with himself.

Saul's servants see that it is an evil spirit coming from God. They have compassion with him and propose a solution. The means that his servants recommend to him for enlightenment is music. It would have been much better if they had advised him to go to God with sincere repentance. They could also have suggested asking Samuel to come and pray for him and plead with God for him. Then he would not only have had enlightenment for the moment, but the good spirit of God would have returned to him.

But their goal is to make him happy and thus heal him. Through such gods many, whose conscience is convinced and startled of sin, are led to destruction. Their proposal is a method whereby all the worries of the soul

are smothered in the pleasures of the senses. The servants of Saul would not have been wrong to present music as an aid to cheer up his spirit, if they had sent it to the prophet to give Saul good advice.

What is positive is that they have not proposed to ask a sorceress or soothsayer to cast out the evil spirit by incantations. Such an ungodly practice we find with those who adorn themselves with the name Christian, but in their distress have consulted the devil, with whom they have resorted to hell. It will be nothing less than a miracle of divine grace if those who surrender in this way to Satan are ever delivered from his power.

Verse 18 | A Servant Describes David

18 Then one of the young men said, "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is a skillful musician, a mighty man of valor, a warrior, one prudent in speech, and a handsome man; and the LORD is with him."

The servants have known David for a long time. They know his music. He has sung and played about God. Music can have a soothing effect (2Kgs 3:15). However, it only brings a natural peace. There must be played by a man of God, because it is about scaring an evil spirit. It is not a therapy, but a spiritual struggle. That is why more about David is being told than just that he can play and sing. Besides being able to, he is also known as a hero and warrior. The servant who knows David's musical qualities has also heard David speak, and he also testifies of this before Saul (cf. Jn 7:46). As the servant before Saul speaks of David, his brothers know him not, for they have no eye for it.

The servant knows all this of David, without David having been in the army. These are all characteristics that only stand out when they are used. With Saul it is only the appearance, his tall stature. The appearance of David is also beautiful, but different than with Saul. It is only beautiful for those who have an eye for it. It is not for the natural eye, but for the spiritual eye. For that beauty we must look deeper than the surface, deeper than the directly perceptible.

The last thing the servant says about David is that the LORD is with him. The servant has also noticed that. This testimony is given several times of Joseph (Gen 39:2-3,21,23). It is also given from the Lord Jesus (Acts 10:38).

Everything is reminiscent of the Lord Jesus. That the servant notices it as a special thing, says everything of the people of God, for it is something that should have been said of the whole people.

Verses 19-23 | David With Saul

19 So Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, "Send me your son David who is with the flock." 20 Jesse took a donkey [loaded with] bread and a jug of wine and a young goat, and sent [them] to Saul by David his son. 21 Then David came to Saul and attended him; and Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor bearer. 22 Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Let David now stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight." 23 So it came about whenever the [evil] spirit from God came to Saul, David would take the harp and play [it] with his hand; and Saul would be refreshed and be well, and the evil spirit would depart from him.

Saul listens to his servant's proposal and sends for David. He mentions the name of David, so there is no doubt about who he means. Furthermore, he notes as a peculiarity that it is about him "who is with the flock". David is not at home, but at work with the animals he must take care of and protect.

Jesse acknowledges the honor that Saul has given him in this way. He sends David to Saul with a gift. Thus David comes to Saul. That God sends an evil spirit to Saul is the reason why David comes to Saul's court. Thus David comes to the court of Saul through God sovereignty. He must get to know Saul, and vice versa. By God's providence David comes to Saul, just as Joseph and Moses previously had come into the opposition of the rulers of their days.

Also at Saul's court David is faithful in his service. His service was much appreciated by Saul, so much so that he started to love David. Saul is the first person we read that he loves David. The hatred of Saul he later shows is not directed at David's person, but at what he does and will be. He hates him not because of his attributes, but because of his calling. He sees in David a competitor for the throne he does not want to give up.

Later he will make him his armor bearer, a special function of trust in the king's immediate surroundings. The Spirit is already pointing this out here. The question to Jesse to always have David with him is also asked

later. Saul initially only met David as a player during his angry moods. Later he gets to know him better.

It must have given a good feeling to Jesse as a father that Saul gives such a testimony of his son. David has behaved as a good citizen and met the expectations. In the same way, employers should also be able to talk about our children as employees.

Saul benefits from the service of David, but it does not change his attitude toward the LORD. Just as the evil spirit of Saul departs from him by the music of David, so too the service of the Lord Jesus during His walk on earth enlightened many who were possessed by evil spirits. Even in the days of the Lord Jesus, many profited from the blessings He spread, but also without conversion to God.

Harps are sometimes linked to prophecy service (1Sam 10:5; 1Chr 25:1a). The application is to make that the Word of God that is spoken in a meeting can have a calming effect. The service of New Testament prophets – a service that is open to every brother in the congregation (1Cor 14:25-33) – is about the upbuilding of the church. “But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation” (1Cor 14:3). When such words are spoken, it will be a pleasant experience for any attendee who expects something from the Lord that is useful to his or her spiritual life.

1 Samuel 17

Introduction

In the previous chapter David was anointed in secret. In this chapter the eyes of the whole people are turned to him. Here David stands before the whole people and in the first place before God. In the previous chapter he incidentally appeared at court at Saul's request in response to Saul's personal need. So there has been a superficial acquaintance of Saul with David, who has also been limited in the outward renown. Now comes the moment when God brings David to the court, in connection with the needs of all the people. The fame which he thereby acquires is general. In this way he comes also permanently at the court of Saul.

The events in this chapter are intended by God as a trial of David's faith. He could openly testify of the service that the LORD commands him to do. It is also the touchstone for anyone who wants to serve the Lord. For this it is important to see who the Philistines and Goliath are, and who Saul and David are.

Goliath is the Philistine par excellence. In him is united all the power of the Philistines. He is the personalization of the evil spirit behind all the Philistines, as the dragon is the outward form of Satan. He is a giant, impressive as the dragon. Goliath is from the race of the giants. That race was eradicated by Joshua, but there are still some remaining in Gath (Jos 11:22). Goliath is a picture of Satan as the dragon about to devour the Son (Rev 12:4b). After this chapter David becomes a fugitive, a picture of the feeing of the remnant in the great tribulation, while the Lord Jesus is in heaven.

Saul does not take up the fight. He should have done that. In a way he resembles Goliath. He is also great, and his spear is also characteristic for him. And he becomes like Goliath a persecutor of David. Saul is a picture of the antichrist; Goliath is a picture of the Roman empire. They are each other's allies in persecuting David. Goliath actually is a bloated Saul.

Why are they here Philistines? It is that people who are amid God's people in the land and are always out to deprive the people of God of their blessings. We can make an application of showing their power. Like the enemy

does here, so will the enemies do in the great tribulation. They will do all they can to keep the people of God out of the land of promise and to kill those who are in it, thus depriving them of the blessings.

For us, the kingdom of David already exists. In David we recognize the picture of our Lord of Whom we are servants. We also have to do with the power of Satan. Satan also wants to prevent us from occupying ourselves with the blessings of heaven. The nominal Christians (Philistines) are his faithful servants. They do their best to keep the believers away from their blessings. But among God's people there is the true David in the Spirit. Just as David is in the army, as anointed king, but without being noticed, so the Lord Jesus is also today among of His people which is surrounded by evil powers that fight it and want to frighten it.

Verses 1-3 | The Philistines and the Israelites

1 Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle; and they were gathered at Socoh which belongs to Judah, and they camped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. 2 Saul and the men of Israel were gathered and camped in the valley of Elah, and drew up in battle array to encounter the Philistines. 3 The Philistines stood on the mountain on one side while Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with the valley between them.

Two armies have drawn up in battle array. There is no fight yet. Both armies stand on a mountain slope. A valley separates them. There is no connection between the people of God and those who are not.

Verses 4-7 | Goliath

4 Then a champion came out from the armies of the Philistines named Goliath, from Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. 5 [He had] a bronze helmet on his head, and he was clothed with scale-armor which weighed five thousand shekels of bronze. 6 [He] also [had] bronze greaves on his legs and a bronze javelin [slung] between his shoulders. 7 The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and the head of his spear [weighed] six hundred shekels of iron; his shield-carrier also walked before him.

Goliath shows up. He is a giant belonging to a giant family, which indicates his demonic origin (cf. Gen 6:4). The race of giants is mentioned

again in the account of the wars David waged with the Philistines (2Sam 21:15-22; 1Chr 20:4-8). Goliath is the leader of the Philistines and he is the Philistine par excellence. He is not only “a” champion, but “the” champion (verse 23), the famous champion. The whole army of the Philistines owes its strength to him.

The description given of him, shows what an impressive stature Goliath is. With his length and armor the number six is connected, which is the number of a man and of the beast (Rev 13:18). Against those weapons and that greatness, the natural human begins nothing at all. Even Jonathan, who has previously defeated a Philistine section in the power of faith (1Sam 14:11-14), fails here.

Verses 8-11 | Goliath Defies Israel

8 He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel and said to them, “Why do you come out to draw up in battle array? Am I not the Philistine and you servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me. 9 If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will become your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall become our servants and serve us.” 10 Again the Philistine said, “I defy the ranks of Israel this day; give me a man that we may fight together.” 11 When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

Goliath comes forward and speaks his challenging words. His defiance is that he calls the Israelites “servants of Saul”. With his blasting language he challenges Israel to fight him. It means the destruction of the giant, for he defies, but he has no knowledge of God. If God in Israel has a people on earth, the giant will have to deal with Him, even though there is so little of God to see as far as Israel is concerned. When the Philistine sees Israel, he may think that it has no God, but unbelief never looks beyond what it perceives with the eye. In the same way, the stories from the past that clearly prove the existence of God are rejected by unbelief as fabrications.

On the other hand, it is shocking to see that the awareness of the people that they are the people of God is not present in the people themselves either. The defiant words of Goliath, as it were his profession of faith, bring fear to Saul and the whole people. The whole scene shows the powerlessness of God’s people and the absolute need for a deliverer. He is found in David,

the man whom no one thinks of. We are not reading about Jonathan. He is a hero of faith, but not of the quality of David, he does not reach to his level. David is a picture of the Lord Jesus, Jonathan of a believer.

The fact that Goliath's language is nothing but cutting, is also apparent when he is defeated. When he was killed, the Philistines did not keep their word and did not submit to Israel as servants.

Verses 12-19 | Jesse Sends David to His Brothers

12 Now David was the son of the Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, whose name was Jesse, and he had eight sons. And Jesse was old in the days of Saul, advanced [in years] among men. 13 The three older sons of Jesse had gone after Saul to the battle. And the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and the second to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. 14 David was the youngest. Now the three oldest followed Saul, 15 but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's flock at Bethlehem. 16 The Philistine came forward morning and evening for forty days and took his stand. 17 Then Jesse said to David his son, "Take now for your brothers an ephah of this roasted grain and these ten loaves and run to the camp to your brothers. 18 Bring also these ten cuts of cheese to the commander of [their] thousand, and look into the welfare of your brothers, and bring back news of them. 19 For Saul and they and all the men of Israel are in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines."

Verses 12-15 explain why David is not with Saul. He is back to his father's sheep. When he was called to be anointed, he was there (1Sam 16:11). When he was called to go to Saul, he was there too (1Sam 16:19). He can be found there every time. If he is shortly called to go to the army, he is there as well (verse 15). Every time David is called, he is found to be faithful busy in his daily work.

The contrast with his three oldest brothers is great. They are afraid of the work that is expected of them as soldiers. Like Saul, they represent the glory of man. They are only of slightly lower quality than Saul and just as powerless as he is to fight Goliath.

While David faithfully does his work, the Philistine comes forward twice a day on the battlefield to let his cuddly and defiant words run high. With

this he demolishes the state of mind of Saul and his army. Forty is the number of trial. Saul, Israel, and the brothers of David are all being tried. Man has always been put to the test whether he can do something against the power under which he suffers as a slave. But nobody can stand up to the dragon.

While God's people are afraid of the enemy and the enemy boasts of his power, the father speaks to the son that he must go to his brothers in the army (verse 17). In the same way Jacob once spoke to Joseph (Gen 37:13). It is a beautiful picture of God Who says this to His Son in view of people who are in the power of Satan. David is sent when the situation is hopeless. There is no one who has any courage to fight.

When Jesse sends David, he gives him blessings to distribute. Thus the Lord Jesus came into the world not to judge the world, but with blessing for the people. Jesse also asks him to "bring back news of them". He wants something shown to him as proof that they are doing well. Jesse wants to know if they live and how they live.

We see here the care that God-fearing parents have for their children when they are no longer at home, for example because of study. They will want to know how they are doing, where they are staying, which places they visit, whether or not they are places of temptation. They are concerned about how they behave and in what company they are. It is good that children behave worthy their upbringing and remember that if they are not under the eye of their parents, they are under God's eye.

Verses 20-24 | David Comes to the Camp

20 So David arose early in the morning and left the flock with a keeper and took [the supplies] and went as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the circle of the camp while the army was going out in battle array shouting the war cry. 21 Israel and the Philistines drew up in battle array, army against army. 22 Then David left his baggage in the care of the baggage keeper, and ran to the battle line and entered in order to greet his brothers. 23 As he was talking with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine from Gath named Goliath, was coming up from the army of the Philistines, and he spoke these same words; and David heard [them]. 24 When all the men of Israel saw the man, they fled from him and were greatly afraid.

David goes, but not without taking care of the sheep. He goes because he has received a command from his father.

When he comes close to the army, everyone is in turmoil, because the army must draw up in battle array. Yet it is nothing more than an outward display because there is only fear for the enemy. The noise can impress someone who knows nothing about battle, but in reality, it means nothing. It is camouflage of the real impotence that prevails.

God's providence brings David to the army at the right time, as both armies prepare for battle. On both sides one positions oneself in battle array. When David sees all the movement, he hurries. He is aware that something is going to happen and feels that it is important to be there. In his rush to get there he makes sure his baggage is in safe hands. Before he does anything else, he complies with his father's request and asks his brothers about their prosperity. While he is speaking with them, Goliath appears and makes his roaring language heard. It is so remarkable that David hears the words of the Philistine. The Lord also hears all the vain words that people speak and will judge them on that basis (Mt 12:37).

All the men of Israel also see the Philistine and hear what he says. The appearance of the giant frightens the whole army to death, and they run. All the men of Israel are still afraid, even though Goliath has been doing it for so many days. They do not get used to it. This is because they do not trust in God and He must therefore leave them and leave them to themselves (cf. Deu 32:30).

David is an exception. He is not afraid because he knows that the LORD is with him. He is rightly a man who we can say is skilled in his work and therefore on the way to promotion. He will be put in the service of the king (Pro 22:29a).

Verses 25-27 | The Reward That Saul Promises

25 The men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who is coming up? Surely he is coming up to defy Israel. And it will be that the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel." 26 Then David spoke to the men who were standing by him, saying, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and

takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?" 27 The people answered him in accord with this word, saying, "Thus it will be done for the man who kills him."

The Israelites talk to each other about whether they have seen the giant. There is no thought of God in them. They also talk about Goliath defying Israel. They do not think of the fact that he defies God. Another topic of conversation is Saul's promise that whoever will defeat the Philistine will receive a reward. In fact, three rewards are involved: great wealth, becoming his daughter to wife and thus becoming son-in-law of the king and being free from all charges, like taxes and conscription, for all who belong to him.

Here we see a picture of the reward the Lord Jesus received for defeating the enemy, the devil. What Saul promises, the Lord Jesus received from God: great riches, i.e. all power in heaven and on earth and a bride, the church. Also, all His family are free from all charges: they are in the freedom of God's children, they are free from the law.

David asks once more about the reward for defeating the Philistine. He is, as it were, surprised at such a great reward for one in his eyes, the eyes of faith, so simple thing. The reason for David's calm is clear. He does not measure the giant against himself, but he understands that it is a matter between the Philistine and God.

His words about the Philistine show that he speaks of him with contempt. David's concern is not with the reward, but with the reproach that is done to the LORD. He speaks of the army of Israel as "the armies of the living God". It is also the struggle of "the living God", an expression that contrasts God with the false and dead idols (1Thes 1:9). Faith does not see the enemy against the insignificant man, but against the almighty God.

Verses 28-30 | David Arouses the Anger of Eliab

28 Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger burned against David and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart; for you have come down in order to see the battle." 29 But David said, "What have I done now? Was it not just

a question?" 30 Then he turned away from him to another and said the same thing; and the people answered the same thing as before.

When Eliab hears what his youngest brother says, his anger burns. He accuses David of sensationalism, that he only comes to see the battle. That is a bit exaggerated, because there is no battle at all. That is why Eliab's reaction is also very unfair. The reaction can be explained logically because David's words are an accusation of the whole army. Then the only reaction is to start to skim, to grumble on the remarks made.

This leads to false statements and accusations. Eliab skims about the flock and doubts that David has made sure that the sheep are safe during his absence. He is not aware that he treats the deliverer despicable

The herd does not seem to have been large. Eliab talks about "those few sheep". This makes it clear that David is faithful in the small and insignificant and that therefore the LORD can entrust him more. Faith that relies on God cannot prove to unbelief that nothing of the accusations is true. Therefore David does not defend himself. He resembles the Lord Jesus Who also reacted like that on accusations of the leaders (1Pet 2:23a).

The anointing of David will not have made much of an impression on Eliab. Little was said and he will not have understood its meaning. For him at least David is not the future king, but a younger little brother who is curious. The outburst of anger of David's brother does not make David give up. He quietly goes through the army and informs everywhere. This is how it becomes known that there is a man of faith walking around in the army who, in simple confidence, testifies that there is a God in Israel.

Verses 31-37 | David Says He Will Defeat Goliath

31 When the words which David spoke were heard, they told [them] to Saul, and he sent for him. 32 David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail on account of him; your seroant will go and fight with this Philistine." 33 Then Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are [but] a youth while he has been a warrior from his youth." 34 But David said to Saul, "Your seroant was tending his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, 35 I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued [it] from his mouth; and when he rose up against

me, I seized [him] by his beard and struck him and killed him. 36 Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted the armies of the living God.” 37 And David said, “The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” And Saul said to David, “Go, and may the LORD be with you.”

The words David speaks also reach Saul’s ear. David has made himself known through his words. They are words of faith. This is how the news becomes known that there is someone who is not affected by what the Philistine blares. When David has come to Saul, he repeats the language of faith. David does not yet speak directly about the LORD. He has the right characteristics to be able to speak in this way, without mentioning the Name of the LORD. It will be clear from his actions that he only relies on the LORD.

David is not satisfied with not having any personal fear but wants to encourage everyone to have the same security. He wants to fill all with the same trust he possesses. In this is expressed his deep connection both with the LORD and with His people.

Saul’s reaction is the language of sober perception, without faith. Therefore Saul does not understand what David says. He has no eye for the power source available to David. David not only says what he intends, but also that he has already proven to fight and defeat enemies. It is not the first time he is fighting the enemy. He knows what it is like to put his life at risk for the defenseless. The people are the flock of God and David will put his life at risk for them.

The Lord Jesus not only promised to give His life, but He also gave it. He also first overcame Satan in the secret of temptation in the wilderness (Mt 4:1-11). Then He gained the open victory over him over and through the cross (Col 2:15). David is a picture of the Lord Jesus Who could say that He kept the sheep in the Name of the Father (Jn 17:12a). Therefore, when they come to take him prisoner, he says: “if you seek Me, let these go their way” (Jn 18:8).

When David tells Saul of his victories, he does not speak of the power of the LORD. Yet he understands he has been given the power of the LORD

for it and he says so now. He counts on God's faithfulness to Israel in all circumstances. He knows that he is God's object of care, for that is how faith always reason. He is God's object of interest, even more so because his only desire is to maintain the glory of the LORD. Saul reacts with a pious wish that the LORD will be with David. Unfortunately, this desire is not the language of his heart.

Verses 38-40 | The Armor of Saul and of David

38 Then Saul clothed David with his garments and put a bronze helmet on his head, and he clothed him with armor. 39 David girded his sword over his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested [them]. So David said to Saul, "I cannot go with these, for I have not tested [them]." And David took them off. 40 He took his stick in his hand and chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in the shepherd's bag which he had, even in [his] pouch, and his sling was in his hand; and he approached the Philistine.

Saul said, "may the LORD be with you", but he does the opposite by providing David with his armor. This is a great trial for David, but he appears to be able to withstand it. If David had won the victory in Saul's armor, the honor would have gone to Saul. The victory would have been attributed to his armor. However, the victory must be entirely the victory of the LORD.

When David has put on the armor, it turns out he cannot go in it. What did the armor mean for Saul himself? He did not gain the victory over Goliath either, did he? Saul's armor is no more than a variant of Goliath's armor.

We can compare David's taking off Saul's armor with the means Paul used to put the Corinthians on the right track. Paul did not use persuasive language of human wisdom when he came to the Corinthians. He renounced it, that their faith might not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Thus David abandons all human means to go alone in trust in God. All human additions to spiritual power would, in the event of a result, only be fame for the flesh.

That does not mean that David will fight with his bare hands. He is looking for tools. Only he does this in dependence on the LORD. He knows that his aids only benefit if the LORD blesses their use. David's tools in this battle are no different than those he used as shepherd. A shepherd goes to war.

He is looking for five smooth stones from the brook. Smooth stones have become smooth because of the flowing water. The flowing water is a picture of the Word of God that is applied by the Spirit to heart and conscience. The stones are a picture of the words from the Word of God. If we occupy ourselves with the living water of the Word of God, so that we may know it, the Spirit of God will be able to give us verses from it that we can use in the battle against the enemy.

David takes five stones with him, even though he needs only one. This shows that he is aware of his responsibility. Five is the number of responsibility. Nor does he sway in the wild, he aims well (cf. Jdg 20:16), while at the same time he knows that the victory is from the LORD.

Verses 41-44 | The Philistine Despises David

41 Then the Philistine came on and approached David, with the shield-bearer in front of him. 42 When the Philistine looked and saw David, he despised him; for he was [but] a youth, and ruddy, with a handsome appearance. 43 The Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 44 The Philistine also said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field."

Goliath's amazement is great when he sees David. He experiences it as a great insult that a boy, without armor and weapons, seemingly helpless, comes up to him to fight against him. The curses descend upon David, swung from the great mouth of a demonic man.

The weakness of the cross of the Lord Jesus is the victory over Satan. Satan is overcome by His humiliation to death. To be defeated by the cross has been unthinkable for the devil and it is still for many today. Yet the foolishness of the cross is the only way to salvation.

Verses 45-47 | The Creed of David

45 Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. 46 This day the LORD will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head

from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, 47 and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the LORD's and He will give you into our hands."

David is not impressed by the giant's roaring language. He goes down to him because this Philistine has taunted the living God. In full certainty of the faith, in full trust in God, David goes down to Goliath. He lists all the mighty weapons the giant has. He is not blind to that, but he does not concentrate exclusively at it, for he knows in Whose Name he meets the giant. Against the LORD, Goliath's weapons are completely insignificant. What Goliath expects from his weapons, David expects from the inexpressible glorious Name of the LORD.

In the most powerful language of faith, David accuses Goliath of taunting the LORD. That is the ground of his condemnation, and David shall execute the sentence. The LORD shall deliver him into the hand of David, that David may remove the head of the enemy. That means the complete settlement of the enemy, so that every force is vanished and irreversible lost. And not only Goliath will become a dead body, the same will happen to all who have taken his side. They will all become food of the animals. A dignified burial will not be there.

Faith has no difficulties and sees clearly in the hour of danger in accordance with God. It sees from the beginning the end. There is faith, a faith that gives strength and forgets itself. David is a young man, but a greater veteran on the path and in the battle of faith than anyone else in the army of Israel.

"That all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel" and not that such a great guy as David has achieved a great victory. This goes beyond personal faith, although this first must be present. He knows that the battle he fights is the battle of God. He does not fight for himself, but for the people. Therefore he says that God gives Goliath in "our" hands.

Once the world will see it and know that there is a God Who has everything in His hands. This is a word for "all this assembly", for all who are witnesses of the battle. Proof is shown that God does not deliver by sword

and spear, but by weakness relying on Him. Therefore, only to Him can be attributed the full victory. These are lessons of trust in God and of mistrust of ourselves (1Sam 14:6; Exo 14:13-18; Jdg 7:2,4; 7:7; Psa 44:6).

Verses 48-51 | David Defeats and Kills Goliath

48 Then it happened when the Philistine rose and came and drew near to meet David, that David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. 49 And David put his hand into his bag and took from it a stone and slung [it], and struck the Philistine on his forehead. And the stone sank into his forehead, so that he fell on his face to the ground. 50 Thus David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and he struck the Philistine and killed him; but there was no sword in David's hand. 51 Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.

The fight between the two champions burns loose. To the Philistine it seems like he must fight a dwarf. Like an advancing mountain, covered with copper and iron, he draws near to meet David. David, however, goes faster toward Goliath than Goliath comes to him. The Spirit of God describes David's actions in detail when he runs quickly to the enemy. He goes to "the battle line", because in the Philistine the whole army of the Philistines unites.

One of the stones is enough to prevail over the giant. God loves to achieve great results by small, simple means. In fact, there is no fight. Even in the struggle in the end time, when the Lord Jesus comes, there is no struggle, no back and forth moving scenes, as if the devil could also have a chance of victory.

David conquers with a sling and a stone, nothing more. By using it correctly, all the power of Goliath and all the Philistines is completely broken in one stroke. The stone has felled the giant. The sword makes a definitive end to the giant. David kills the giant with his own sword. Thus, by dying, the Lord Jesus conquered death.

The description of the victory has in the original the form of a song. The consequence of the victory over the giant extends to all those who has

joined the giant. Both David and Goliath represent a people. In defeating Goliath, the entire army of the Philistines is defeated. The defeated enemies are all fleeing. They do not keep word and do not become willing slaves of the overcomer, as Goliath has provocatively suggested in verse 9.

Verses 52-54 | Consequences of the Victory

52 The men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted and pursued the Philistines as far as the valley, and to the gates of Ekron. And the slain Philistines lay along the way to Shaaraim, even to Gath and Ekron. 53 The sons of Israel returned from chasing the Philistines and plundered their camps. 54 Then David took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his weapons in his tent.

The people of Satan are now persecuted by the people of God. The roles are reversed. The victory is great. This will happen for the remnant when the Lord Jesus returns. As an application to us, we can keep the enemy under when we stand in the victory of the Lord Jesus.

The whole power of the clergy is broken for those who have seen the giant fall. The understanding of what the true church is and our personal place in it in the presence of God and in His joy necessarily means the overthrowing of the false church with all its confessors. The impressive armies then suddenly become a scattered troop that proclaim in their confession their ignorance of God and Christ.

In verse 54, the Spirit of God seizes forward again. Jerusalem is currently still in the hands of the enemy, the Jebusites, but the victory over Goliath also guarantees the conquest of the city. The city is later conquered by David. The tent is not David's either, but here it is the tabernacle. There he lays the sword of Goliath (1Sam 21:9). He thus indicates that the honor of victory is for the Lord.

Verses 55-58 | Saul Asks Who David Is

55 Now when Saul saw David going out against the Philistine, he said to Abner the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this young man?" And Abner said, "By your life, O king, I do not know." 56 The king said, "You inquire whose son the youth is." 57 So when David returned from killing the

Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the Philistine's head in his hand. 58 Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "[I am] the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."

Saul's question to Abner, whose son David is, suggests that Saul does not know David, even though David has been at Saul's court several times already. Also Abner does not know (anymore) who David is and cannot answer the question. Probably because they only know David as a harp player (1Sam 16:23).

Now the young man comes in a special way for Saul's attention. He looks at him in a new way. If a young man can achieve such a victory, he must be a special person. The question of his father is more than just getting to know his father's name. It is more about the character of the man who has a son like David with a courage that is special. Then the question arises as to which family he belongs to, what his descendancy is. In this way people can also come under the impression of Who the Lord Jesus is, as we read in the Gospels.

Abner brings David to Saul and he asks himself the question of who David is the son of. The question shows what there is in Saul. Saul has no insight into the thoughts of God. His thoughts do not rise above the earth. He has no eye for David as God sees him. For Saul he must come from a family of violent men, a generation of gods. It is like with the Lord Jesus about Whom the question was asked: "How has this man become learned, having never been educated" (Jn 7:15)?

David answers in humility. His answer is beautiful: "the son of your servant Jesse". Jesse means 'Yahweh exists' and of Him he is the servant. This makes me think of the question whether God is a concrete reality for me, if to me He is the existing God.

1 Samuel 18

Verses 1-4 | Jonathan Loves David

1 Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself. 2 Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house. 3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. 4 Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt.

David means 'beloved', meaning that he is loved. In this chapter much is said about love for David. You love David or you hate him. Neutrality is not possible. There are five people or groups of people who love him.

We have already read about the first one, that is Saul. Saul loves him (1Sam 16:21). However, it is a love that turns into hatred. This is because David is no longer his servant, but his superior, not in position, but in prosperity and spiritually. As long as David is his servant, he loves him, but if Saul must go aside to give David priority, he will not.

Thus, the Lord Jesus not only wants to be the One Who has defeated the enemy – i.e. Satan, of whom Goliath is a picture – but He wants to be everything in our lives. He wants to be not only Savior, but also Lord. Especially children of believing parents should learn this. The Lord wants to be number one. We should not remain king of our own life.

The second of whom we read that he loves David is Jonathan. He connects himself with heart and soul and all that he has with David. Perhaps David's answer in the previous verse (1Sam 17:58) is so attractive to Jonathan that he connects himself with David. As soon as Jonathan connects with David, he sees himself as nothing. Jonathan is crown prince, but nonetheless he sees his superior in David. There is no jealousy or wounded pride.

Between the description of Jonathan's love for David in verse 1 and verse 3, there is something about Saul's relationship to David in verse 2. Saul's love for David is a selfish love. He sees in David mainly someone from whom he can benefit. Therefore David must remain fully in the service of Saul after his victory. Saul claims him for himself.

In verse 3 we read for the second time that Jonathan loves David as himself. We will read it again later (1Sam 20:17). We do not read here that David loves Jonathan. We read this in his song about Jonathan when he has died in the battle with the Philistines (2Sam 1:26). David's appreciation of Jonathan's love for him shows that David's love is more than a human love. It indicates the love of the Lord Jesus for those who serve and follow Him out of love. It is great to hear such an expression of His love from His mouth. A father loves all his children, but he has a special relationship with those who appreciate his love.

Jonathan's love is the love of friendship. It is a selfless love. He knows David will be king and he gives him that place by giving him everything. His love for David also starts from the victory over Goliath, but he has seen deeper than just the result. He loves David for who David himself is and not just for what he has done. The same must be true of our love for the Lord Jesus. We see this with Paul for whom Christ is everything because he is seized by Him (Phil 3:12).

Jonathan gives everything to David out of love for him. Everything that gives him dignity as king and warrior, he puts at the feet of David. It is not just outward tribute, but the expression of what is in his heart for David. Anything he can boast of is nothing compared to David. In this way we also want to give everything to the Lord Jesus out of love for Him. Jonathan, however, does not give him his shoes, which symbolically points to the fact that he does not follow David in his wanderings.

Verses 5-9 | David's Prosperity and Saul's Envy

5 So David went out wherever Saul sent him, [and] prospered; and Saul set him over the men of war. And it was pleasing in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants. 6 It happened as they were coming, when David returned from killing the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy and with musical instruments. 7 The women sang as they played, and said,

*"Saul has slain his thousands,
And David his ten thousands."*

8 Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?" 9 Saul looked at David with suspicion from that day on.

David is in school with God and is prosperous in it. We also see his prosperity in verses 14,1,30. Here his prosperity is a recommendation to the servants of Saul. A life in Godliness provides appreciation. Again and again the testimony sounds that God is with him. David grows and Saul goes backwards. What is the case with us?

Saul sets David over the men of war, for he who can defeat Goliath can defeat any enemy. Just as David plays the harp before Saul when he needs it, so David is busy in the battle everywhere Saul sends him. He uses him in the affairs of government and David pulls out wherever Saul sends him. He is as obedient as he is brave.

Those who look forward to reigning must first learn to obey. David showed himself to be an obedient son to Jesse his father, and now he shows himself to be an obedient servant to Saul his master. It is to be expected of those who are faithful in one relationship that they will be faithful in another.

His prosperity leads to a hymn of praise from women. They have a proper appreciation of the deeds of David. That is not to Saul's liking, however. His jealousy is aroused. What the women sing is true. After all, David has slain his ten thousands and Saul only his thousands. The victory of David is many times greater than the victories of Saul.

But while Jonathan has resigned, Saul refuses to acknowledge David's excellence. He realizes that David is a competitor for the throne, and he does not want under any circumstances to come from his throne. Therefore, from that day on he watches David with suspicion and here begins the way of suffering of David. From now on Saul will be a persecutor of God's anointed and thereby he becomes a picture of the antichrist.

Here is the turning point in David's history after his prosperity. Thus the Lord Jesus is honored first, and then they want to cast Him from the steepness into the abyss (Lk 4:22,28-29). The love of the people for David arouses hatred in Saul. At the birth of the Lord Jesus, all Jerusalem is

troubled, but Herod wants to kill Him. Jealousy leads to murderousness. It also happens in our time.

Verses 10-13 | Saul Tries to Kill David

10 Now it came about on the next day that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul, and he raved in the midst of the house, while David was playing [the harp] with his hand, as usual; and a spear [was] in Saul's hand. 11 Saul hurled the spear for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall." But David escaped from his presence twice. 12 Now Saul was afraid of David, for the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul. 13 Therefore Saul removed him from his presence and appointed him as his commander of a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.

A wicked spirit sent by God brings Saul to rage. When David wants to calm him down by playing the harp, Saul hurls his spear at him. Saul shows his murderousness by wanting to kill David with his spear twice, without succeeding in his intention. David dodges him both times.

The LORD has protected him, and He has done so by giving David the presence of mind to dive away at the right moment. He will undoubtedly have kept a watchful eye on Saul's hand with the spear in it. When he has escaped the danger, he appears to be destined for something extraordinary.

David did not hurl the spear back to Saul. He has withdrawn. He did not fight but fled for his own safety. Although he has enough strength and courage, and the appearance of the right to resist and avenge the insult, he has done nothing more than bring himself to safety by avoiding danger.

We do not read that David is afraid for Saul, but on the contrary that Saul is afraid for David. By the failure of two murder attempts Saul must have understood that he has no power over David. For an experienced spear thrower like Saul, his miss is proof that David is under the protection of God. Otherwise he would certainly have killed him. With other people it would have led to conversion, but Saul hardens himself. He can no longer bear David in his surroundings and gives him the supreme command over his army, hoping that David dies in the war.

Verses 14-16 | The LORD Is With David

14 David was prospering in all his ways for the LORD [was] with him. 15 When Saul saw that he was prospering greatly, he dreaded him. 16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, and he went out and came in before them.

Unlike Saul, David is prosperous in his school of suffering. He must be perfected through suffering, as was the case with the Lord Jesus. Again, we read about Saul's fear of David because the LORD is with David, by which David has prosperity. He has a wisdom that embarrasses all his opponents, and which is undeniable.

All Israel and Judah, all the people, love David. For he has delivered them from Goliath. They love David because of the blessing he gives them. This also applies to the Lord Jesus in relation to God's people today. Israel and Judah love David, but from a distance. None of that people has a personal relationship with him. Jonathan and later Michal do.

There are many Christians who love the Lord Jesus in this way. Young people often float on their parents' love for the Lord Jesus. However, there must be a personal love relation with the Lord Jesus. How many wives are there who have a relationship with the Lord Jesus through their husbands? They do not read and pray themselves, perhaps because of the man's fault. They rely on the faith life of their husband. But each one must have an own relationship with the Lord. The life of prayer shows the intimacy of the relationship with the Lord. If there is no such thing, there is no life.

Verses 17-19 | Saul Promises David Merab

17 Then Saul said to David, "Here is my older daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife, only be a valiant man for me and fight the LORD's battles." For Saul thought, "My hand shall not be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him." 18 But David said to Saul, "Who am I, and what is my life [or] my father's family in Israel, that I should be the king's son-in-law?" 19 So it came about at the time when Merab, Saul's daughter, should have been given to David, that she was given to Adriel the Meholathite for a wife.

David still must get the promised daughter because of the victory over Goliath (1Sam 17:25). Saul does not feel like it. He abuses his promise to present a new condition to David with a cunning intent. He is hypocritical

when he asks David to wage the wars of the LORD, for he hopes that David will be killed in battle.

The wars of God's people are truly wars of the LORD, as Saul calls them, because they are waged on God's express order. But if the spirit of the world and domination are mixed with it, they are no longer. Then they are only wars of worldly desires.

Whether David is aware of this or not, he shows humility in his response to Saul's promise. He says he feels too small to become Saul's son-in-law. Whether he believes Saul at his word, we do not know. He knows Saul as an incalculable man. It will soon become clear what Saul's word is worth.

Saul breaks his word by giving the daughter promised to David to another. This is the greatest insult Saul can inflict on him. He thus strikes him both in his honor and in his love. He may want to elicit a reaction from David that he can use to condemn and eliminate him.

Verses 20-25 | Michal's Love for David

20 Now Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David. When they told Saul, the thing was agreeable to him. 21 Saul thought, "I will give her to him that she may become a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him." Therefore Saul said to David, "For a second time you may be my son-in-law today." 22 Then Saul commanded his servants, "Speak to David secretly, saying, 'Behold, the king delights in you, and all his servants love you; now therefore, become the king's son-in-law.'" 23 So Saul's servants spoke these words to David. But David said, "Is it trivial in your sight to become the king's son-in-law, since I am a poor man and lightly esteemed?" 24 The servants of Saul reported to him according to these words [which] David spoke. 25 Saul then said, "Thus you shall say to David, 'The king does not desire any dowry except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to take vengeance on the king's enemies.'" Now Saul planned to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.

What Saul may have intended to hurt David, becomes the reason for a new love to reveal itself. There is a new candidate. Michal loves David. Saul is told that, and he sees a new chance to get rid of David.

Michal really loves David (verse 28). She later provides proof of her love (1Sam 19:12). She defies her father and helps David escape. However,

Michal is always called “the daughter of Saul”. Her origins continue to play tricks on her, as is often the case with us. She has never been able to subject the character of her origin to her love for David and has never really known him.

In Michal we see believers who are like all in Asia who have left Paul (2Tim 1:15). They love the Lord, but they do not know the Lord as Paul knows Him. Michal represents a carnal Christian. We see that in her love when David, full of happiness that the ark goes to the city of God, dances before the ark. Then she despises him (2Sam 6:16,20-23). Michal loves certain aspects of David, but others not. If there is anything about the Lord Jesus that does not please us, it is our problem. Michal remains infertile until the day of her death. If we confess the Lord Jesus as Savior, but do not approach Him as a worshipper, spiritual infertility is the result.

By saying to David that he can become his son-in-law for the second time, Saul presents it as if his first daughter was also connected to David as wife. He claims him as it were. He also involves his servants in the plot to persuade David to take Michal to wife. Saul also knows that all his servants love David. They have seen how this young man has felled Goliath. David is their hero. Whoever hears of the Lord Jesus as the great Conqueror can only love Him.

We do not read of the servants that they hated David, but they have not chosen undividedly his side either. When Saul speaks about killing David, they keep their mouths and do not speak up for him (1Sam 19:1). It is not easy to testify of the Lord Jesus when He is blasphemed, but he who really loves Him is not silent. When you come somewhere, they don't know you, it is important to let them know as soon as possible that you belong to Him, such as at school, at work, in the neighborhood. If you do not do it right away, it often becomes only more difficult.

When the servants come to David and tell him what Saul said, David repeats his humble position. With this David indicates that he wants to be Saul's son-in-law. When the servants return to Saul with this answer, Saul understands. As with Merab, Saul also connects a condition with David's marriage to his daughter Michal. He asks for a dowry, but a strange one: a hundred foreskins of the Philistines. David is not rich, but Saul has a dowry in mind that makes him think he can get rid of David thereby.

Verses 26-29 | David Gets Michal

26 When his servants told David these words, it pleased David to become the king's son-in-law. Before the days had expired 27 David rose up and went, he and his men, and struck down two hundred men among the Philistines. Then David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full number to the king, that he might become the king's son-in-law. So Saul gave him Michal his daughter for a wife. 28 When Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and [that] Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him, 29 then Saul was even more afraid of David. Thus Saul was David's enemy continually.

David agrees with the condition. He succeeds in his mission and does even more than Saul wanted. Everything Saul means as an attempt to get rid of David becomes a means by which the power of David against the enemy only becomes more apparent. Thus all the attacks of the Pharisees on the Lord Jesus only prove His glory and exaltedness, in which the light of His grace shines.

For the third time we read that Saul fears for David. On the other hand, we read of Michal that she loves David. Saul's fear for David does not bring about a surrender to David; on the contrary, he is an enemy to David every day of his life.

Verse 30 | Prosperity of David in the Battle

30 Then the commanders of the Philistines went out [to battle], and it happened as often as they went out, that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul. So his name was highly esteemed.

The law exempts men in the first year of their marriage from military service (Deu 24:5), but David has too much patriotism to take advantage of that exemption. After he is married, he perseveres in his good services to Israel.

David's action against the Philistines, as soon as they go out to battle, is much more successful than anything that the servants of Saul have undertaken against them. By his prosperity, His name comes upon the lips of all. His name shows who he is. The people are impressed by his unselfishness and pleasant character.

1 Samuel 19

Verses 1-7 | Jonathan Pleads for David

1 Now Saul told Jonathan his son and all his servants to put David to death. But Jonathan, Saul's son, greatly delighted in David. 2 So Jonathan told David saying, "Saul my father is seeking to put you to death. Now therefore, please be on guard in the morning, and stay in a secret place and hide yourself. 3 I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak with my father about you; if I find out anything, then I will tell you." 4 Then Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Do not let the king sin against his servant David, since he has not sinned against you, and since his deeds [have been] very beneficial to you. 5 For he took his life in his hand and struck the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great deliverance for all Israel; you saw [it] and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by putting David to death without a cause?" 6 Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan, and Saul vowed, "As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death." 7 Then Jonathan called David, and Jonathan told him all these words. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as formerly.

We see in Saul and Jonathan a great contrast between two people in their attitude opposite David. This speaks of the relationship that every human being has with Christ. It is for or against Him. The relationship to Christ is all-determining for the present and the future. The separation that that triggers runs through families (Lk 12:51-53).

Saul speaks openly for the first time about killing David (verse 1). It is no longer during an attack of anger, but deliberate. He does it in the presence of Jonathan and all his servants. In this company David has only one friend, Jonathan. The servants seem to symbolize the silent majority. They are neither for David nor against him. They do not have their own opinion but go along with the party that offers them the most benefits. There is a certain esteem with them for David, of which Saul is also aware (1Sam 18:5,22), but they do not speak openly for him, like Jonathan.

Jonathan is “greatly delighted in David”. Saul seems to have forgotten that. He will think that Jonathan is as afraid of his position as he is and will therefore benefit from killing David. But Jonathan informs David of the intentions of his father and urges him to exercise caution. He also informs him that he will let him know what his father really intends to do. He does not urge David to flee but seeks an opportunity to return to his father’s court. Despite all the difficulties that is still David’s place.

In what Jonathan says in verses 4-5 of David, we can almost hear the Christian speak of a fellow believer and of Christ. It is good to be a friend who speaks well of a friend. Above all, it is good to speak well of the Lord Jesus before the ears of the world.

The first thing Jonathan says is that Saul, as king, should not be tempted to sin against David. He may only kill David if sin is found in him. But, Jonathan testifies, David hath not sinned against the king. On the contrary, he has done what is good for him. Jonathan reminds his father of David’s victory over Goliath, putting his life at risk (cf. Jdg 12:3). That victory the LORD has given and has benefited all Israel. Saul saw it himself and rejoiced.

Jonathan’s testimony to Saul shows how much David is a servant of the LORD and not just of Saul. David is hated without cause, as was and is the case with the Lord Jesus. The natural man can sometimes admire the Lord Jesus for His deeds. But if he does not choose Him, he hates Him and also all who are in connection with Him.

Jonathan concludes his plea with an appeal to Saul’s common sense. There is no reason to kill David, he is innocent. Therefore, Saul must refrain from killing David, otherwise he will shed innocent blood.

The heart of Saul is getting soft and he reassigns David, just like before. It characterizes David that he returns to the court of Saul. This can only be done by someone who lives with and for the LORD and not for the eyes of men. There is no resentment or revenge on his part. Despite all the injustice done to him and the permanent threat of death, David returns to perform his humble service with an intractable king.

Every time we find such moments of the becoming soft of the heart of Saul (1Sam 24:7; 26:21). Each time it turns out to be only a transient condition

and not the conviction of his heart. His jealousy for David remains and with it his hatred and his attempts to kill him. David remains for him the competitor of his throne, from which he does not want to renounce.

David escapes the sword of Saul four times in this chapter alone. First through the intervention of Jonathan. Next time by his own speed to dodge the spear Saul throws at him (verse 10). The third time by the help of Michal (verse 12) and the fourth time by the protection of Samuel (verse 23).

Verses 8-10 | Saul Tries to Kill David

8 When there was war again, David went out and fought with the Philistines and defeated them with great slaughter, so that they fled before him. 9 Now there was an evil spirit from the LORD on Saul as he was sitting in his house with his spear in his hand, and David was playing [the harp] with [his] hand. 10 Saul tried to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, so that he stuck the spear into the wall. And David fled and escaped that night.

When there is war with the Philistines, David attained a great victory, that the Philistines may flee from him. Instead of rejoicing over it, the evil spirit of the LORD comes over Saul. Then David leaves his place of celebrated general and takes again the place of the humble minstrel to calm down a king tormented by an evil spirit. He knows that in that place he should not be on his guard of the Philistine spear, but of Saul's spear (1Sam 18:10-11).

Because in addition to David's victory, it is mentioned that an evil spirit takes possession of Saul, we can assume that David's victory makes Saul jealous. Jealousy offers demons an opening to gain control over a human being. Saul again tries to kill David with his spear. Because David is always on his guard, he dodges the spear with a presence of mind given to him by the LORD. Then he flees and escapes.

Verses 11-17 | Michal Helps David to Escape

11 Then Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch him, in order to put him to death in the morning. But Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, "If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be put to death." 12 So Michal let David down through a window, and he went out and fled and

escaped. 13 Michal took the household idol and laid [it] on the bed, and put a quilt of goats' [hair] at its head, and covered [it] with clothes. 14 When Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, "He is sick." 15 Then Saul sent messengers to see David, saying, "Bring him up to me on his bed, that I may put him to death." 16 When the messengers entered, behold, the household idol [was] on the bed with the quilt of goats' [hair] at its head. 17 So Saul said to Michal, "Why have you deceived me like this and let my enemy go, so that he has escaped?" And Michal said to Saul, "He said to me, 'Let me go! Why should I put you to death?'"

While Saul's servants surround the house, David writes Psalm 59 (Psa 59:1a). In it he prays for deliverance (Psa 59:1b-2). He is therein a type of the remnant. In such circumstances we may trust in God and say that in the morning we will praise Him. At the same time David uses the opportunity offered to escape. He flees in a way like that of Saul, later Paul (Acts 9:24-25).

The use of the idol means that there is an idol in the house of David. Perhaps the application is allowed that this is the way Michal looks at David: she adores him, he is her idol. It leads her to help her husband stay out of her father's hands. There are women who adore their husbands so much that they support him through thick and thin, even in evil. We do not know whether Saphira, for example, worshipped her husband Ananias, but she did support him in evil and shares his judgment (Acts 5:1-2,5,9-10).

The illness that David is said to have is no obstacle to Saul to let him bring to him. He is now so keen on the death of David that he wants to kill him by himself to have the certainty of his death.

Michal has a certain love for David, but it is a selfish love. She is not a Saul, but neither is she a woman who follows her husband. Her help to the refugee resembles in the distance the help Rachab gave to the spies (Jos 2:4-6).

The deceit is discovered. Saul blames Michal very much and calls David "my enemy". Then Michal's self-love appears. She introduces David to her father as someone who has threatened to kill her if she would not help him escape. Michal is not Saul, but certainly also not Jonathan who spoke well from David to his father Saul (verse 4).

Verse 18 | David Flees to Samuel

18 Now David fled and escaped and came to Samuel at Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him. And he and Samuel went and stayed in Naioth.

David does not flee to his family in Bethlehem, but to the old prophet Samuel. In picture he resorts to the Word of God. He chooses that as his hiding place. By this Word he has been told that he will become king. He does not see much of that yet. He therefore needs to be reminded of this. He also needs the Word to guide him in the journey that is about to begin.

Here we hear about Samuel again for a long time. We last heard of him in 1 Samuel 16, when he anointed David king. Then David came to the fore and Samuel withdrew to Ramah. That does not mean that he has become useless, because we see that he is leading a prophet school here. He will also have certainly kept his word, that he said to the people that he would not cease to pray for them (1Sam 12:23).

Verses 19-24 | Under the Protection of Samuel

19 It was told Saul, saying, "Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah." 20 Then Saul sent messengers to take David, but when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, with Samuel standing [and] presiding over them, the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul; and they also prophesied. 21 When it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they also prophesied. So Saul sent messengers again the third time, and they also prophesied. 22 Then he himself went to Ramah and came as far as the large well that is in Secu; and he asked and said, "Where are Samuel and David?" And [someone] said, "Behold, they are at Naioth in Ramah." 23 He proceeded there to Naioth in Ramah; and the Spirit of God came upon him also, so that he went along prophesying continually until he came to Naioth in Ramah. 24 He also stripped off his clothes, and he too prophesied before Samuel and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Therefore they say, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

Samuel and David withdraw to "Naioth", which means "houses", which probably refers to the houses of prophets, where prophet schools are located. Under Samuel's guidance, the prophets are busy becoming familiar with God's thoughts. There comes David. He, and Samuel, may have thought that Saul would not venture to get there. But Saul does not shy

away from it. He sends his messengers out to pick up David from there. Then we see what happens to the messengers when they come into that sacred environment.

The prophets, led by Samuel, are under the power of the Spirit. That power is also exercised over those who come into that sphere. This also happens with the next messengers and with a third group of messengers. Instead of laying hold on David they are laying hold on themselves. They experience that God is truly among them (cf. 1Cor 14:24-25). It is not about conversion, but about an influence from which one cannot escape. We see something similar in Balaam who wants to flow God's people but is forced to bless it (Num 22:2-6; 23:11-12,25-26; 24:10-13).

Then Saul himself goes. It does not realize at all that David is under the special protection of heaven. His journey to Naioth is described in detail. When he comes to Ramah, he asks not only for David, but for Samuel and David. He connects the two names as the conspirators against the throne on which he sits. When he is on his way, the Spirit of God already comes upon him. The Spirit remains on him and as he goes, he prophesies, until he comes to Samuel. It seems that this is God's last attempt to make Saul aware he must repent.

The Spirit of God works wherever the Word of God is preached. Everyone who hears it comes under its seizure. It leads to an action that one would not first think possible: sing, be moved. Yet the heart remains dark and cold.

Saul stripped off his upper garment of royal dignity and only has his underclothes on. He is completely under the seizure of the Spirit, but not with his mind. Thus, men can have great gifts and prophesy in the Name of Christ and cast out demons, but without knowing grace (Mt 7:22-23).

Mockingly, later is told of him that he is also among the prophets, as something considered impossible and not recognized as true, but as an untrue matter. Even an unbelieving man like Balaam came under the seizure of the Spirit, but without repentance. Thus, a person can come under the seizure of God's Spirit, but without affecting his relationship with God.

1 Samuel 20

Introduction

The history of David is described in detail in these chapters. That is because the Holy Spirit loves him. We love him too and are interested in everything he experiences. It is described vividly. In many details we find what the Lord Jesus experienced. At first David is not yet a fugitive, but he will be in the next chapters. He becomes a fugitive because he refuses to anticipate God's time and take the law into his own hands. Saul remains for him "the anointed of the LORD", against whom he will not take up arms as long as he remains so.

In this chapter in David we see a child of God who is looking for the will of God. That is why the chapter is so long. It describes how David resists becoming a fugitive. This is not because he does not want to, although it does not attract him, but out of dedication to his duty as a servant of Saul. He does not have the right to leave, to flee. He wants to stay with Saul to the fullest to serve him, and was prepared to undergo anything to that end, not to be an unfaithful slave. Nabal accuses him of this later (1Sam 25:10). David only flees when he has no other possibility.

This chapter is also a farewell of two friends who love each other very. That makes the departure for David so painful and unattractive.

Verses 1-3 | David Knows That Saul Wants to Kill Him

1 Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said to Jonathan, "What have I done? What is my iniquity? And what is my sin before your father, that he is seeking my life?" 2 He said to him, "Far from it, you shall not die. Behold, my father does nothing either great or small without disclosing it to me. So why should my father hide this thing from me? It is not so!" 3 Yet David vowed again, saying, "Your father knows well that I have found favor in your sight, and he has said, 'Do not let Jonathan know this, or he will be grieved.' But truly as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, there is hardly a step between me and death."

David flees to his friend Jonathan and pours out his heart for him. He wonders in despair what he did that his father pursued him so much. Jonathan wants to reassure David. He does not believe his father does. Otherwise he would know. David is not convinced. He knows very well that Saul will not tell his son everything, because Saul knows that his son is a friend of David. David has no choice but to see Saul's desire to get rid of him. He has experienced this several times. He has already escaped Saul's murderousness several times, but how long will it take before he falls into Saul's hands? He is hanging on a thread.

Verses 4-8 | David Proposes a Test

4 Then Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you say, I will do for you." 5 So David said to Jonathan, "Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I ought to sit down to eat with the king. But let me go, that I may hide myself in the field until the third evening. 6 If your father misses me at all, then say, 'David earnestly asked [leave] of me to run to Bethlehem his city, because it is the yearly sacrifice there for the whole family.' 7 If he says, 'It is good,' your servant [will be] safe; but if he is very angry, know that he has decided on evil. 8 Therefore deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the LORD with you. But if there is iniquity in me, put me to death yourself; for why then should you bring me to your father?"

Jonathan is a real friend. He wants to help David. He asks what he can do for him and promises that he will do what David asks. He sets no conditions because he knows that what David will desire is only good. This is the expression of a heart that loves the other. It is the question and the mind of the believer who loves the Lord Jesus.

David only wants to know what Saul has in mind for him. That is why he suggests a plan to test Saul's mindset. This plan will also make it clear to Jonathan what his father wants. That goal may be even more important than in gaining certainty himself.

Is this plan misleading, a lie? It is like what Moses says to Pharaoh when he proposes to him to let Israel go a three-day trip far into the wilderness to celebrate a feast there for the LORD. That the ultimate goal is to deliver the people and make them live in Canaan, Moses does not tell. The ques-

tion Moses asks is the question of a servant for a short leave of absence, which puts Pharaoh's mindset to the test. It is not about insincerity, but about a test. It is the same with David.

All who are in a place of submission can learn from David. He takes the place of servant opposite Jonathan and calls himself so. Jonathan is the son of his lord. He also gives him the right to kill him if there was sin in him, as Saul claims.

Verses 9-15 | How Jonathan Will Inform David

9 Jonathan said, "Far be it from you! For if I should indeed learn that evil has been decided by my father to come upon you, then would I not tell you about it?" 10 Then David said to Jonathan, "Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?" 11 Jonathan said to David, "Come, and let us go out into the field." So both of them went out to the field. 12 Then Jonathan said to David, "The LORD, the God of Israel, [be witness]! When I have sounded out my father about this time tomorrow, [or] the third day, behold, if there is good [feeling] toward David, shall I not then send to you and make it known to you? 13 If it please my father [to do] you harm, may the LORD do so to Jonathan and more also, if I do not make it known to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. And may the LORD be with you as He has been with my father. 14 If I am still alive, will you not show me the lovingkindness of the LORD, that I may not die? 15 You shall not cut off your lovingkindness from my house forever, not even when the LORD cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth."

Jonathan resolutely rejects David's thought of killing him, for he supposes no evil in David. Furthermore, he will certainly assert his friendship and inform him if he notices that his father wants to bring evil upon him. David asks from whom he will hear the true mindset of Saul.

Jonathan does not answer directly but suggests going outside to speak farther. He takes the initiative and David follows. David presents himself royally by being subject to the ruling authority. He does not stand on his rights as the anointed king. He knows what he will be but does not take advantage of the future by moderating something the LORD has not yet given him. He must first learn to obey as a servant before he can rule as king.

Jonathan solemnly promises by the LORD that he will certainly let David know how his father reacts. He will also make sure that nothing will happen to David. He knows that David is the anointed. He wishes him the presence of the LORD, as his father experienced it. He submits to the future king after he has let him go as crown prince.

Finally, he asks David for his favor for himself and his family. Here he has a prophetic view of the future. For himself he asks to stay alive when David has become king. He will acknowledge in it the mercy of the LORD. For his house he asks for the mercy of David. As for David, Jonathan knows that the LORD will wipe out all his enemies.

Verses 16-17 | The Covenant

16 So Jonathan made a [covenant] with the house of David, [saying], "May the LORD require [it] at the hands of David's enemies." 17 Jonathan made David vow again because of his love for him, because he loved him as he loved his own life.

Their love is emphasized again. Jonathan not only makes a covenant with David, but also with the house of David. He expects the offspring of David to have the same mercy as David himself. David also acts on this later (2Sam 9:3,6-7). David's enemies, who might also hurt his children, he surrenders to the LORD's dealings.

The reason Jonathan so desires their friendship to pass on to his descendants is because of his love for David. He loves David with the love of his own life, and he desires David to answer that love with an oath he loves Jonathan.

Verses 18-23 | The Sign With a Message

18 Then Jonathan said to him, "Tomorrow is the new moon, and you will be missed because your seat will be empty. 19 When you have stayed for three days, you shall go down quickly and come to the place where you hid yourself on that eventful day, and you shall remain by the stone Ezel. 20 I will shoot three arrows to the side, as though I shot at a target. 21 And behold, I will send the lad, [saying], 'Go, find the arrows.' If I specifically say to the lad, 'Behold, the arrows are on this side of you, get them,' then come; for there is safety for

you and no harm, as the LORD lives. 22 But if I say to the youth, 'Behold, the arrows are beyond you,' go, for the LORD has sent you away. 23 As for the agreement of which you and I have spoken, behold, the LORD is between you and me forever."

After the confirmation of their love for each other the friends continue to talk about the actual situation to get to know the will of the LORD for David. Should he return to Saul or become a fugitive? Clarity will be obtained by David's absence on a new moon day. As commander of Saul's army, David must certainly be present on that day. When he is away for three days, Saul will certainly reveal what he thinks.

It is agreed that Jonathan will announce the results after three days. This will be done by shooting arrows in the direction of where David is hiding. Possibly they make this appointment because it is not certain that Jonathan will be able to say it personally to David. By the sign of the arrows shot off Jonathan will make clear to David what Saul's feelings about him are.

From this sign the will of the LORD is derived. Jonathan speaks only of the fact that the LORD sends David away. It seems as if he does not consider the possibility that the LORD will govern it in such a way that David can go back to the court of Saul. He points to the LORD as the One Who unites him and David. No Saul can separate them.

Verses 24-34 | Saul Tries to Kill Jonathan

24 So David hid in the field; and when the new moon came, the king sat down to eat food. 25 The king sat on his seat as usual, the seat by the wall; then Jonathan rose up and Abner sat down by Saul's side, but David's place was empty. 26 Nevertheless Saul did not speak anything that day, for he thought, "It is an accident, he is not clean, surely [he is] not clean." 27 It came about the next day, the second [day] of the new moon, that David's place was empty; so Saul said to Jonathan his son, "Why has the son of Jesse not come to the meal, either yesterday or today?" 28 Jonathan then answered Saul, "David earnestly asked leave of me [to go] to Bethlehem, 29 for he said, 'Please let me go, since our family has a sacrifice in the city, and my brother has commanded me to attend. And now, if I have found favor in your sight, please let me get away that I may see my brothers.' For this reason he has not come to the king's table." 30 Then Saul's anger burned against Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of

a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you are choosing the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother's nakedness? 31 For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Therefore now, send and bring him to me, for he must surely die." 32 But Jonathan answered Saul his father and said to him, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" 33 Then Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him down; so Jonathan knew that his father had decided to put David to death. 34 Then Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did not eat food on the second day of the new moon, for he was grieved over David because his father had dishonored him.

David hides in the field, waiting for the message Jonathan will bring. When it is the new moon, Saul sits down at his usual place, near the wall. This is a tactical place because it is not possible to attack him in the back. Maybe it says something of his mistrust in those who surround him. Someone who is jealous does not trust anyone.

The taking of the places is described vividly. When Saul sits down, Jonathan stands up out of respect. Abner, the army superior of Saul, sits next to Saul. Saul only pays attention to the place of David who remains empty. We hear what he thinks. It typifies Saul. He can only think in terms of pure and unclean. He is like the Pharisee who only pays attention to the appearance.

At the same time, it also says something about David. Saul knows him as one who scrupulously observed the law and preferred to stay away from a holy feast than to participate in it in uncleanness. With Christians we often see the opposite. On the one hand they easily stay away from their own meetings (Heb 10:25) and on the other hand they lightly participate in the holy Supper of the Lord (1Cor 11:27-30).

On the second day Saul wants to know why David did not come and asks. He asks his question not in general, but purposefully to David's friend, his son Jonathan. He is convinced that Jonathan knows where David is. When Jonathan gives the agreed statement, Saul anger burns against Jonathan. He pours all his wrath upon him. By this Jonathan experiences what it means to be a friend of David. It is not possible to stand on David's side without getting Saul's anger upon oneself. This is also the case for the Christian who clearly chooses for Christ.

Saul points out to Jonathan that he plays with his own position. He will never be king as long as David lives. Then he orders Jonathan to get David to kill him. Jonathan speaks up for David again and asks his father what the reason is for killing David. Then comes the clear proof of his father's hatred of David. Saul hurls his spear at his own son to kill him.

Here Jonathan shares in the fate of David, who is so hated by Saul that he wants to kill him. The spear that has been hurled several times at David is now thrown at his friend, even if it is his own son. In the same way, a choice for the Lord Jesus brings separation into families. Family members hand over a family member to enemies (Lk 21:16-17).

Verses 35-40 | The Message via the Sign

35 Now it came about in the morning that Jonathan went out into the field for the appointment with David, and a little lad [was] with him. 36 He said to his lad, "Run, find now the arrows which I am about to shoot." As the lad was running, he shot an arrow past him. 37 When the lad reached the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan called after the lad and said, "Is not the arrow beyond you?" 38 And Jonathan called after the lad, "Hurry, be quick, do not stay!" And Jonathan's lad picked up the arrow and came to his master. 39 But the lad was not aware of anything; only Jonathan and David knew about the matter. 40 Then Jonathan gave his weapons to his lad and said to him, "Go, bring [them] to the city."

As agreed, Jonathan goes into the field to report to David about his father's attitude towards him. He sends the lad in the direction to which he will shoot the arrow and urges him to hurry. The lad obeys immediately. As he quickly runs away, Jonathan shoots an arrow over him and calls after the lad that the arrow is beyond him. The message is clear to David. The message is not only clear, but also urgent. There is urgency. That is why Jonathan urges the lad to speed up.

Jonathan shot the arrow very far away as a sign that Saul's hatred goes very far. David must know that he is no longer certain of his life. The arrow is a clear message. He comes in reality from the hand of the LORD (verse 22).

When the lad has completed his mission, Jonathan gives him his weapons and sends him back to town. The lad is no longer needed. He has, without

being aware of it, performed an important task. By faithfully following the orders of Jonathan, he has contributed to the protection of David. In this way there will have been more actions by people who have faithfully done what they had to do, without being aware that they have contributed to protecting God's children who were in danger.

Verses 41-42 | Farewell

41 When the lad was gone, David rose from the south side and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed three times. And they kissed each other and wept together, but David [wept] the more. 42 Jonathan said to David, "Go in safety, inasmuch as we have sworn to each other in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD will be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants forever.'" Then he rose and departed, while Jonathan went into the city.

When the lad is gone, David appears. He is still the servant towards the crown prince, with whom he also has a close friendship, and bends down deeply before him. It is a heart-moving encounter because they know that it will be the last time they see each other. That they meet once again (1Sam 23:16) is not a restoration of the close contact they have had so far. They say goodbye to each other, and each go their own way.

Jonathan gave everything to David. He stood up for him against his father. He kissed him. However, he did not follow him in the way of his rejection. They separate and will only find each other again in their intimate connection on the other side of death. David goes to face suffering and from there to the throne. Jonathan does not go with him in suffering and is not glorified with him. He returns to the city and will fall with his father on the mountains of Gilboa.

Whatever we think about Jonathan, he did not go with David the way of oppression and defamation. He is not mentioned among the heroes of David who followed him in suffering and are glorified with him in his reign.

However, it is also good to remember, no matter what we think about Jonathan, that a comparison between the men who are with David and Jonathan is not entirely valid. Jonathan had a different position. By the way, who has shown a dedication and love for David like him? David never asked him to follow him.

He may in some ways be compared to the man who drives out demons, of whom John tells the Lord that they – he and the other disciples – have forbidden him to do so because he does not follow them. But the Lord does speak right of the man and reprimands His disciples (Lk 9:49-50). In any case Jonathan will certainly not have helped his father in his hunt for David.

1 Samuel 21

Introduction

David's way as a fugitive begins. He is outlawed and hunted by Saul. His path begins with two mistakes. His first mistake is that he involves Ahimelech in his case by deceit. The result is that the whole family of Ahimelech is exterminated. His second mistake is that he goes to Achish. At the same time David has written several psalms during his run that express his feelings. In these psalms the Spirit of Christ is expressed.

Verses 1-6 | David Comes to Ahimelech

1 Then David came to Nob to Ahimelech the priest; and Ahimelech came trembling to meet David and said to him, "Why are you alone and no one with you?" 2 David said to Ahimelech the priest, "The king has commissioned me with a matter and has said to me, 'Let no one know anything about the matter on which I am sending you and with which I have commissioned you; and I have directed the young men to a certain place.' 3 Now therefore, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever can be found." 4 The priest answered David and said, "There is no ordinary bread on hand, but there is consecrated bread; if only the young men have kept themselves from women." 5 David answered the priest and said to him, "Surely women have been kept from us as previously when I set out and the vessels of the young men were holy, though it was an ordinary journey; how much more then today will their vessels [be holy]?" 6 So the priest gave him consecrated [bread]; for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence which was removed from before the LORD, in order to put hot bread [in its place] when it was taken away.

David first had protection from Samuel. Yet he was not safe there for Saul. His friend, prince Jonathan, was also unable to offer him lasting protection. Now that he is a real fugitive, deprived of all help and protection, he goes to the priest Ahimelech in Nob. He does so to ask the will of God (1Sam 22:10). The priest has the urim and tummim to know God's will.

Ahimelech is surprised that David is alone. There are others with him (Mk 2:26), but they are probably some of his men and not members of the court of Saul who have gone with him as usual when he had to do something for Saul. Ahimelech does not know that David is on the run and David is also silent about it. Instead of honestly saying that he is fleeing from Saul, he comes up with a story about a secret command from Saul. He lies to the priest. His trust in the LORD is gone and he lives in fear of men. This brings a person to an action by which a reproach is cast upon the Name of the LORD and others are wronged. He is a warning example for us here.

David asks Ahimelech for two things: bread (verse 3) and a sword (verse 8). He wishes five loaves of bread. Ahimelech answers that there is only “holy bread”, that is the bread of the Presence (verse 6). These have been on the golden table in the holy place for a week and must be replaced by hot or new breads. David may have the old ones for himself and his men on the condition that the men have abstained from their wives.

David replies that the men had no contact with their wives for three days and that “the vessels of the young men were holy”. The “vessels” are their clothing and other personal belongings. Also, they have not been in contact with anything unclean (Lev 13:58; Exo 19:10). The term “vessels” also their bodies may be meant (1Thes 4:3-4).

The old bread has performed its task before the LORD and can now be consumed. The Lord Jesus, the Son of David, approves this conclusion (Mt 12:3-4). The Lord refers to this history because it aptly illustrates what His people are doing to Him at that time. He shows with the citation of this history that keeping ceremonial practices is of no value to Him if the King, anointed by God, is rejected by His people.

Verse 7 | Doeg

7 Now one of the servants of Saul was there that day, detained before the LORD; and his name was Doeg the Edomite, the chief of Saul's shepherds.

In between all activities, the presence of Doeg “that day” is reported. Doeg is there when David appears and may even have heard some things. Why he is at the tabernacle is not mentioned. It seems that this enemy of God's

people is not unreligious. It is said of him that he was “detained before the LORD”. Maybe he has made a vow. If that is the case, his religion is not different from Saul’s religion. He is “one of the servants of Saul”. However, he is not just a servant. Saul has given him a high position because he is his chief shepherd.

Verses 8-9 | David Gets the Sword of Goliath

8 David said to Ahimelech, “Now is there not a spear or a sword on hand? For I brought neither my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king’s matter was urgent.” 9 Then the priest said, “The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the valley of Elah, behold, it is wrapped in a cloth behind the ephod; if you would take it for yourself, take [it]. For there is no other except it here.” And David said, “There is none like it; give it to me.”

David wants not only bread but also a weapon. To explain why he is unarmed, he says the king’s matter was urgent. Here he lies again. A good warrior will never leave without a weapon. This is a lesson for us that there is no excuse for not taking God and the spiritual weapon of His Word into account in our daily work. Especially when a matter is urgent, it is important to be dependent on God’s guidance through His Word and Spirit.

Ahimelech points out to David the only weapon he can provide, and that is Goliath’s sword, noting that this Philistine was killed by David. He offers David to take it with him. In practical terms, it means that David is not a little boy. Otherwise he would not be able to handle that big sword. Even when he fought against Goliath, he was not a little boy. Already then he had taken this sword and cut off the head of the Philistine with it (1Sam 17:51). He did not keep it with him then, but as it were, he dedicated it to the LORD. That is why it now lies with Ahimelech, behind the ephod.

Here the sword and the ephod are connected. This points out the connection between the Word of God and the service of the Lord Jesus as High Priest. That there is no sword that can match Goliath’s sword applies in absolute terms to the Word of God, which is called “the sword of the Spirit” (Eph 6:17).

Verses 10-15 | David With Achish

10 Then David arose and fled that day from Saul, and went to Achish king of Gath. 11 But the servants of Achish said to him, "Is this not David the king of the land? Did they not sing of this one as they danced, saying,

*'Saul has slain his thousands,
And David his ten thousands?'"*

12 David took these words to heart and greatly feared Achish king of Gath. 13 So he disguised his sanity before them, and acted insantly in their hands, and scribbled on the doors of the gate, and let his saliva run down into his beard.

14 Then Achish said to his servants, "Behold, you see the man behaving as a madman. Why do you bring him to me? 15 Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this one to act the madman in my presence? Shall this one come into my house?"

David feels compelled to leave his land, the land over which he will reign according to God's promises. He seeks refuge with Achish, the king of Gath, a Philistine city. Saul will certainly not seek him among Israel's greatest enemies. Saul will also not dare to get there. However, he is recognized by the servants of Achish. They even call him "the king of the land". They tell Achish what was sung about David. This song was sung after his victory over the champion of the Philistines (1Sam 18:6-7).

When David notices that he has been recognized, he becomes afraid. Fear is always a bad counselor and an enemy of faith and love. For perfect love drives out fear (1Jn 4:18). Someone grows and gains victories to the extent that in faith he conquers fear. However, David is not guided by his faith during this period. He knows that the Philistines see in him a mighty enemy which by chance they have gotten in their hands by his coming (Psa 56:1). He knows no other solution to this problem than to behave like a madman. He presents himself as someone who has lost his mind.

David descends here far below the level of a believer. This is not a stratagem, but a desperate act. A believer who consciously behaves like an idiot gives a totally wrong example. He casts a reproach upon the Name of the Lord. Let us not judge David too harshly. How many times have we consciously behave ourselves differently out of fear of manifestations of enmity in the world and not been witnesses to the Lord Jesus, to put it mildly?

The downfall of David is great. His conduct causes Ahimelech to chase him away (Psa 34:1). Certainly, he has escaped from a dangerous situation, but how insulting is his salvation. There is a lot to be ashamed of. What remains is the grace of God.

That God's grace also plays a role in this whole event, is shown by the two psalms that originated in his heart during his stay with Achish in Gath. [Ahimelech and Achish are two names for the same person. Ahimelech is the title of the prince of the Philistines (Gen 20:2), like 'Pharaoh' among the Egyptians. Achish is his own name (1Sam 21:10).] In the event described here, we see his outward behavior. In both psalms we see what is going on in his heart during that event.

Psalm 56 shows that his outward behavior is not the language of his heart. His heart has gone out to the LORD in these circumstances. Psalm 34 shows what is in his heart when he is afraid of Achish. His heart calls to God and He saves him, for his heart is broken and he has a contrite spirit.

1 Samuel 22

Verses 1-2 | David in the Cave of Adullam

1 So David departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam; and when his brothers and all his father's household heard [of it], they went down there to him. 2 Everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented gathered to him; and he became captain over them. Now there were about four hundred men with him.

David was chased back to his land by Achis. He is back in the land where he will be chased by Saul. He escapes all his persecutors by hiding in the cave of Adullam. In the list of heroes of faith and acts of faith in Hebrews 11, the way David goes and the place where he abides are recorded as proofs of faith (Heb 11:38). Also now, knowing that he was destined by the LORD and anointed to be king, he has no intention of ascending the throne by force. It seems as if everything is over for him. He can do nothing and go nowhere.

It is like with the apostle Paul. When he is in prison, his service seems to be over. But just in prison he writes some special letters that we now have in the Bible: the letter to the Ephesians, the letter to the Colossians and the letter to the Philippians. David has written in the cave some of the psalms we have in the Bible (Psalms 57:142). In it we hear his mood "when he was in the cave" (Psa 142:1). At the end of Psalm 142 he says: "The righteous will surround me" (Psa 142:7). We see that happening here.

When he is alone in the cave and pours out his soul before the LORD about his loneliness (Psa 142:4), we see here how hearts and legs move for him. People come to him. They later become the heroes of David who help him to become his kingdom and share in his glory. But here they are not yet. David is here a picture of the Lord Jesus to Whom all who also have no part on earth come.

First his brothers and his whole family come to him. They are also in danger of being persecuted by Saul. Then come everyone who was in distress, and everyone who was in debt, and everyone who was discontented. They

either have a personal need, a problem they cannot solve themselves, or someone who is on their heels to enslave them, or they are so bitter by injustice or incomprehension suffered that they have no choice but to go to David. They do that because they have nothing to lose. He is joined by about four hundred men.

So today, too, people come to the Lord who see in Him their last chance of survival (cf. Mk 5:25-28). They develop into heroes. This development takes place in the school of God, there one is formed. David is their superior, it is also his school. Being with David means not only faith in his cause, but faith in himself. It also means that you no longer belong anywhere else.

So it is with the believer who has taken refuge in the Lord Jesus. He only does this when his need is so great, that he sees no other way out when he is a debtor with a debt he cannot pay or is so bitter that life no longer makes any sense to him.

Verses 3-4 | David Brings His Parents in Moab

3 And David went from there to Mizpah of Moab; and he said to the king of Moab, "Please let my father and my mother come [and stay] with you until I know what God will do for me." 4 Then he left them with the king of Moab; and they stayed with him all the time that David was in the stronghold.

David seeks refuge for his parents in Moab. Moab is not known as a friend of Israel. The king of Moab, when Israel was stationed in his plains after the wilderness journey, tried to dissolve the people by means of Balaam (Num 22:1-7). But there is also another side on Moab. Moab will be a land to which the remnant flees in the time of the great tribulation and will be purified by God. Therefore it says: "Moab is My washbowl" (Psa 60:8).

Verse 5 | David Must Go to Judah

5 The prophet Gad said to David, "Do not stay in the stronghold; depart, and go into the land of Judah." So David departed and went into the forest of Hereth.

David is also in Moab, but he cannot stay there. That is what the prophet Gad tells him on behalf of God. God wants to bring David into the fire of trial, and that is in His land ruled by Saul. Gad becomes the seer of David

and stayed with him. Through Gad David learns to know the will of God. He obeys the prophet and returns to Judah.

Verses 6-8 | Saul Calls David His Attacker

6 Then Saul heard that David and the men who were with him had been discovered. Now Saul was sitting in Gibeah, under the tamarisk tree on the height with his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing around him. 7 Saul said to his servants who stood around him, "Hear now, O Benjamites! Will the son of Jesse also give to all of you fields and vineyards? Will he make you all commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds? 8 For all of you have conspired against me so that there is no one who discloses to me when my son makes [a covenant] with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you who is sorry for me or discloses to me that my son has stirred up my servant against me to lie in ambush, as [it is] this day."

Our attention is again focused on Saul who is sitting under a tree again and has the spear in his hand again. In what he says, we hear what lives in his heart. He speaks to his tribesmen, the Benjamites. They are related to him, but he has also committed them to himself by buying them with gifts. Saul is a man who complains about himself, feels sorry for himself and sees himself as a victim of the circumstances. We hear no reaction from his servants. They are silent.

Saul does not mention the name of David. It is a hated name for him. He despicable speaks of him as "the son of Jesse". Although he tries to win over his servants by the reward, he sees them as conspirators against him. Because they do not speak as he does, he sees them as enemies. He even accuses his son Jonathan of inciting David to revolt against him. A jealous man comes to the most foolish conspiracy theories. He also turns the business upside down by calling David his attacker. It is not David who attacks him, but he attacks David.

Verses 9-15 | Achimelech Called to Account

9 Then Doeg the Edomite, who was standing by the servants of Saul, said, "I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Achimelech the son of Ahitub. 10 He inquired of the LORD for him, gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine." 11 Then the king sent someone to summon Achimelech

the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's household, the priests who were in Nob; and all of them came to the king. 12 Saul said, "Listen now, son of Ahitub." And he answered, "Here I am, my lord." 13 Saul then said to him, "Why have you and the son of Jesse conspired against me, in that you have given him bread and a sword and have inquired of God for him, so that he would rise up against me by lying in ambush as [it is] this day?" 14 Then Ahimelech answered the king and said, "And who among all your servants is as faithful as David, even the king's son-in-law, who is captain over your guard, and is honored in your house? 15 Did I [just] begin to inquire of God for him today? Far be it from me! Do not let the king impute anything to his servant [or] to any of the household of my father, for your servant knows nothing at all of this whole affair."

The servants may keep silence; there is one who does not keep silence, and that is the Edomite Doeg. He will show that he is doing well with Saul. Doeg tells Saul of which he was an eyewitness. In response to that, Saul lets Ahimelech come. Saul hears him, but not as it should be. The hearing is an accusation. The accusation is that Ahimelech helped a rebel to bread and a sword and also that he inquired of God for him. Then you are guilty of high treason, you are guilty of a coup d'état. Saul is already sure what he will do, he has already passed judgment.

Ahimelech puts himself on the side of Saul in his giving account. In his ignorance he defends David. He does not care much about David, but he wants to be neutral. There is nothing that Saul can charge him with, so he means. Did he not know that David was fleeing from Saul? All he has heard about David is that he faithfully serves Saul, is in a close family relationship with Saul, and that he obediently does what Saul asks of him. Is David not honored in the house of Saul? Surely, he can only see it as his duty to help David. By speaking of David in this way he gives a good testimony of him. But that is exactly what Saul hates so much. It only increases his anger.

Verses 16-19 | The Verdict and the Execution

16 But the king said, "You shall surely die, Ahimelech, you and all your father's household!" 17 And the king said to the guards who were attending him, "Turn around and put the priests of the LORD to death, because their

hand also is with David and because they knew that he was fleeing and did not reveal it to me." But the servants of the king were not willing to put forth their hands to attack the priests of the LORD. 18 Then the king said to Doeg, "You turn around and attack the priests." And Doeg the Edomite turned around and attacked the priests, and he killed that day eighty-five men who wore the linen ephod. 19 And he struck Nob the city of the priests with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and infants; also oxen, donkeys, and sheep [he struck] with the edge of the sword.

Saul is not willing to change his intention to kill Ahimelech. He himself pronounces the verdict. Ahimelech must die, together with his whole family (Ecc 3:16).

Because the priest did not tell him that David had been with him, he therefore colluded with the enemy. Whoever is not inspired by the same blind hatred of David, is on the side of David and must be killed. He orders his guards to kill the priesthood of whom he also says they are priests of the LORD. The guards do not dare to do that. By such an order Saul has lost his authority among his subordinates.

Then he turns to Doeg and orders him to kill the priests. That man kills eighty-five men without hesitation and then kills the entire priest city of Nob. Doeg does on behalf of Saul what Saul should have done with Amalek and in which Saul himself has saved what he found valuable (1Sam 15:3-9). By killing the whole family of Ahimelech, the word spoken about the house of Eli is fulfilled (1Sam 3:11), for Ahimelech is of the family of Eli.

Verses 20-23 | Abiathar Flees to David

20 But one son of Ahimelech the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David. 21 Abiathar told David that Saul had killed the priests of the LORD. 22 Then David said to Abiathar, "I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have brought about [the death] of every person in your father's household. 23 Stay with me; do not be afraid, for he who seeks my life seeks your life, for you are safe with me."

Yet the priesthood is preserved, for a son of Ahimelech escapes. He flees to David and tells him what happened (cf. Mt 14:12). When David hears it,

he takes the blame. He offers Abiathar his protection and guarantees him safety. With his life, which Saul hunts, he guarantees him.

David writes at this occasion Psalm 52 (Psa 52:1-2).

1 Samuel 23

Verses 1-5 | David Delivers Keilah

1 Then they told David, saying, "Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah and are plundering the threshing floors." 2 So David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" And the LORD said to David, "Go and attack the Philistines and deliver Keilah." 3 But David's men said to him, "Behold, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more then if we go to Keilah against the ranks of the Philistines?" 4 Then David inquired of the LORD once more. And the LORD answered him and said, "Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the Philistines into your hand." 5 So David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines; and he led away their livestock and struck them with a great slaughter. Thus David delivered the inhabitants of Keilah.

Keilah, a city in Israel, is besieged by the Philistines. This enemy plunders the threshing floors and robs the city of its food. The Philistines come to plunder what God's people have brought in from the blessing of the land. We can apply this to ourselves as follows. If Philistine principles, if rituals for example, take hold of us, we will lose what we discovered in God's Word about the Lord Jesus and His work.

Instead of going to Saul, David is informed of the situation, although he was far from that place. The people seem to have more faith in David than in Saul. David wants to know what to do and asks the LORD. In the same way, we must assure ourselves of the will of God before we do anything. David gets an answer.

David also must deal with his men. When David communicates to his men the answer he has received, they say they are afraid. They are already afraid in Judah, where are not sure of their lives because of Saul, and for the Philistines they are even more afraid. Where these enemies are, they do not want to go at all (cf. Jn 11:7-8).

When his men express themselves like this, David bursts not out against them, nor blames them for a lack of trust. He gives them the space to confess their fear to him. To meet them he inquires of the LORD again. Af-

ter the assurance that the LORD will give him victory, his men are also convinced. They go with him to Keilah and he delivers the inhabitants of Keilah.

David not only defeats the Philistines, but also leads away their livestock. He confiscates the enemy's possessions and takes back more than they have robbed. Faith is always enriched by a battle. Every battle with victory gives us a new perspective on Christ. We learn to see a little more of Him again.

Verses 6-8 | Saul Goes Down to Keilah

6 Now it came about, when Abiathar the son of Ahimelech fled to David at Keilah, [that] he came down [with] an ephod in his hand. 7 When it was told Saul that David had come to Keilah, Saul said, "God has delivered him into my hand, for he shut himself in by entering a city with double gates and bars." 8 So Saul summoned all the people for war, to go down to Keilah to besiege David and his men.

When David is in Keilah, Abiathar joins him. Abiathar has the ephod in his hand. With this David has the person and the means at his disposal by which he can ask the LORD (verse 9). It seems that David hopes that he will find a safe haven in that city, especially after his deliverance action. Saul thinks about that in another manner. When he is informed that David is in Keilah, he sees his chance to get David into his hands. That David is in the city of Keilah means to him that David is in the trap.

Now that he hears that David is in Keilah, he goes there with a whole army, while he did not go there when the Philistines besieged the city. He mobilizes the whole people against the one man David. Do we not see in this a picture of people who do not lift a finger when the work of the gospel is to be done, but who are quick to take up the weapons of the flesh against a servant of the Lord? Where the spirit of jealousy and criticism is at work, frantic attempts are made to prevent the work of the Lord.

Verses 9-14 | David Consults the LORD

9 Now David knew that Saul was plotting evil against him; so he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod here." 10 Then David said, "O LORD God

of Israel, Your servant has heard for certain that Saul is seeking to come to Keilah to destroy the city on my account. 11 Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down just as Your servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant." And the LORD said, "He will come down." 12 Then David said, "Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?" And the LORD said, "They will surrender you." 13 Then David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the pursuit. 14 David stayed in the wilderness in the strongholds, and remained in the hill country in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him into his hand.

When David comes to know what Saul intends to do, he asks the LORD, the God of Israel – he sees the whole people in connection with God – what Keilah will do. He asks specific questions and gets a clear answer. First the LORD tells him that Saul will come, for the answer to this question is first important. If David knows that, the next question is what the people of Keilah will do. David is not so naive that he thinks they will not surrender him as their benefactor to Saul. He also receives an answer to this question from the LORD. The shocking answer is that they will surrender him and his men into the hand of Saul.

The considerations of the inhabitants of Keilah are not disclosed. Perhaps they have not thought about it at all, but the LORD knows that they will succumb if Saul pressurizes them. Only the LORD can predict reactions. Only He can say what would happen if a case had developed differently. We cannot do that. We can guess but say nothing with certainty.

One assumption, for example, is that they will hand him over to Saul because, as they might think, they have certainty in Saul. As they may have thought, they did not have that in the fugitive David. Choosing the rulers of the world seems wiser than choosing someone who has been rejected and is a target of the rulers.

After this answer David leaves the city. He is not stubborn and does not count on the solidarity of the inhabitants of Keilah. The LORD has not said that he should leave the city, but David sees the answer of the LORD as

an indication to leave there. He leaves in confidence in God. He chooses the uncertainty of fleeing, but under the protection of God, and leaves the security of the city which without God cannot protect him.

Verses 15-18 | Jonathan Encourages David

15 Now David became aware that Saul had come out to seek his life while David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh. 16 And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David at Horesh, and encouraged him in God. 17 Thus he said to him, "Do not be afraid, because the hand of Saul my father will not find you, and you will be king over Israel and I will be next to you; and Saul my father knows that also." 18 So the two of them made a covenant before the LORD; and David stayed at Horesh while Jonathan went to his house.

David cannot stay long anywhere. He must flee from place to place. At the same time God protects him and does not deliver him into Saul's hand. During the run there is an unexpected encounter with Jonathan who "encouraged him in God". Jonathan strengthens David in his trust in God.

Spiritual fellowship and fraternal compassion during trials are a refreshment. It feels like the dew of heaven. It is not so much about where we can get it, but where we can give it. Jonathan's arrival at David in the wilderness is as divinely timed as Titus' arrival at Paul in Macedonia: "For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within. But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus; and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more" (2Cor 7:5-7).

Jonathan encourages David by telling him not to be afraid of his father. He knows that his father will not succeed in killing him. He reminds him that he will become king. That is what God promised him and for Jonathan it is therefore certain that David will be the same. Until now Jonathan speaks the language of faith. That is the only way that someone can be encouraged.

What he adds regarding himself is not the language of faith. It is the language of humility when we see that he wants to take second place. Yet that

will not happen. It is not for him to reserve that place for himself (cf. Mt 20:21,23). The reason is that he does not follow David in his rejection. Only those who suffer will also reign. This also applies to us: "If we endure, we will also reign with Him" (2Tim 2:12).

As son of Saul, Jonathan cannot be connected to David as ruler either, because nothing of Saul's house can be connected to the government of God's people. David does not succeed Jonathan's father, but takes his place. Saul is a king to the heart of the people. With David begins a completely different kingship, a kingship of the man after the heart of God.

What Jonathan says of his father, makes clear Saul's terrible apostasy. Saul acts against better judgement. After having said this, they again made a covenant. Then comes the final separation. Jonathan goes back to his house and David flees on. From Jonathan we do not read that he returns to the palace, or that he takes a seat in the ranks of the persecutors of David, but that he goes to his house.

He is not a follower of the persecuted David, nor is he a persecutor. We can make a hard judgment about Jonathan, but let us be careful. His love for David has been shown in many ways. We hear David impressively testify of his love for Jonathan (2Sam 1:26). On David's side there is no blame for Jonathan. Well, let us not do that either.

Verses 19-24 | The Ziphites Betray David

19 Then Ziphites came up to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is David not hiding with us in the strongholds at Horesh, on the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? 20 Now then, O king, come down according to all the desire of your soul to do so; and our part [shall be] to surrender him into the king's hand." 21 Saul said, "May you be blessed of the LORD, for you have had compassion on me. 22 Go now, make more sure, and investigate and see his place where his haunt is, [and] who has seen him there; for I am told that he is very cunning. 23 So look, and learn about all the hiding places where he hides himself and return to me with certainty, and I will go with you; and if he is in the land, I will search him out among all the thousands of Judah." 24 Then they arose and went to Ziph before Saul. Now David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the Arabah to the south of Jeshimon.

The Ziphites act even worse than the inhabitants of Keilah. They betray David to Saul from themselves, they take the initiative themselves. This is an act of Judas. Saul expresses the wish that these men will be blessed by the LORD for this advice. Then he speaks very badly of David. It is true that David is very cunning in his work, but for the enemies of God's people, and not for Saul and God's people. Saul speaks of David as a cunning enemy. The character of Saul, initially noble, is increasingly sinking into darkness and becoming more and more characteristic of the devil. He therefore ends in total darkness.

Saul tells them what to do to make sure they can get hold of David.

Verses 25-29 | David's Narrow Escape

25 When Saul and his men went to seek [him], they told David, and he came down to the rock and stayed in the wilderness of Maon. And when Saul heard [it], he pursued David in the wilderness of Maon. 26 Saul went on one side of the mountain, and David and his men on the other side of the mountain; and David was hurrying to get away from Saul, for Saul and his men were surrounding David and his men to seize them. 27 But a messenger came to Saul, saying, "Hurry and come, for the Philistines have made a raid on the land." 28 So Saul returned from pursuing David and went to meet the Philistines; therefore they called that place the Rock of Escape. 29 David went up from there and stayed in the strongholds of Engedi.

Saul almost seizes David. He has surrounded David, that there may be no way out for him. Then, through God's providence, the outcome will come for David. The LORD makes use of the Philistines by having them invading the land. The news of this causes Saul to stop David's pursuit for a moment, because he must fight the Philistines. When David has not fallen into the hands of Saul by God's providence, he takes refuge in the strongholds of Engedi.

1 Samuel 24

Verses 1-3 | Saul Pursues David Again

1 Now when Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, saying, "Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi." 2 Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel and went to seek David and his men in front of the Rocks of the Wild Goats. 3 He came to the sheepfolds on the way, where there [was] a cave; and Saul went in to relieve himself. Now David and his men were sitting in the inner recesses of the cave.

Saul, however, did not leave him alone. When he is told where David is, he forms an army of three thousand of the best soldiers to go out with them in search of David. Saul tirelessly continues his attempts to eliminate David.

Looking for David Saul enters a cave at the sheepfolds on the way to relieve himself. There are many caves, which seem to serve as sheepfold, where the shepherd can take his sheep to protect them from the heat. God's providence brings Saul to the cave where David and his men have hidden.

Verses 4-7 | David Can Kill Saul

4 The men of David said to him, "Behold, [this is] the day of which the LORD said to you, 'Behold; I am about to give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you.'" Then David arose and cut off the edge of Saul's robe secretly. 5 It came about afterward that David's conscience bothered him because he had cut off the edge of Saul's [robe]. 6 So he said to his men, "Far be it from me because of the LORD that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is the LORD's anointed." 7 David persuaded his men with [these] words and did not allow them to rise up against Saul. And Saul arose, left the cave, and went on [his] way.

The men of David say to him that this is his chance to get rid of his and their enemy. They see Saul against the light of the cave opening in this humiliating position and think that for David this is a sign of the LORD to kill him and become king.

For them it is clearly His hand that guides things in this way. However, this conclusion is drawn too quickly. Not in all prosperity should we see an opportunity to save ourselves from a tricky situation. We must also be open to the possibility that it is a temptation of Satan.

David does not accept the suggestion of his men. He keeps himself under control and therefore also his six hundred men. He does something else. He cuts off a piece of the royal robe. When he has done so, conscience bothers him, that is, his conscience speaks. He does not kill Saul, but he does touch his dignity. That alone makes his conscience speak.

He does not take Saul's entire robe, for he is waiting for the time when God will clothe him with the royal robe. It is much better to wait for the time of God than to take the initiative and thus anticipate God's time. The latter is always to damage and shame, the former to blessing and honor.

When David is back with his men, he explains to them why he did not kill Saul. David is all alone with his six hundred men. They would all have loved to have personally killed Saul. But see how David speaks of Saul. He still calls him "my lord". Saul is still his lord and God's anointed king. In speaking this way David keeps his men from killing the anointed king of God. His words show that all royal dignity can be found with David.

Verses 8-15 | David Speaks to Saul

8 Now afterward David arose and went out of the cave and called after Saul, saying, "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground and prostrated himself. 9 David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of men, saying, 'Behold, David seeks to harm you'? 10 Behold, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD had given you today into my hand in the cave, and some said to kill you, but [my eye] had pity on you; and I said, 'I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed.' 11 Now, my father, see! Indeed, see the edge of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the edge of your robe and did not kill you, know and perceive that there is no evil or rebellion in my hands, and I have not sinned against you, though you are lying in wait for my life to take it. 12 May the LORD judge between you and me, and may the LORD avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you. 13 As the proverb of the ancients says,

'Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness'; but my hand shall not be against you. 14 After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom are you pursuing? A dead dog, a single flea? 15 The LORD therefore be judge and decide between you and me; and may He see and plead my cause and deliver me from your hand.'

When David has calmed his men, he leaves the cave and calls after Saul. It is impressive to see the attitude of David against Saul and how he speaks to him. Despite all the disappearance of the dignity of the kingship of Saul, David continues to honor him as his lord and pays him his respects by bowing before him. He also calls Saul "my father". It is the opportunity for David, through this event, to show Saul his mind against the false accusations made against him.

He does not even talk about Saul's attitude towards him. He generously ignores that. He talks about the people who talk to Saul and influence him. It does not make Saul less responsible, but it shows how David tries to win Saul's heart. David wants to convince Saul that he does not want to destroy him.

He does not boast that he got Saul in his hands but says that the LORD had given him in his hand. He could have killed him. He tells Saul that his men even strongly urged him to do so, but he did not do it. As undeniable proof of his words he shows Saul the edge of his robe. That should convince him that David has nothing bad against him in the sense.

In David's actions we find a foundation for the lives of the Christian who is wronged. David does not want to take the matter between Saul and him into his own hands. He surrenders it into the hand of the LORD (1Pet 2:23). That hand will meet Saul if he continues like this. David points out to Saul what comes of wickedness. He leaves revenge to the LORD and does not exercise it himself (Rom 12:19). The retaliation will come from Him. He sees himself as completely insignificant, a dead dog, a single flea.

After he has said this of himself, David hands over his case once more to the LORD and lets Him decide. He is convinced that the LORD sees it and will look after his cause. The LORD will do him justice and make him stay out of the hand of Saul.

Verses 16-22 | Saul Speaks to David

16 When David had finished speaking these words to Saul, Saul said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" Then Saul lifted up his voice and wept. 17 He said to David, "You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you. 18 You have declared today that you have done good to me, that the LORD delivered me into your hand and [yet] you did not kill me. 19 For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safely? May the LORD therefore reward you with good in return for what you have done to me this day. 20 Now, behold, I know that you will surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hand. 21 So now swear to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants after me and that you will not destroy my name from my father's household." 22 David swore to Saul. And Saul went to his home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

When David has spoken, we hear Saul's reaction. The heart of Saul is really touched. He calls David "my son", but further it has no effect. There is no repentance to God. Saul weeps, but there is no repentance. It is just a mood condition, an emotion without depth.

Saul acknowledges what David said. He calls David more righteous than himself and wishes him the reward of the LORD. He acknowledges the good that David did him and that he owes his life to David. He admits that David will become king, something he knows for a long time, for that is how it was pronounced by Jonathan (1Sam 23:17). However, it is a forced recognition that leads to even greater hatred.

Saul asks as a favor of David that he will not exterminate his descendants. David swears he will not. However, he knows Saul well enough not to go to town with him. The ways of David and Saul continue separately.

Faith is not naive. We can be grateful if the persecution ceases, but we cannot follow the enemy to his house and start to feel at home in the same rest of the world. It does not change the world in terms of the hatred it has for the children of God. Following the enemy will change the believer, but in a negative sense.

1 Samuel 25

Introduction

Here, it seems, the history which describes the relationship between Saul and David is briefly interrupted. Yet there is a connection with the history of Saul. Nabal, one of the main characters of this chapter, looks a lot like Saul. Like Saul, he rejects David. This is at the same time Satan's attack on David. Satan failed in setting David up against Saul, but he did succeed in doing so against Nabal. When a sudden event occurs, it suddenly turns out what is in David. All the beautiful features have suddenly disappeared and we see that the flesh in David reveals itself. This history is a great warning to us.

In the history of David there are several attractive characters, such as Jonathan, Mephiboseth and Ittai. Abigail, Nabal's wife, occupies a special place among all these friends of David. In her we see in this chapter beautiful qualities of faith. It is a chapter about a woman for women. Here we see what a woman can do for a man. Many men will be able to testify, if they will, that their wife has often stopped them from foolishness.

Verse 1 | Samuel dies

1 Then Samuel died; and all Israel gathered together and mourned for him, and buried him at his house in Ramah. And David arose and went down to the wilderness of Paran.

When Samuel dies, it indicates the disappearance of the Word of God from Israel. Also, with this an intercessor for the people disappears (1Sam 12:23) and it is also over with intercession. Word and prayer are no longer present. The people acknowledge the great loss and mourn for him. During his life they have discarded him (1Sam 8:5). Now that he has died, they feel the loss. This is more often the case with prophets. During their life they are denied, after their death they are honored. However, this tribute does not consist of taking their words to heart, but of decorating their graves (Mt 23:29).

It is easy to honor this man, now that he no longer troubles their conscience with his faithful admonitions. The flesh is even able to have a certain self-satisfaction that they have had such a man in their midst. However, what God appreciates is willing obedience to the message of His servants while they are still alive, and a remembrance of their words after they have died (Heb 13:7).

True servants do not want to be mourned when their bodies lie in the grave. They much more prefer their words to be listened to. When they see this, they will be encouraged in their hearts and will give an account to the Lord “with joy and not with grieve” (Heb 13:17). The praise of the dead while their teaching is rejected can be called religious hypocrisy.

An example of this hypocrisy can be seen in the tribute given to Peter in Christianity. Beautiful buildings bear his name. But what would happen if the apostle returned to us today and preached the truth of his letters from the pulpit of the building bearing his name? Then he would be as despised and cast out as his Lord and Master from the synagogue of Nazareth (Lk 4:28-29).

For example, Peter clearly teaches that being born again is the fruit of faith in the seed of the Word of God that is absorbed into the heart (1Pet 1:23). In some parts of Christianity, however, it is stated that being born again occurs through the baptism performed by a ‘clergyman’. The same goes for the priesthood of all believers that Peter teaches in his letter (1Pet 2:3-8). Christianity teaches that the priesthood is the privilege of a select group of ministers.

For David it is different than for the people. For him, Samuel’s death is a great personal loss. He took refuge at him and found protection for some time (1Sam 19:18). Now he cannot go there anymore. However, that does not mean that he is without the Word of God, for the prophet Gad is with him. He also has the priest Abiathar with him. Everything that is valuable to Israel is with David.

After the news of Samuel’s death, it is mentioned that David arises and goes to the wilderness of Paran. It seems to be so that David heard of Samuel’s death and therefore leaves. The wilderness of Paran evokes memories in connection with the wilderness journey. It is one of the resting places

during the wilderness trip (Num 10:12). It lies south of Israel and west of Edom. Israel has sent spies from there to spy out the land, and they returned there after spying out the land (Num 13:3,26). So David went outside the land to stay out of Saul's hands.

The death of Samuel and David's departure from the land seem to be the introduction to the events described in this chapter. Both seem to have had a very discouraging effect on David. We can deduce that from his request to Nabal for support and his response to Nabal's refusal. There is no evidence in either action that God has told him to do so.

Verses 2-3 | Nabal and Abigail

2 Now [there was] a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel; and the man was very rich, and he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. And it came about while he was shearing his sheep in Carmel 3 (now the man's name was Nabal, and his wife's name was Abigail. And the woman was intelligent and beautiful in appearance, but the man was harsh and evil in [his] dealings, and he was a Calebite),

Maon is a city in Judah, in the area of Carmel – there is also a wilderness called Maon (1Sam 23:24). The first thing to look at is someone who has his business in that area. Before his name is mentioned, the man is said to be “very rich”. It also says where he is and what is happening. He has a large flock of sheep and goats and is busy stripping the sheep of their wool.

The name “Nabal” means “fool”. He is what his name says, because he does not take God into account at all. That is exactly the characteristic of a fool, for he “says in his heart, There is no God” (Psa 14:1a). He is a picture of the wicked people who do not think of God. There is no trace of wisdom in someone who is a fool.

His wife is called “Abigail”, which means “father of joy” or “whose father rejoices”. She is a complete opposite of her husband. With her are mind and insight, which she has not lost in this marriage. She is also a beautiful appearance. The fact that she is ever attached to such a man in marriage will not have been her own choice but will have been arranged for her.

Of Nabal is also said he is “harsh and evil in [his] dealings”. Nabal's ancestor is Caleb. Nabal inherited the possessions of Caleb, but not his faith and

dedication. He does not walk in the spirit of his ancestor. We would never have heard of Nabal if he had not come into contact with David, even if only for a moment.

Verses 4-8 | David's Request

4 that David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. 5 So David sent ten young men; and David said to the young men, "Go up to Carmel, visit Nabal and greet him in my name; 6 and thus you shall say, 'Have a long life, peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. 7 Now I have heard that you have shearers; now your shepherds have been with us and we have not insulted them, nor have they missed anything all the days they were in Carmel. 8 Ask your young men and they will tell you. Therefore let [my] young men find favor in your eyes, for we have come on a festive day. Please give whatever you find at hand to your servants and to your son David.'"

When David hears that Nabal is shearing his sheep, he thinks that is the best way to ask Nabal for a favor. It seems to have been a habit to have large meals on the occasion of the shearing of the sheep, as we also see with Absalom (2Sam 13:23-24). Shearing the sheep (Gen 31:19; 38:12-13) is like collecting the harvest. Such an event makes you happy and often generous.

David sends ten young men to Nabal and tells them exactly what they need to wish him, what they have been for him – so that Nabal can now celebrate this sheep shearers festival – and what they should ask for as a favor. He orders his ten young men to first greet him in his name. Then they must wish him peace, both for him personally and for his family, family, and servants, and for all his possessions. This wish of peace is not only politeness but shows the mind of David toward Nabal.

Besides showing his mind in his good wishes David also points out his commitment to the wellbeing of Nabal. Not only has he taken nothing, but he has also ensured protection that others have taken nothing of what belongs to Nabal. With this evidence he underlines his words. And that is not all either. He points out to Nabal that he can check the truth of his statements with his servants. Finally, David appeals to the grace of Nabal.

He does not demand anything, he does not threaten, he does not demand a reward, but asks Nabal to act mercifully. And is it not a good day when he approaches Nabal?

With all these words David wants to create the right atmosphere for the question he wants to ask. He is humble. About his own young men, he speaks to Nabal as “your servants” and he calls himself “your son David”. He also does not give a list of desired articles but leaves it entirely to Nabal. He asks Nabal to give him “whatever you find at hand”, that means, what he can miss and has within reach, without having to make any effort.

Verses 9-11 | Nabal’s Response

9 When David’s young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in David’s name; then they waited. 10 But Nabal answered David’s servants and said, “Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants today who are each breaking away from his master. 11 Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men whose origin I do not know?”

The ten young men come to Nabal and speak in name of David what he has told them. The testimony is given by ten men. The number ten is the number of responsibility. Nabal is responsible for his response to David’s question. The question is whether the claims of God’s anointed king, even though he is on the run, are recognized. The fact that David as a person does not seem to live on the height of faith does not detract from the test to which Nabal is subjected by this question.

When they have spoken and are silent, Nabal immediately answers. His answer is a deep insult to David and shows contempt for the anointed king. Narrowing he pronounces it: “Who is David?” It sounds like the mocking question from the Pharaoh to Moses: “Who is the LORD?” (Exo 5:2; cf. Job 21:15a). Then he says: “And who is the son of Jesse?” This shows that he does know David and that he despises him, as is the case with Saul, who also calls David this way (1Sam 20:27).

By the way, the question “who is David”, and if we see David as a picture of the Lord Jesus, is a question that is asked of every human being. Every human being will have to answer the question: “What do you think about

the Christ?" (Mt 22:42). The answer to this question determines eternity. If we do not know the answer to this question, it is guilty ignorance. As for David, Abigail knows, while Nabal does not. As for Christ, anyone can know, because it is written in God's Word. If we do not know, it is because we do not want to know.

Nabal sees everything as his property, obtained by his own efforts. The recurring word "my" indicates that. It never comes to him that he owes his wealth largely to the protection of his property by David and his men. Because of this he has lost nothing (verses 15-16).

Nabal is remarkably similar to the rich man about whom the Lord Jesus tells a parable, in response to someone's question of whether He wants to judge in a dispute over an inheritance (Lk 12:13-21). In the parable God also addresses that rich man with the name "Fool" (Lk 12:20). Whoever looks at his possessions as purely the result of his own merit, without any sense of gratitude to God, is a fool.

Verses 12-13 | Reaction of David

12 So David's young men retraced their way and went back; and they came and told him according to all these words. 13 David said to his men, "Each [of you] gird on his sword." So each man girded on his sword. And David also girded on his sword, and about four hundred men went up behind David while two hundred stayed with the baggage.

Without any reaction from the men, they return to David. David does react, and how. He does not react with the gentleness of Him of Whom he is so often a picture. He reacts as John and James (Lk 9:54). His reaction may be understandable, but it is not good. Where are his patience and his questions to God what he should do? He reacts carnal. We see here that the beloved one is only by grace a man after God's heart. Like others, he can take a case into his own hands.

David expects evil and insult from Saul. He is prepared for that and is wary of it. This allows him to control himself. However, he expected kindness from Nabal. Therefore, the insult he receives is an unpleasant surprise. He is caught in it. He is not wary of that sudden attack. In view of such temptations it is necessary to pray to the Lord: "Do not lead us into temptation" (Mt 6:13a).

Verses 14-17 | A Young Man Reports to Abigail

14 But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, "Behold, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master, and he scorned them. 15 Yet the men were very good to us, and we were not insulted, nor did we miss anything as long as we went about with them, while we were in the fields. 16 They were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the time we were with them tending the sheep. 17 Now therefore, know and consider what you should do, for evil is plotted against our master and against all his household; and he is such a worthless man that no one can speak to him."

One of the young men of Nabal tells Abigail what happened. He testifies how Nabal responded to David's request how he reacted against David's men. Nabal has scorned David's men in an outburst of anger over what has been asked of him on David's behalf. Then the young man testifies of the goodness of David and his men whom he and the other young men have experienced. They experienced them as a wall around them and they did not miss anything of the cattle they had to guard. Nabal must have given them severe punishment if they missed another piece of cattle. Those outbursts of anger have been spared to them by the protection of David and his men. At the same time, Nabal has lost nothing.

Through his actions Nabal fell into disgrace with David and will be killed. The servant cannot discuss this evil with Nabal because the man is unapproachable. He speaks to Nabal's wife about him as "such a worthless man that no one can speak to him".

Verses 18-22 | Abigail Meets David

18 Then Abigail hurried and took two hundred [loaves] of bread and two jugs of wine and five sheep already prepared and five measures of roasted grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded [them] on donkeys. 19 She said to her young men, "Go on before me; behold, I am coming after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal. 20 It came about as she was riding on her donkey and coming down by the hidden part of the mountain, that behold, David and his men were coming down toward her; so she met them. 21 Now David had said, "Surely in vain I have guarded all that this [man] has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that

belonged to him; and he has returned me evil for good. 22 May God do so to the enemies of David, and more also, if by morning I leave [as much as] one male of any who belong to him."

Abigail hurries (verse 18; verses 23,34,42). It is the haste of faith to hold someone back from foolishness. She does not act out of protection for her husband, but she acts with the future of David in mind. That shows a great faith. If faith is present, there is also wise action. She takes everything Nabal has refused to give and even does more than that. David has asked for the things that Nabal has easy to grasp (verse 8). Abigail also gives food that she has prepared.

This is far more than a mere compensation of Nabal's refusal. Later she will also compensate the insulting words Nabal has spoken. She acts according to the truth of the proverb: "A gift in secret subdues anger, And a bribe in the bosom, strong wrath" (Pro 21:14; Gen 32:13b-21).

With her gift she goes to David. She comes down. This suggests that in the valley, i.e. in a humble attitude, a dispute can be settled. In the low affection and mercy are found. This is present with Abigail in relation to David, and thus she prevents him from exercising a wrong intention.

While she is on her way, she meets David. The meeting is described in a way that suggests that she hears everything David says, and that David then suddenly stands face to face with her. What David intends to do and the reason for it are communicated. This shows that David reacts as a taunted and offended man. In his opinion Nabal has rewarded him "evil for good". For that he will avenge himself. There he has, he thinks, the fullest right.

He is thus far away from the mind he has always shown towards Saul, which thus reminds us of the mind of the Lord Jesus. Nabal's refusal to give him some of his prosperity, and Nabal's insult in relation to his person, went down the wrong way with David. However misplaced Nabal's refusal may be, he did not do injustice to David. There is no agreement that David will be rewarded for the protection he has offered. David's punitive expedition is not related to the refusal and the insult done to him.

The fact that the world does not show any gratitude for services rendered and perhaps even insults us should not be a reason to avenge ourselves.

Gratitude is not a right we can claim. We too can count on the Lord to reward everything we have done out of love for Him, especially if we do not receive the expected reward from people. It is not for us to avenge ourselves for injustice or insult: "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath [of God], for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord" (Rom 12:19).

Because David listens to Abigail, the LORD takes Nabal for His account, and David does not do anything that he would regret later.

Verses 23-31 | David Restrained From Shedding Blood

23 When Abigail saw David, she hurried and dismounted from her donkey, and fell on her face before David and bowed herself to the ground. 24 She fell at his feet and said, "On me alone, my lord, be the blame. And please let your maidservant speak to you, and listen to the words of your maidservant. 25 Please do not let my lord pay attention to this worthless man, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name and folly is with him; but I your maidservant did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent. 26 "Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, since the LORD has restrained you from shedding blood, and from avenging yourself by your own hand, now then let your enemies and those who seek evil against my lord, be as Nabal. 27 Now let this gift which your maidservant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who accompany my lord. 28 Please forgive the transgression of your maidservant; for the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the LORD, and evil will not be found in you all your days. 29 Should anyone rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, then the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the LORD your God; but the lives of your enemies He will sling out as from the hollow of a sling. 30 And when the LORD does for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and appoints you ruler over Israel, 31 this will not cause grief or a troubled heart to my lord, both by having shed blood without cause and by my lord having avenged himself. When the LORD deals well with my lord, then remember your maidservant."

When Abigail sees David, she shows her submissive attitude by falling at his feet. In this attitude, she blames herself for the bad treatment his mes-

sengers had received (verses 24,28). She does this to protect her house and to prevent David from committing folly. Anyone who is truly submissive will ignore great insults. Humble she asks David to hear her.

She speaks to him with the respect that a man like David deserves. She keeps calling him "my lord" and shows a completely different attitude and mind than her husband, who in his contempt for David said: "Who is David?" It is as if her tribute removes and replaces the contempt of her husband. She does her best to soften David and bring him to a better mind. She also points out to David that her husband is not even worth engaging with him. It is that she did not see David's young men when they came for some food. If it had been, she would have given what they asked for.

David is on his way to get his right through his own hand. What he has always refused against Saul, he is about to do here: avenge himself. Now that she has stopped David, she says that the LORD has kept him from committing that evil. In what she says, she shows her faith in the outcome of her intervention. She resembles Rahab, who also binds herself in faith with God's people, when those people do not yet own any of the promised land (Jos 2:9-13).

She pronounces it that the LORD will "certainly make for my lord an enduring house". She believes that he will be king, that he is fighting the battles of the LORD and that he will do so in a righteous manner. For her David, and not Saul, is the king anointed by God. Saul, she calls someone who "rises up to pursue you and to seek your life". She encourages David by pointing out to him the protection of the LORD with Whom he is safe and for Whom he is valuable. He can trust that the LORD Himself will deal with his enemies, whether it be Nabal or Saul. These words should remind David of what he himself said earlier to Saul, that the LORD will deal with him (1Sam 24:13,16).

She points out the time that will come when David's suffering will be over, and he will reign. In view of that wonderful time, she asks with confidence whether David will remember her. The words she speaks remind us of the words of the robber on the cross next to the Lord Jesus. This man discovers in the Crucified the Lord of glory and the King of kings. He looks beyond the fearful circumstances of the moment and asks in confidence: ""Jesus,

remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" (Lk 23:42). The noble Abigail and the low sunken robber show the same faith. They look beyond the present and act and speak in the light of the future.

Verses 32-35 | David Listens

32 Then David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me, 33 and blessed be your discernment, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodshed and from avenging myself by my own hand. 34 Nevertheless, as the LORD God of Israel lives, who has restrained me from harming you, unless you had come quickly to meet me, surely there would not have been left to Nabal until the morning light [as much as] one male." 35 So David received from her hand what she had brought him and said to her, "Go up to your house in peace. See, I have listened to you and granted your request."

Abigail is a wise admonisher and David has a listening ear: "[Like] an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold Is a wise reprover to a listening ear" (Pro 25:12). David reacts as a believer. He is not ashamed to be corrected by a woman and gives the LORD the honor for that. He sees in her a messenger of God and acknowledges His goodness in her.

When someone comes to us with counsel, guidance, comfort, warning, or punishment, it is important that we see that God sends such a person to us. It should make us thankful when, through God's providence, there are people on our way who are a means in His hand to keep us from committing sin.

Verses 36-38 | The Death of Nabal

36 Then Abigail came to Nabal, and behold, he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; so she did not tell him anything at all until the morning light. 37 But in the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him so that he became [as] a stone. 38 About ten days later, the LORD struck Nabal and he died.

When Abigail comes home, Nabal is drunk. There are few things that reduce a person as much as drunkenness. Excessive drinking deprives

a person of his sound vision on life and makes him a senseless animal. God is not thought of at all. Nabal does not seem to have missed her and nothing of what she took with her. He lavishly celebrates. What he has begrudged to David, he uses to have his own carousal. In his imagination he is a king. He sits on the throne, his own self reigns.

Abigail realizes that it makes no sense to tell Nabal anything about what has been happening. Trying to tell drunken people the gospel is throwing pearls before swine. When Nabal is sober again the next day, Abigail tells him about her meeting with David. When he hears that, his heart dies and he becomes as a stone, that is, like a dead person.

Several explanations have been given as to why this is the case. Some say that he suffered a cardiac arrest because he realized the death threat he had been exposed to by his heartless actions against David and his men. He must have thought that this evil could still happen to him. A wicked man remains afraid of threat as long as he does not accept grace. Others say that he was particularly excited about the gift his wife brought to David without his knowledge. This loss has been shocking for him. It may also be that he, who was a hard, numb man, realized that his wife has humiliated him by her actions in an extraordinary way. That was unbearable for him.

In any case, about ten days later he really dies, because the LORD kills him. He has lived without mercy and dies without consolation. There is no one who grieves for him. We see that the LORD exercises right between David and Nabal. Let it be an encouragement for us that He also arranges the right for us.

Verses 39-42 | Abigail Becomes David's Wife

39 When David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be the LORD, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal and has kept back His servant from evil. The LORD has also returned the evildoing of Nabal on his own head." Then David sent a proposal to Abigail, to take her as his wife. 40 When the servants of David came to Abigail at Carmel, they spoke to her, saying, "David has sent us to you to take you as his wife." 41 She arose and bowed with her face to the ground and said, "Behold, your maidservant is a maid to wash the feet of my lord's servants." 42 Then Abigail quickly arose,

and rode on a donkey, with her five maidens who attended her; and she followed the messengers of David and became his wife.

David acknowledges that the LORD has taken a stand for him and praises Him for it. That clears the way for him to take Abigail as his wife. Abigail leaves her easy life with plenty and chooses to come to David and accompany him on a path of suffering and wandering. Abigail is a picture of the faithful remnant of Israel in the end time that is connected to the Messiah.

When she comes to him, she takes the attitude of submission and says she is ready to do the humblest work. She takes the humble place and makes herself available to David and his servants. She connects her fate to his and will share in the persecution and oppression that are his part. She will even be captured by David's enemies when they are in Ziklag (1Sam 30:5). However, she will also share in his throne when he will reign in Hebron (2Sam 2:2-4).

Verses 43-44 | The Wives of David

*43 David had also taken Ahinoam of Jezreel, and they both became his wives.
44 Now Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was from Gallim.*

When mentioning the wives of David Ahinoam is mentioned first (2Sam 3:2; 1Chr 3:1). This probably happens because she is the mother of his firstborn son, Amnon. As a reason for taking his two other wives it is mentioned here that Saul gave his daughter Michal, "David's wife", to Palti (2Sam 3:15). Saul may have done so to bother David and possibly cut through any band David was connected to him with.

It should be noted that, however much it may be customary in those days that the increase in the power of a king is accompanied by an increase of wives, having more than one wife is and remains against God's statute and intention (Mt 19:4-5).

1 Samuel 26

Introduction

In this chapter we see David again at a spiritual high point, while in the next chapter he fails again. We also saw that in 1 Samuel 24-25. It teaches us that we are constantly dependent on grace in all things.

Verses 1-3 | Saul Pursues David

1 Then the Ziphites came to Saul at Gibeah, saying, "Is not David hiding on the hill of Hachilah, [which is] before Jeshimon?" 2 So Saul arose and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having with him three thousand chosen men of Israel, to search for David in the wilderness of Ziph. 3 Saul camped in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon, beside the road, and David was staying in the wilderness. When he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness,

We have also seen the Ziphites before as the traitors of David (1Sam 23:19). Now they betray again to Saul where David is. Their communication is reason for Saul to continue his pursuit of David. Although Saul knows that the LORD is with David, he is tireless in his attempts to eliminate David. Saul does not want to hand over the kingdom to the hand of the man God has chosen in his place.

It is the attitude of every man who does not bow to the authority of Christ, still rejected today, while God has already "made Him both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Christ means 'Anointed'. He is the anointed King of God. In Saul's attitude we see how the flesh is. It never gives in; it never bends before God. We will always have to be careful that it does not assert itself in our lives.

Verses 4-7 | David Goes to Saul

4 David sent out spies, and he knew that Saul was definitely coming. 5 David then arose and came to the place where Saul had camped. And David saw the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the commander of his army; and Saul was lying in the circle of the camp, and the people were camped around him. 6 Then David said to Ahimelech the Hittite and to Abishai the son

of Zeruah, Joab's brother, saying, "Who will go down with me to Saul in the camp?" And Abishai said, "I will go down with you." 7 So David and Abishai came to the people by night, and behold, Saul lay sleeping inside the circle of the camp with his spear stuck in the ground at his head; and Abner and the people were lying around him.

David does not go for rumors but wants to know for sure if it is true that Saul is looking for him again. That is why he sends out spies. If the messages turn out to be correct, David takes the initiative to go to Saul. David's approach this time is different than in 1 Samuel 24. He does not flee further but goes towards Saul. What happens next is remarkably like what we read in 1 Samuel 24.

Yet he exposes himself to much greater dangers here. In the first case Saul, without knowing it, came close to David. It was an accidental 'meeting'. Here David goes to Saul himself. Saul is not alone here, but is in the circle of the camp, surrounded by his soldiers. What David does seems overconfident, but God is with him, for he puts a deep sleep upon Saul and all who are with him (verse 12).

With his action David puts his life again at risk. He must have a great deal of peace in his heart to venture this adventure. He asks two men to go with him. Abishai has the same courage as David and offers to join him. The sense of this action of David seems to be a new attempt to prove his innocence.

Striking is again the remark about Saul's spear, which says that Saul "stuck in the ground at his head". He has the spear within reach to seize it at the slightest threat of danger. It is the spear with which he has tried to kill David several times.

Verses 8-12 | The Spear and the Jug

8 Then Abishai said to David, "Today God has delivered your enemy into your hand; now therefore, please let me strike him with the spear to the ground with one stroke, and I will not strike him the second time." 9 But David said to Abishai, "Do not destroy him, for who can stretch out his hand against the LORD's anointed and be without guilt?" 10 David also said, "As the LORD lives, surely the LORD will strike him, or his day will come that he dies, or he

will go down into battle and perish. 11 The LORD forbid that I should stretch out my hand against the LORD's anointed; but now please take the spear that is at his head and the jug of water, and let us go." 12 So David took the spear and the jug of water from [beside] Saul's head, and they went away, but no one saw or knew [it], nor did any awake, for they were all asleep, because a sound sleep from the LORD had fallen on them.

When David and Abishai are with Saul, Abishai speaks to David that it is God's guidance to deal with his enemy now. Last time, when Saul came into the cave with David and his men, his men made the same proposal and with the same motivation (1Sam 24:5). There they said David could do whatever he wanted with Saul. It seems that Abishai learned from last time that David himself will not do it and that he therefore offers to do it. He would do it with Saul's own spear, with the certainty that one stroke is sufficient. With great self-confidence he says that a second time will not be necessary.

Would it not be a just retribution to kill Saul with the weapon with which he himself wanted to kill David several times? Would this not fulfill the Word of God that whoever digs a pit for another, falls into it himself (Pro 26:27)?

As for Abishai's remark that it is God's guidance that David Saul has in his hands, there is still a lesson to be learned. In some faith communities, it is common for someone to say to another what God wants that other person to do. This can even be introduced with the words 'thus saith the Lord', a way of saying which we do not find anywhere in the New Testament regarding the church. Such a use of words can sound impressive, but it is usually manipulation and, in any case, arrogant.

Someone may say that we must do something and appeal to the will of the Lord, but we must first be convinced ourselves that something is the will of the Lord. Others cannot determine for us the will of the Lord. God makes His will known to each of His own personally through His Word. By reading it ourselves, or by testing what someone else has said about it, we can get to know His will for our lives.

David resists the temptation with the same argument as last time. Saul is still for him "the LORD's anointed". Here again we see that beautiful char-

acter trait in David that he recognizes the authority established by God. He does not look at the character of the dignitary, but at the position of the dignitary. This is an important lesson for us in our attitude towards government, to which the same applies (Rom 13:1-2).

In 1 Samuel 24 David gave the matter into the hands of the LORD. He does the same here, but he also says how Saul will come to an end. David knows that the LORD will deal with Saul. The LORD can deal with him by striking him that he dies, as He did to Nabal (1Sam 25:38). He can also let him die in battle, which indeed happens later. Faith awaits God's actions and does not take them forward by taking the matter into its own hands.

David does something else. He takes Saul's spear and jug with him. With this he deprives Saul of his defense or royal dignity and his refreshment. The spear is still the symbol of Saul's power. He is a weak person without a spear.

Verses 13-16 | David Addresses Abner

13 Then David crossed over to the other side and stood on top of the mountain at a distance [with] a large area between them. 14 David called to the people and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, "Will you not answer, Abner?" Then Abner replied, "Who are you who calls to the king?" 15 So David said to Abner, "Are you not a man? And who is like you in Israel? Why then have you not guarded your lord the king? For one of the people came to destroy the king your lord. 16 This thing that you have done is not good. As the LORD lives, [all] of you must surely die, because you did not guard your lord, the LORD's anointed. And now, see where the king's spear is and the jug of water that was at his head."

Before David addresses his pursuers, he first makes sure that there is a large area between him and them. It also indicates the enormous spiritual distance between David and Saul. They live in two worlds that have nothing in common. David is connected to God; Saul thinks only of his own position. Between these two ways of life yaws a large gap, which is impossible to bridge.

When David has come at a safe distance from Saul and his men, he calls the people and Abner awake. In 1 Samuel 24 it is a matter between David

and Saul, but here David speaks to the ears of all the people. This time he has not only to do with Saul, but also with Abner, the commander of Saul, who has a better character than his commander, Joab. Abner must realize that he is fighting for a lost cause. Saul must realize that he cannot count on any human help. He first addresses Abner. Abner's reaction shows that he understands that it is about Saul.

David expresses his respect for Abner, but at the same time shows him that he has failed. As proof of this he points Abner to the spear and the jug and mentions the place where they stood. It is clear that David was close to Saul, without anyone noticing. In a sense, this failure means the death of the king. It is due to the inattentiveness of Abner, who guarantees the king's safety, that Saul was under an immediate threat of death.

In David's words, there seems to be an invitation for Abner to join him. However, Abner seems to be taking a neutral position. He is not a great supporter of Saul, because his guarding of Saul is not done with real dedication.

Verses 17-20 | David Addresses Saul

17 Then Saul recognized David's voice and said, "Is this your voice, my son David?" And David said, "It is my voice, my lord the king." 18 He also said, "Why then is my lord pursuing his servant? For what have I done? Or what evil is in my hand? 19 Now therefore, please let my lord the king listen to the words of his servant. If the LORD has stirred you up against me, let Him accept an offering; but if it is men, cursed are they before the LORD, for they have driven me out today so that I would have no attachment with the inheritance of the LORD, saying, 'Go, serve other gods.' 20 Now then, do not let my blood fall to the ground away from the presence of the LORD; for the king of Israel has come out to search for a single flea, just as one hunts a partridge in the mountains."

While David is talking to Abner, Saul wakes up. He hears the conversation and recognizes the voice of David. David then addresses Saul, as he did in 1 Samuel 24. Yet it is not in the same way. David speaks more clearly here, there is more indignation in it, but without insulting Saul. He asks Saul a few questions, from which Saul must be able to see that he is completely

wrong. Can Saul mention just one reason that can justify his pursuit? Is there anything evil in David to point out?

David sees only two possibilities that make Saul pursue him so much. It may be that the LORD does it. If so, an offering is his only protection against the LORD's wrath. In the picture it speaks of the fact that only an appeal to the fullness of the Lord Jesus in His God-dedicated life can deliver him from the wrath of God. Although there is no apparent evil with David, David knows of himself that he is not without sin. Only the Lord Jesus is without sin. It is also possible that David means that the LORD is angry with Saul and incites him to this wrong action and that David says to Saul how he can be pleasing to the LORD.

But if they are men, then they take upon themselves the curse of the LORD, for then they are the guilty because he had to leave his inheritance that the LORD gave him. Without directly accusing Saul, David is forced by Saul to leave his inheritance. The people who charge him with Saul chase him away from God's land and in fact say that he should go and serve other gods, the idols. David knows that the LORD is with him, but he is not insensitive to all that he misses.

If people slander us, it can bring us to the point where we no longer enjoy the Lord's things. There is even the danger of resorting to methods originating from the flesh. We see that in the next chapter even literally happen with David. His stay outside the place of blessing brings him into the realm and under the power of demons.

David knows that Saul is out on his blood. Although Saul does not have him in his hands, he asks Saul not to let his blood on the ground far away from the LORD's face. David attributes to Saul the deed he intends to do. In doing so, he puts Saul's plan on the same level as its execution.

Verses 21-25 | A Final Separation

21 Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Return, my son David, for I will not harm you again because my life was precious in your sight this day. Behold, I have played the fool and have committed a serious error." 22 David replied, "Behold the spear of the king! Now let one of the young men come over and take it. 23 The LORD will repay each man [for] his righteousness and his faithfulness;

for the LORD delivered you into [my] hand today, but I refused to stretch out my hand against the LORD's anointed. 24 Now behold, as your life was highly valued in my sight this day, so may my life be highly valued in the sight of the LORD, and may He deliver me from all distress." 25 Then Saul said to David, "Blessed are you, my son David; you will both accomplish much and surely prevail." So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

Saul's reaction is a cheap "I've sinned". It sounds good, but it is just words. It is not the language of a convinced conscience. Saul acknowledges that David has shown him grace by letting him live and that his life is precious in David's eyes. On the other hand, he says of himself that he has "played the fool", that is, he acted as a wicked, and "a serious error". Unfortunately, there is no acknowledgement of sin before the LORD. There is no question of "sorrow that is according to [the will of] God", for only that sorrow "produces a repentance without regret, [leading] to salvation" (2Cor 7:10a). Saul's sorrow is "sorrow of the world" and that sorrow "produces death" (2Cor 7:10b).

His request to David to return and his promise that he will not harm David any more are implausible. David does not respond to his words. He does not take them seriously. He hands over the judgment of his own conduct and that of Saul to Him Who judges righteous. For himself he knows that he has done nothing evil. As proof of this he mentions what Abishai gave as justification to kill Saul (verse 8).

David acknowledges that the LORD has indeed given Saul into his hand, not to kill him, but to show him grace. Saul's life has been important in David's eyes, and he expects his own life to be just as important in the LORD's eyes. To Him he entrusts his life and he expresses the desire that the LORD will save him from all need.

Here David is still completely focused on the salvation by the LORD. A few verses further, at the beginning of the next chapter, he thinks that he will perish through Saul's hand and makes his own decisions. This does not take away the sincerity of the wish of his heart that the LORD will be with him in all need. It does show that a sincere desire must be followed by a persevering trust in the Lord.

In the last words we have from Saul to David, he acknowledges that David will prevail. These are prophetic words and they come from the lips of the man who searched for David's misfortune from the beginning. He can only testify of the faithfulness of this man of God's choice (cf. Rev 3:9).

In the same way, the world has often had to acknowledge that God was with those they persecuted. The same will happen when the Lord Jesus returns with all His saints, "to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed" (2Thes 1:10). The whole company of the lost, Satan and all his angels, together with all who rejected Christ, will unite in the acknowledgment of the blessing of the redeemed by Christ and their victory by the blood of the Lamb.

Then David and Saul separate. They will never see each other again. Saul is facing his downfall. David goes "on his way". What way that is, we see in the following chapter. It is its own way.

1 Samuel 27

Verses 1-4 | To the Land of the Philistines

1 Then David said to himself, "Now I will perish one day by the hand of Saul. There is nothing better for me than to escape into the land of the Philistines. Saul then will despair of searching for me anymore in all the territory of Israel, and I will escape from his hand." 2 So David arose and crossed over, he and the six hundred men who were with him, to Achish the son of Maach, king of Gath. 3 And David lived with Achish at Gath, he and his men, each with his household, [even] David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's widow. 4 Now it was told Saul that David had fled to Gath, so he no longer searched for him.

In this chapter David does what he mentioned in the previous chapter as a goal of the people who chase him: he resorts to "other gods" (1Sam 26:19b). Verse 1 contains his motivation. There is no consultation with the LORD, but consultation with himself. He said in his heart that he would have to resort to the Philistines for his safety, because Saul would certainly not seek him there.

The deliberations of the human heart lead to a wrong path. He has always managed to keep himself out of Saul's hand, but that 'luck' once stops. This is the way to reason when God is no longer standing before the attention, but man. Who does not know that? Abraham and Elijah also reasoned like this and went their own way. Unbelief looks at the current circumstances full of danger, while no thought is given to God's salvations in the past. We do so when we think that we can no longer withstand the constant pressure and are on the verge of collapsing.

David adds the deed to the word and goes to Achish. It is the second time he has fled there. Then he was there for a short time, because when he feels discovered, he gets scared there too. He behaved like an insane and was sent away by Achish (1Sam 21:10-15). Now he goes there again. It will have become clear to Achish in the course of time that David is the archenemy of Saul. He lets David live with him.

When Saul hears that David has fled to Gath and that he has got a shelter there, he leaves David alone. It seems that David's plan succeeds. The problems are over. However, this is only an illusion. He gets more and more entangled in the nets of Achish. David must gain this experience so that he may learn that his kingdom will be based on grace.

Verses 5-7 | David in Ziklag

5 Then David said to Achish, "If now I have found favor in your sight, let them give me a place in one of the cities in the country, that I may live there; for why should your servant live in the royal city with you?" 6 So Achish gave him Ziklag that day; therefore Ziklag has belonged to the kings of Judah to this day. 7 The number of days that David lived in the country of the Philistines was a year and four months.

David does not want to live too close to Achish anyway. He hypocrites that he is but a servant of Achish and therefore cannot dwell in the royal city. Achis allows him to live in Ziklag, a city he even gets as property and which also remains the property of the kings of Judah. Thus, Ziklag in the land of God remains a reminder of this wrong way of David.

David will spend a year and four months in the land of the Philistines. No word of the LORD is heard all this time.

Verses 8-12 | David's Double Life

8 Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites and the Girzites and the Amalekites; for they were the inhabitants of the land from ancient times, as you come to Shur even as far as the land of Egypt. 9 David attacked the land and did not leave a man or a woman alive, and he took away the sheep, the cattle, the donkeys, the camels, and the clothing. Then he returned and came to Achish. 10 Now Achish said, "Where have you made a raid today?" And David said, "Against the Negev of Judah and against the Negev of the Jerahmeelites and against the Negev of the Kenites." 11 David did not leave a man or a woman alive to bring to Gath, saying, "Otherwise they will tell about us, saying, 'So has David done and so [has been] his practice all the time he has lived in the country of the Philistines.'" 12 So Achish believed David, saying, "He has surely made himself odious among his people Israel; therefore he will become my servant forever."

David is behaving here in accordance with what Saul said of him. For he acts very cunningly (1Sam 23:22). He not only goes to the enemies to live there, but he behaves as if he were an enemy of his own people. David can no longer go his way straightforward. His life consists of deceiving Achish, in whom he creates the false confidence that he has “surely made himself odious among his people Israel”.

The longer one propagates the lie, the more one believes in it oneself and is distorted by it in one’s character. What an antigenic testimony! This false and hypocritical behavior becomes a habit of this man after God’s heart. How is it possible to persevere in it? It is necessary that we pray: “Remove the false way from me, And graciously grant me Your law” [that is, God’s Word] (Psa 119:29).

If the conscience of God’s servants tells them that they are in a wrong position, one of their excuses is that they are dedicating themselves with new energy to a certain good thing. In so doing, they make themselves believe that such a thing will silence their conscience. Thus David is committed to fight against the enemies of God and His people. For the Amalekites must be eradicated by order of God and Saul has failed to do so. David makes up for that omission. He goes there and defeats them, apparently because the LORD is with him.

However, we should not focus on success. This is what happens frequently in Christianity. It is not asked whether a particular case is in accordance with the Scriptures or not, but whether something produces results. Result is the only thing that counts. The advice of the world is sought to make a ‘church’ attractive. Evangelists use worldly methods to offer the gospel. If only souls are saved, that is the justification. However, we should not judge things by what we see, but by whether something is according to Scripture and reject everything that contradicts it. It is a walk in faith, not a walk guided by what we see.

1 Samuel 28

Introduction

David has maneuvered himself into an untenable position. Before describing how this ends, Saul's untenable position is described and how he deals with it.

Verses 1-2 | David Must Fight Against Israel

1 Now it came about in those days that the Philistines gathered their armed camps for war, to fight against Israel. And Achish said to David, "Know assuredly that you will go out with me in the camp, you and your men." 2 David said to Achish, "Very well, you shall know what your servant can do." So Achish said to David, "Very well, I will make you my bodyguard for life."

The Philistines believe that the time has come to fight against Israel. They may have noticed that Saul's strength is decreasing. Also, the stay of David with them will have given them a certain reassurance. Their greatest enemy, who had already inflicted many defeats on them, is now their ally. This will cause the moment to come that David will have to go with Achish to fight against his own people. He cannot continue his lying activities. The day of truth dawns. He will now have to take sides. Yet he does not. Achish tells him that he and his men will join him in the army to fight against Israel.

David persists in his false attitude. He is not open and does not answer yes or no but gives a general and circumventing answer. He resembles Petrus who not only denies the Lord, but also his relationship to his fellow disciples (Lk 22:58). David has resorted to Achish to be free from Saul's persecution. Now it appears that he is a prisoner of Achish. Achish even calls him to his bodyguard forever. The great winner of the Philistine giant becomes the defender of the Philistines. So far it can come with a believer who starts to live in lies.

Verses 3-6 | The LORD Does Not Answer Saul

3 Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. And Saul had removed from the land those who were

mediums and spiritists. 4 So the Philistines gathered together and came and camped in Shunem; and Saul gathered all Israel together and they camped in Gilboa. 5 When Saul saw the camp of the Philistines, he was afraid and his heart trembled greatly. 6 When Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets.

Here again the death of Samuel is pointed to. Samuel's death also ends the prophetic revelations of God. That does not mean that they are no longer there at all, but they are no longer there for Saul. This fact is repeated to understand the rest of the chapter. The same goes for the remark that Saul has removed the mediums and spiritists from the land. One of them will also be discussed later in this chapter.

Saul has carried out a major clean-up operation around mediums and spiritists. However, this chapter shows that this must only have been an act of compensation for his disobedience. It is not the result of Godliness. His removal of those connected to demons seems to have been an action to save his face. He does not take God into account, but through such purification he can silence his conscience. This good deed is done with a wrong motive. It is nothing more than 'refurbishing the flesh'. Therefore, Saul can go there later, if he must and will have a word from the invisible world. Then it turns out that his work was not a pure work, which he did with conviction for God.

When Saul sees that the Philistines are preparing to wage war against him, he becomes terrified. He sees himself forced to consult the LORD. But God no longer reveals Himself to Him. The ways along which this could happen are closed. God does not reveal Himself directly to Him through a dream. The way of the urim is also closed. That is what Saul himself did by murdering the priests. Through the prophet Samuel there will be no revelation because Samuel has died. Saul is all alone. The LORD, and all that is of Him, is with David.

Saul does not receive an answer from the LORD because he does not come to him with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. God cannot be consulted by those who think of things in their hearts other than what He has in mind (Eze 14:3). How could he also expect the LORD to answer him, when he did not listen to Samuel during his life and still hates and persecutes David? Is God not listening to prayer? Yes, but not to the prayer of those

who consciously turn away from Him and do not want to listen to Him: “He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, Even his prayer is an abomination” (Pro 28:9). As soon as someone comes to Him with repentance, He listens immediately.

Verses 7-10 | Saul Goes to a Medium

7 Then Saul said to his servants, “Seek for me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her.” And his servants said to him, “Behold, there is a woman who is a medium at En-dor.” 8 Then Saul disguised himself by putting on other clothes, and went, he and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night; and he said, “Conjure up for me, please, and bring up for me whom I shall name to you.” 9 But the woman said to him, “Behold, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off those who are mediums and spiritists from the land. Why are you then laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?” 10 Saul vowed to her by the LORD, saying, “As the LORD lives, no punishment shall come upon you for this thing.”

Saul is only afraid of himself. It makes him desperate. In his despair he does not turn to God in acknowledgment of his disobedience, pride and arrogance and his unjust hatred of David. He goes in the direction many people take today, that of occultism. Symbolically seen, we are here at the end of a time. Christianity has also come at a time when impure spirits are consulted. People open themselves up to it.

Saul seeks contact with the world of spirits. He lets find out if there is still anyone of the mediums left. His servants are all too willing to serve him in that evil cause. They immediately point to one. It is someone who lives in En-dor, a city not far from there. This medium has apparently escaped Saul’s purification action. Apparently, Saul did not do his job that thoroughly. He disguises himself – as if he could deceive God! – and goes to En-dor.

The woman, the medium, is first afraid that she will fall into a trap. God’s providence has ruled it in such a way that she tells Saul what he has commanded before. She points out the danger she is running because of the law that Saul has enacted. Maybe she does that to increase her price.

It is striking how aware she is of the danger she is in by Saul’s injunction to exterminate her ‘profession-group’, while ignoring the obligations of

God's law and the horrors of His wrath. She thinks of what Saul ordered, but she has no message about what God ordered about such practices. She is more afraid to fall into a trap that can cost her life than to fall into the hands of the living God, "who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt 10:28). Sinners are more afraid of punishment from men than of God's righteous judgment.

However, the disguised Saul swears to her by the LORD that she need not be afraid of anything. He still dares, and even in this situation and in this demonic den, to call the name of the LORD and even to swear by Him. He speaks of a LORD who lives, without this being a living reality for him. That is clear from what he promises the woman. He promises more than he can make true if he says: "No punishment shall come upon you." He cannot, and even less can he, save her from the anger of living God.

He speaks so because his heart is far removed from the reality of a real confession of what the Name of God means. His visit to this woman shows that he despises the God of Israel. Now that God has left him and is angry with him, he believes he can put his trust in a creature. In his case, these are even creatures who are apostates from God, who consciously revolt against Him, and who want to deceive His people to apostate from God.

Saul expressly appeals to someone who is in contact with demons. This is spiritism. No medium can bring back the dead. Only the Lord Jesus has "the keys of death and of Hades" (Rev 1:18b). Yet the mediums are successful. This is, however, because they open themselves up to demonic spirits speaking through their mouths. They often know something about the deceased. God has completely forbidden this area for His people (Deu 13:1-17a), but the masses do not care about it. We can observe that people massively read horoscopes, coming from the same source.

Asking the dead is in direct contrast to asking God. Isaiah deeply indignant speaks about this on behalf of God (Isa 8:19-20). Such consultation is an abomination to the LORD (Deu 18:9-12).

Verses 11-14 | Saul Wants Samuel Brought Up

11 Then the woman said, "Whom shall I bring up for you?" And he said, "Bring up Samuel for me." 12 When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out

with a loud voice; and the woman spoke to Saul, saying, "Why have you deceived me? For you are Saul." 13 The king said to her, "Do not be afraid; but what do you see?" And the woman said to Saul, "I see a divine being coming up out of the earth." 14 He said to her, "What is his form?" And she said, "An old man is coming up, and he is wrapped with a robe." And Saul knew that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did homage.

The woman asks the usual question if she gets a visit from someone who wants to consult her about a dead person. She gets the unusual request to bring up Samuel. We do not read anywhere that when Samuel lived in Ramah, Saul ever went to him to consult him. And Ramah is not far from Gibeah, the dwelling place of Saul. Now that Samuel has died, he wants to consult him.

In the same way, many who despised and persecuted God's servants while they were still alive, honored them after their death. It is similar to what the Lord Jesus says to the scribes and Pharisees, to whom He says the "woe to you" because of this attitude: "For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous" (Mt 23:29). He calls them "sons of those who murdered the prophets" (Mt 23:31), indicating that they are exactly like their fathers. Spiritually, they are descendants of Saul.

Saul wants to meet Samuel. He will meet him. When Saul has let know who he wants her to bring up, the story suddenly continues with what the woman sees. We might have expected that it would be said how she does this, what incantations and magic she uses. The deep silence of Scripture about this is significant. It shows that "the depths of Satan" (Rev 2:24) are not an area we should enter. Our potential curiosity about methods that bring us into contact with demons is not satisfied. It is strange to God's Being to make announcements about the way in which mysteries of iniquity are made available to us. The Scriptures do not call for or give space to sinful tricks but tells us to be "pure to evil" (Rom 16:19).

When Samuel comes up, it is not the result of a conjuration of the woman. She, who is the medium through whom an evil spirit expresses itself, is greatly surprised by what is happening. She does not have this in her hand. God controls the event. How could a godless medium ever use an evil spirit to bring up the spirit of a man like Samuel? It is folly to think that. That is why the woman is so scared.

She expected the evil spirit to speak through her, just as it would otherwise. She has admitted this demon to come into her herself. She has surrendered herself to him and through him has brought many people into contact with the invisible world. If this demon had shown herself to her in the desired form, she would have made him believe something with which he could be satisfied, and she could raise her money. But that is not how it goes. She does not see what the evil spirit would show her, but she sees Samuel, as the description shows.

What she sees is reality and not imagination, because she also hears what Samuel says. This is not spiritism. It is really Samuel and not a demonic spirit that imitates Samuel. Not she let Samuel come up, but the LORD let him speak. It is a special action of God, because of a special case. God gives Saul a testimony through the deceased Samuel. As said, the Lord Jesus has the keys of death and of the realm of the dead, which are not in the hand of any creature.

Saul did not see the apparition himself. The woman sees a supernatural being. Samuel is recognized by Saul by his robe of prophets. He kneels down before the man he despised in his life. He despised him, perhaps not so much in his position, but as the bearer of the Word of God.

Verses 15-19 | The Judgment of Saul Confirmed

15 Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?" And Saul answered, "I am greatly distressed; for the Philistines are waging war against me, and God has departed from me and no longer answers me, either through prophets or by dreams; therefore I have called you, that you may make known to me what I should do." 16 Samuel said, "Why then do you ask me, since the LORD has departed from you and has become your adversary? 17 The LORD has done accordingly as He spoke through me; for the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your neighbor, to David. 18 As you did not obey the LORD and did not execute His fierce wrath on Amalek, so the LORD has done this thing to you this day. 19 Moreover the LORD will also give over Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines, therefore tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. Indeed the LORD will give over the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines!"

Samuel does not address Saul through the medium but directly. He recalls what has already been said to Saul and confirms what Saul already should know. He now mentions the name of the man to whom the LORD has given the kingdom (verse 17). Samuel also tells him the cause of this: one disobedience brings this calamity to him (verse 18). Saul is also told that he will die the next day and his sons will die with him. Samuel says that Saul and his sons will be with him in the realm of the dead tomorrow. That is all he says. He does not say that they will be with him in Abraham's womb. Jonathan will be there, but Saul will not be.

Saul resembles Esau who also despised a blessing from God and who had no place for repentance and therefore sought this blessing in vain, although even with tears (Heb 12:17). Now Samuel himself speaks to Saul with a question. Saul answers and reveals his despair. It is the despair of someone who wants to know the future, but who no longer gets to hear it from God. The reason for this is that all too often he rejected God when He announced the future to him. People often want to know what their future looks like, but they do not want to hear it from God. For such people God has become an enemy. It is a terrible expression to say of God that He has become one's enemy.

Verses 20-25 | Despair and Resignation of Saul

20 Then Saul immediately fell full length upon the ground and was very afraid because of the words of Samuel; also there was no strength in him, for he had eaten no food all day and all night. 21 The woman came to Saul and saw that he was terrified, and said to him, "Behold, your maidservant has obeyed you, and I have taken my life in my hand and have listened to your words which you spoke to me. 22 So now also, please listen to the voice of your maidservant, and let me set a piece of bread before you that [you may] eat and have strength when you go on [your] way." 23 But he refused and said, "I will not eat." However, his servants together with the woman urged him, and he listened to them. So he arose from the ground and sat on the bed. 24 The woman had a fattened calf in the house, and she quickly slaughtered it; and she took flour, kneaded it and baked unleavened bread from it. 25 She brought [it] before Saul and his servants, and they ate. Then they arose and went away that night.

After this message Saul immediately falls “full length” upon the ground. This addition emphasizes his length. That has been his pride and fame. All that pride collapses. When God tells sinners in His Word what terrible fate awaits them, He opens a door of hope to them at the same time. That door of hope a sinner can enter when he repents. But those who turn to the gates of hell for help can only expect darkness, without a ray of light.

While he is still lying on the ground, the woman asks him to listen to her. Once more Saul is treated kindly, however by a medium. She presents herself as his servant. She has no sense of guilt; she has done her job. Here we see what all these demonic practices yield. It only brings misery and dejection and total mental and physical devastation. Saul has lost every initiative. He is in the power of others, surrendered to them. The woman and his servants try to get him up and running, they cannot offer him anything better. Saul gets up and disappears in the night, on his way to his tragic, dramatic end (cf. Jn 13:30).

The tragedy is great. The downfall is his own fault. There is a dark, demonic, nocturnal darkness in the soul of Saul, as there is later in the soul of Judas. Here already the night falls over the life of Saul. He can no longer go back and faces irrevocably his downfall.

1 Samuel 29

Verses 1-2 | David in the Army of the Philistines

1 Now the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek, while the Israelites were camping by the spring which is in Jezreel. 2 And the lords of the Philistines were proceeding on by hundreds and by thousands, and David and his men were proceeding on in the rear with Achish.

Aphek is in Israel. There the Philistines gather together. These are the preparatory actions for decisive moments for both David and Saul. The result is grace for one and destruction for the other. Such a difference we see with Peter and Judas. They have both left the Lord, but Peter is restored while Judas faces his downfall. The difference is the possession of the new life.

David is with the Philistines, and with enemies he stands up against the people of God. This is the result of his life in the lie. David is not only a servant of Achish, but he seems to be his friend. That is how deep he sank.

Verses 3-5 | The Philistine Testimony About David

3 Then the commanders of the Philistines said, "What [are] these Hebrews [doing here]?" And Achish said to the commanders of the Philistines, "Is this not David, the servant of Saul the king of Israel, who has been with me these days, or [rather] these years, and I have found no fault in him from the day he deserted [to me] to this day?" 4 But the commanders of the Philistines were angry with him, and the commanders of the Philistines said to him, "Make the man go back, that he may return to his place where you have assigned him, and do not let him go down to battle with us, or in the battle he may become an adversary to us. For with what could this [man] make himself acceptable to his lord? [Would it] not [be] with the heads of these men? 5 Is this not David, of whom they sing in the dances, saying,

*'Saul has slain his thousands,
And David his ten thousands?'*

God in His providence will prevent the great folly of David and lead him back to Him. He makes sure that David does not have to come along in a

battle of the Philistines against the people over whom He anointed David as king. That deliverance is not due to anything of David. He can only praise the LORD for His grace.

The LORD uses the memories of the other Philistines to put pressure on Achish to send David home. The LORD works in secret for David by turning the hearts of his enemies against him. Thus, the Lord can also work for us in secret by working enmity against us in the hearts of men. That is a way to deliver us from a situation from which we cannot deliver ourselves and in which we may have been landed by our unfaithfulness.

Achish tries to keep David with him by giving a resounding testimony of his full dedication to the cause of the enemy. But the pressure is getting too high. It was not unusual for Israelites to serve in the armies of the Philistines (1Sam 14:21). At the decisive moment, however, they left and joined Saul again. David could do the same. They emphasize their distrust in David by reminding Achish of the testimony of David and citing it in full (1Sam 18:7). They know that well. On a previous occasion that David has been in their land, they have also referred to it (1Sam 21:11).

Verses 6-11 | Achish Lets David Go in Peace

6 Then Achish called David and said to him, "[As] the LORD lives, you [have been] upright, and your going out and your coming in with me in the army are pleasing in my sight; for I have not found evil in you from the day of your coming to me to this day. Nevertheless, you are not pleasing in the sight of the lords. 7 Now therefore return and go in peace, that you may not displease the lords of the Philistines." 8 David said to Achish, "But what have I done? And what have you found in your servant from the day when I came before you to this day, that I may not go and fight against the enemies of my lord the king?" 9 But Achish replied to David, "I know that you are pleasing in my sight, like an angel of God; nevertheless the commanders of the Philistines have said, 'He must not go up with us to the battle.' 10 Now then arise early in the morning with the servants of your lord who have come with you, and as soon as you have arisen early in the morning and have light, depart." 11 So David arose early, he and his men, to depart in the morning to return to the land of the Philistines. And the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

Achish got an impression of great loyalty and sincerity from David. The testimony Achish gives is an antigenic testimony to David. David's reaction is falsehood and hypocrisy. If Achish looked closely, he could find a lot. David is pretending he would like to join in. He continues to lie, to live his life in lies. He pretends to be indignant that he cannot go along to fight against the enemies of "my lord the king". He calls Israel the enemy and Achish his lord, while the real enemies are the Philistines and he is the servant of Saul.

Achish agrees with what David says. He even sees David as a messenger from God. As an idolater he can only mean that he sees a good spirit in David. David has so much surrendered his true identity and intentions because of his life in the lie, that he has given Achish a false image of what a messenger of God is. David could not in any way disturb the conscience of this Philistine ruler.

Achish gives David the freedom to go wherever he wants. The dividing line is drawn. David returns, not yet to Israel, but "to the land of the Philistines". While Saul has disappeared forever in the night, the new morning (verse 11) is dawning for David.

1 Samuel 30

Verses 1-6 | Ziklag Raided and Overthrown

1 Then it happened when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had made a raid on the Negev and on Ziklag, and had overthrown Ziklag and burned it with fire; 2 and they took captive the women [and all] who were in it, both small and great, without killing anyone, and carried [them] off and went their way. 3 When David and his men came to the city, behold, it was burned with fire, and their wives and their sons and their daughters had been taken captive. 4 Then David and the people who were with him lifted their voices and wept until there was no strength in them to weep. 5 Now David's two wives had been taken captive, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite. 6 Moreover David was greatly distressed because the people spoke of stoning him, for all the people were embittered, each one because of his sons and his daughters. But David strengthened himself in the LORD his God.

Although it begins to light around David, he is not yet where he should be. After a trip of three days he and his men arrive in Ziklag, where he hopes to relax. When he arrives there, however, he finds an overthrown and burnt city. There is also no one to welcome them. All family members are taken captive.

It teaches us a practical lesson. If we say goodbye to our loved ones, even for a few hours, we cannot foresee what may happen to them or to us before we meet again. Therefore, it is good to entrust each other to the gracious preservation of God and to praise Him for His preservation when we may meet each other healthy and well again. Another lesson is that we lose a lot when we leave the Lord's way. As soon as we start living for ourselves, we should not rely on the Lord to preserve our family members. If the head of the family turns its back to the Lord, this often has serious consequences for the family.

What he finds in Ziklag must be bitter for him. The Amalekites have done that. For whatever reason they may have spared the captives, we may see God's hand in it. In the defeating and burning of Ziklag we see the disci-

plining hand of God over David. In the sparing of the captives we see the preserving hand of God. That no one has been killed is thanks to His care. In wrath He remembers mercy (Hab 3:2). God wants to use the Amalekites to correct, not to kill. That is why He prevents the enemies from hurting anyone of the prisoners.

The bitterness and bitter tears that emerge here are not to be found in the time when Saul chases him like a partridge on the mountains or even when he is offended by Nabal. These tears are the result of his search for shielding from the enemy of God's people and not from God. He has never before experienced the disciplining hand of God in such a way. He has always been the object of God's special care and protection. He withdrew from it, with this as a result. Let it be a warning to us!

In addition to the grief for what he has lost, there is also the uprising of his so far so loyal companions. They blame him for the heavy loss that also struck them. In their bitterness they even talk about stoning David! We see here that, if we go a way without God, we lose everything to 'the Amalekites' who are a picture of the flesh. We must also count on a deterioration in our relations with our brothers and sisters.

Besides the loss of everything, David also loses the trust of his men. He is also primarily responsible for this drama, although they followed him themselves. By this discipline David returns to God, his God. That is the difference with Saul, who cannot say that. God has departed from him by his own disobedience and penitence.

David seeks and finds strength. He does not find this strength in his men, for they are against him, nor in his wives, for they are not there. He finds it in the only source where it can be found, and that is in God Himself. What does David do? He "humbles" himself "under the mighty hand of God" (1Pet 5:6) and confesses his sin. He returns to the LORD and strengthens himself in Him (verse 6b). This is the glorious turning point in David's life. Here the light only breaks through properly. Now he is going to ask the LORD again what he should do.

Verses 7-10 | The Pursuit Started

7 Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "Please bring me the ephod." So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. 8 David inquired of

the LORD, saying, "Shall I pursue this band? Shall I overtake them?" And He said to him, "Pursue, for you will surely overtake them, and you will surely rescue [all]." 9 So David went, he and the six hundred men who were with him, and came to the brook Besor, [where] those left behind remained. 10 But David pursued, he and four hundred men, for two hundred who were too exhausted to cross the brook Besor remained [behind].

The connection with the LORD has been restored. The first sign that David is on the right path again is that he consults the LORD. He does not make decisions himself but wants to ask the LORD through the priest. He acknowledges Him in his ways, and He straightens his paths (Pro 3:6). The answer the LORD gives is clear, certain, and encouraging.

He gives more than David asks. David asks if he should pursue the band and overtake them. The answer is that he will overtake them, but God still gives him the full assurance of the rescue of their families and their possessions. God rejoices in it when a deviated child of Him goes back to Him again.

With six hundred men David starts the pursuit. These are the men who wanted to stone him just before. David, however, has strengthened himself in the LORD, his God and placed Him again before the attention of his men. That also gives them new strength and new confidence. When it turns out that the strength of two hundred men has been used up, David does not insist, but leaves them at the brook Besor. He himself continues with the rest.

Verses 11-15 | A Guide to the Band

11 Now they found an Egyptian in the field and brought him to David, and gave him bread and he ate, and they provided him water to drink. 12 They gave him a piece of fig cake and two clusters of raisins, and he ate; then his spirit revived. For he had not eaten bread or drunk water for three days and three nights. 13 David said to him, "To whom do you belong? And where are you from?" And he said, "I am a young man of Egypt, a servant of an Amalekite; and my master left me behind when I fell sick three days ago. 14 We made a raid on the Negev of the Cherethites, and on that which belongs to Judah, and on the Negev of Caleb, and we burned Ziklag with fire." 15 Then David said to him, "Will you bring me down to this band?" And he said, "Swear to me by

God that you will not kill me or deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring you down to this band."

In this section we have a small history in great history. Herein a new quality of David becomes visible. Every thought of his life in the lie is covered here by his expressions of mercy and pity for an Egyptian young man. This compassion is the compassion of the Lord Jesus for him who has been discarded by the world and Satan.

In their pursuit of the Amalekites, the men of David find an Egyptian young man left behind by his masters, the Amalekites. They bring him to David. It is wonderful to see how David takes care of him. When his men have brought the young man to him, he first gives him food and drink. That is how the young man regains his strength.

Then David asks him two questions. These two questions are useful questions to ask to someone. The first question is: "To whom do you belong?" The second question is: "Where are you from?" At the first question man must confess that he is a slave to sin. He is in the power of the flesh. On the second question, he must confess that he is from of the world. The reality of the world is that once someone is no longer usable, there is no compassion. He is thrown away, discarded, because there is no benefit to be gained from such a person anymore.

That happened to the young man. He has become ill and such a person is not useful anymore. You depreciate him directly. He is discarded as worthless material. This is expressed in the young man's confession in verse 13. He confesses both his origins and his works. Egypt is a picture of the world. Someone who lives in the world is a slave of sin. The works of the flesh are made visible in him (verse 14; Gal 5:20-21).

Today, many young people in the world are slaves of sin. Alcohol, drugs, and sex are the works in which that slavery becomes visible. Fortunately, it still happens that young people start to realize what a ruthless power they have ended up in and that they cannot expect any outcome for their real problems from that power. Fortunately, also when they come into contact with the Lord Jesus Who does not give them back into the power of their former rulers. If they honestly say who they are and what they have done, He wants to use them.

It is like with the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-20). He had enough friends as long as they benefited from him. However, when he began to suffer want, there was no one he could fall back on. Then he came to himself. He saw his sin and went home to confess it. The father took him in his arms. Thus we may bring the gospel to people.

David then asks him if he wants to help trace the Amalekites. David says as it were: Do you want to go with me, to make your former friends your enemies and me your friend? In this he agrees, but not without having received the firm promise that David will not hand him over to his former master. He has his belly full of it. Never will anyone who joins the Lord Jesus be delivered back into the world by Him.

Verses 16-20 | The Spoil of David

16 When he had brought him down, behold, they were spread over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing because of all the great spoil that they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah. 17 David slaughtered them from the twilight until the evening of the next day; and not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men who rode on camels and fled. 18 So David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and rescued his two wives. 19 But nothing of theirs was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that they had taken for themselves; David brought [it] all back. 20 So David had captured all the sheep and the cattle [which the people] drove ahead of the [other] livestock, and they said, "This is David's spoil."

On the instruction of the young man David comes to the Amalekites. They are not aware of any danger. They celebrate exuberantly because of the big spoil they have captured. They think they are in peace and security, without even thinking for a moment of danger (1Thes 5:3). David attacks the enemy and causes a great slaughter. Only a few escape.

He saves everything that the Amalekites have stolen. David's spoil is much larger than what the enemy took with him at Ziklag. It is all that the enemy has captured from other robberies. The spoil is the spoil of David and his men, but it is called "David's spoil". The spoil is attributed to him. He is the victor. So it is with the Lord Jesus.

Verses 21-25 | David Divides the Spoil

21 When David came to the two hundred men who were too exhausted to follow David, who had also been left at the brook Besor, and they went out to meet David and to meet the people who were with him, then David approached the people and greeted them. 22 Then all the wicked and worthless men among those who went with David said, "Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, except to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead [them] away and depart." 23 Then David said, "You must not do so, my brothers, with what the LORD has given us, who has kept us and delivered into our hand the band that came against us. 24 And who will listen to you in this matter? For as his share is who goes down to the battle, so shall his share be who stays by the baggage; they shall share alike." 25 So it has been from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day.

David first asks about the prosperity of those who stayed behind because they had been too tired to come along. The expression "had also been left" indicates that David insisted that they would not move on. This is yet another characteristic of the Lord Jesus. It is the characteristic of the shepherd who does not demand the utmost from his sheep. This is why the Holy Spirit describes the events of this chapter in such detail. This is the action of the Lord Jesus, who will reign in righteousness and not according to the law of the world or of carnal believers.

When the spoil must be distributed, there is a quarrel among David's followers. Here the selfishness of his followers is expressed. There are those who believe they have more rights than others. Don't we recognize that? Probably so. David solves this beautifully. He brings everything back to the foundation of grace. He speaks to the "wicked and worthless men" who have made this selfish proposal as "my brothers". In this way he prevents a contradiction with them and prevents the suspicion of giving preferential treatment.

He does not make hard accusations about this carnal behavior. His "gentle answer turns away wrath" (Pro 15:1a). About the spoils he says that it is "what the LORD has given us". David does not attribute victory to himself but to the LORD. He says as it were: "What do you have, that you have not

received? (1Cor 4:7a). The victory is bestowed upon them by the LORD. Who dares to boast and say that he has more rights than anyone else?

The spoil is shared equally by all those who have been involved in the battle in any way. The people who stayed behind have looked after the baggage, haven't they? Isn't that a great job? Have the warriors forgotten how they lost Ziklag and everything they owned just before?

Thus will the Lord be able to reward all that has been done for Him. We tend to look only at what is conspicuous, what people talk about. The Lord also sees the sick man, who cannot go out himself, but prays for His work. He sees the mother who is busy caring for the children. Would that be less important than the man who is allowed to preach the Word of God before full halls, or the woman who has time to do children's work and reach children with the gospel?

Verses 26-31 | The Friends of David

26 Now when David came to Ziklag, he sent [some] of the spoil to the elders of Judah, to his friends, saying, "Behold, a gift for you from the spoil of the enemies of the LORD: 27 to those who were in Bethel, and to those who were in Ramoth of the Negev, and to those who were in Jattir, 28 and to those who were in Aroer, and to those who were in Siphmoth, and to those who were in Eshtemoa, 29 and to those who were in Racal, and to those who were in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, and to those who were in the cities of the Kenites, 30 and to those who were in Hormah, and to those who were in Bor-ashan, and to those who were in Athach, 31 and to those who were in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were accustomed to go."

When David is back in Ziklag, he also sends part of the spoils to Judah's elders. He thus gives them the proof of his restoration. These elders are the true friends of David as opposed to Achish. We can see what he gives them as a gift of reconciliation. He shows that he is back with them and is there for them again, for their blessing. It may also be a kind of reward for their loyalty to him, even when he went the wrong way. He has, as it were, returned to be the head of his people.

David and his men have been wandering in all the places mentioned. There David received their friendship during his wanderings and was in-

vigorated by it. He is rewarding that now. That too is something the Lord Jesus does (Mt 10:40-42). He now rewards all those who let Him into his or her life. He is still the Rejected. But He appreciates it when there are people who help Him. That means who support His work and all who work for Him.

1 Samuel 31

Verses 1-6 | The Death of Saul and His Sons

1 Now the Philistines were fighting against Israel, and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines and fell slain on Mount Gilboa. 2 The Philistines overtook Saul and his sons; and the Philistines killed Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchi-shua the sons of Saul. 3 The battle went heavily against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was badly wounded by the archers. 4 Then Saul said to his armor bearer, "Draw your sword and pierce me through with it, otherwise these uncircumcised will come and pierce me through and make sport of me." But his armor bearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. So Saul took his sword and fell on it. 5 When his armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died with him. 6 Thus Saul died with his three sons, his armor bearer, and all his men on that day together.

After we have seen the deviation and recovery of David we are moved back to the events around Saul. The Philistines are supreme. Saul, after his inner distress by visiting the medium in Endor (1Sam 28:7-25), also gets distressed from the outside. A king is made one with his people. The people are falling. The people who wanted a king who goes before them (1Sam 8:4-5), falls with his king here. With Saul, his three thousand exquisite men have also fallen. They fall with their lord. That is how it goes with every human being. Every human being falls with his lord, the devil, or conquers with his Lord, the Lord Jesus. Three sons of Saul, including Jonathan, also died.

Saul sees that his end is approaching. Yet there is no call to God. All he wants left is to prevent him from falling alive into the hands of the Philistines. He calls the Philistines "uncircumcised". But even though he himself has been circumcised and thus externally a member of the people of God, he is uncircumcised in heart (cf. Rom 2:28-29). Circumcision is a picture of the judgment of the sinful flesh, the acknowledgement that God had to judge it in Christ (Col 2:11).

Saul maintains the outer separation between him as an Israelite and the Philistines, without realizing that he is inwardly precise as they are. David

lived among the Philistines, but never was a Philistine. Saul was never among the Philistines, but he is one of them within. Samson also spoke about Philistines as the uncircumcised (Jdg 15:18), but he did so to God. Jonathan also, but in faith (1Sam 14:6). Saul does it in orthodoxy.

His condition is tragic. He is only surrounded by enemies. God has taken His hands away from him. Saul asks his armor bearer to kill him. He is afraid to do that. David has also been an armor bearer of Saul. He too never stretched out his hand against Saul. Then Saul commits suicide. Saul is the first of the few people who are mentioned in Scripture as having committed suicide: Saul's armor bearer, Ahithophel (2Sam 17:23); Zimri (1Kgs 16:18) and Judas (Mt 27:5). According to Samuel's word, Saul and his sons die on the same day.

His armor bearer follows the example of his lord. He linked his life to that of Saul. When Saul is dead, there is no more purpose for him to live. The difference between Saul's and Jonathan's armor bearer (1Sam 14:6-7,12-14) is as great as the difference between Saul and Jonathan. Today we can recognize Saul's armor bearer in many who glorify an idol. When this idol falls, their lives fall to pieces and it loses its subsistence value. They have lost what they have venerated so much and commit suicide. To this despair the devil leads every man who follows another man as his god.

Saul's death puts an end to an old system of things that sidelines God. Now God puts that system aside (Hos 13:11). He judges it through the Philistines as His rod of discipline. Now there is room for his king, for the man of his choice, the man after his heart. The fall of Saul and his men means the fall of Israel. This is the situation David is in when he becomes king. He comes to bring order to the greatest disorder resulting from judgment. Prophetically it will be the same. The Lord Jesus will not accept His government until all human government has come to an end, that is to say, it has been put to an end by Him.

Verses 7-10 | The Philistines Celebrate the Victory

7 When the men of Israel who were on the other side of the valley, with those who were beyond the Jordan, saw that the men of Israel had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned the cities and fled; then the Philistines

came and lived in them. 8 It came about on the next day when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. 9 They cut off his head and stripped off his weapons, and sent [them] throughout the land of the Philistines, to carry the good news to the house of their idols and to the people. 10 They put his weapons in the temple of Ashtaroath, and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan.

Saul has not fulfilled his mission to deliver the land of Israel from the Philistines. On the contrary, when he has died, the Philistines come and live in the cities abandoned by the Israelites. What Saul had wanted to prevent in his pride, that he would be mocked, happens to him (cf. Jdg 16:25). He escaped the torments of the Philistines by his suicide, but they defaced his body by beheading it.

When he was introduced to the people, it appeared that he stood head and shoulders above the people (1Sam 10:23). The people have therefore applauded him and greeted him as their hero. His enemies have let his head go through the land like a trophy and bring the joyful message of victory into the house of their idols and to the people. They have hung his body on the wall of Beth-San as a sign of reproach.

Verses 11-13 | The Inhabitants of Jabesh

11 Now when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard what the Philistines had done to Saul, 12 all the valiant men rose and walked all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and they came to Jabesh and burned them there. 13 They took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

Then it turns out that Saul still has friends. There are still people in Israel for whom this humiliation goes too far. They sacrifice their night's rest in order to pick up Saul's body and bury it. Then they fast for seven days. They understand something of the reproach that has been placed on Israel.

With this everything that has to do with the king after the heart of man and the system that belongs to him has ended. The way is free for the man after God's heart. That is what the next book is about.

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