

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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A CHANGE OF SEASON FOR SAMUEL

I Samuel 8

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The title of my message is “A Change of Season for Samuel” and I’ll be reading from I Samuel 8.

Here are the three points for today’s message:

- Samuel did not retire, he just changed roles.
- Samuel did not quit because of complaints.
- Samuel trusted God with an unknown future.

INTRODUCTION: A boy named Samuel was born to a woman named Hannah. She told the Lord if he would give her a son, she would dedicate him to the Temple. When he was weaned, she took him to the temple, and he was raised by a priest named Eli. Samuel grew to be a godly man and became a prophet. We have two books in the Bible named for him.

As we enter today’s message, Samuel is old, and he appoints his sons to follow in his footsteps as judges over Israel. However, the sons did not follow Samuel’s ways. They were dishonest, unfair, and unjust. They were not men of character and integrity.

Until this time, the Israelite people lived without a king. They had been led by Moses, Joshua, the Judges, and now Samuel who was a prophet and served a king-like role. The people noticed Samuel was getting old, and they were losing confidence in his ability, not as a prophet, but as a king.

So the elders came respectfully to Samuel and reminded him that he was growing old and needed someone to take over his duties, but his sons were not fit to do so. They asked him to appoint a king to rule over them like the nations around them.

The request concerned Samuel. He had followed God's will all his life, so he went to the Lord, and God told him to appoint a king. The people were not rejecting Samuel but were rejecting him as their king. God told Samuel to convey to the people what to expect from a king. Basically, all their children would become servants and slaves to the king as soldiers, workers in the fields, bakers, cooks, and perfumers. Their crops and vineyards would become his, along with their cattle and flocks. But they still insisted they wanted a king to fight their battles for them.

Surprisingly, God told Samuel to listen to them, and Samuel dismissed them to go home.

SCRIPTURE: 1 Samuel 8:1-5

When Samuel grew old, he appointed his sons as Israel's leaders. ² The name of his firstborn was Joel and the name of his second was Abijah, and they served at Beersheba. ³ But his sons did not follow his ways. They turned aside after dishonest gain and accepted bribes and perverted justice.

⁴ So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. ⁵ They said to him, "You are old, and your sons do not follow your ways; now appoint a king to lead us such as all the other nations have."

SAMUEL DID NOT RETIRE, HE JUST CHANGED ROLES

EXPLANATION: We do not have any solid statement of Samuel's age at this point. We know God used many people during their older years. God still had work for Joshua to do when he was somewhere around 100 years old. *"You have grown old and are gone far in years, and very much land remains to be possessed."* (Joshua 13:1). He was probably around 110 years of age when he declared, *"But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."* (Joshua 24:13).

Commentators tend to think Samuel was much younger than Noah, Moses, and Joshua. This is interesting. We all age differently, don't we? Something about Samuel's leadership made the elders come to him and request another leader. I am sure it was devastating to Samuel. If you read closely, you'll note they were NOT questioning his ability to be a prophet. Perhaps they thought he was doing too much and thought he needed help. Perhaps they thought he wasn't as effective as a leader as he once was. Or perhaps they just wanted to be like other nations and have a

king.

Interestingly enough, the Levites, the priestly class, were required to change roles at age fifty (Numbers 8:23-26). They were to assist the young men but did not have the bulk of the responsibility of setting up and taking down the tabernacle after fifty. God, in his mercy and compassion, was relieving them of the stress of the heavy work. This only applied to the Levites. For prophets like Samuel, there was no prescribed age for retirement or role change.

(We see later that God gave them a king, Saul, and wow what a character. At times he followed God and other times he did not. In fact, there are numerous scriptures that indicate mental illness.)

My point here is that Samuel listened to the elders around him who said he was getting old. He sought God, let go of being the main leader yet remained a prophet. What we learn from Samuel is that there is no permanent retirement age in the Christian journey, but the roles can change. In this church, most are senior adults, but in many churches, senior adults are being disregarded as having any value. If you don't believe, go visit some churches and come back and tell me what you experienced. I believe a church can be multigenerational and not dominated by one generation – either young or old.

ILLUSTRATION: Let me illustrate. How many of you learned skills from your parents or people who were older than you? Probably everyone here. My sons are in college and I am amazed at the number of their peers who cannot jump start a car or change a car battery. As a church body, we must train and equip the next generation to assume leadership so our roles can change as we age. What if Samuel had said no to the request of the people? What if he had remained their leader?

APPLICATION: Here's the application: Maybe age and circumstance are requiring you to change your role in ministry. This applies to young people just as well. You know it's easy for younger people to not get involved if the older people just do it all. Perhaps you are one of our younger members, and it's time for you to assume some responsibility. It can all die in one generation if, 1) the older people don't train the younger and make way for them, and if 2) the younger people don't step up to the task.

A person posted on Facebook that it is sad seeing churches close. He made that statement after he had traveled quite a bit. I assume he saw several abandoned buildings. The interesting thing is that he never attends. I had to say something. I replied, “That’s what happens when people don’t attend and give.”

SAMUEL DID NOT QUIT BECAUSE OF COMPLAINTS

In verses 2-5, Samuel does not offer a defense for the accusation of the elders that his sons are unfit to take on the mantle of his judgeship of Israel. Samuel evidently knew they were telling the truth.

EXPLANATION: Samuel did not take offense when he was told he was old and his sons were unfit to lead. Where Samuel did take offense was in what he perceived was a rejection of God’s leadership. He was jealous for the things of God.

And in being jealous for the things of God, Samuel was not defending tradition. Think about this...he could have easily said, *“I’ve always been the leader and that’s what I plan to continue doing.”*

APPLICATION: Let’s learn from Samuel’s behavior. He was not merely standing for tradition – even though the tradition for many years had been him in charge! I think we need to be careful we don’t find ourselves leading our churches into a Mark 7:9 situation: *You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God, in order to keep your tradition.* Had Samuel fought to maintain tradition, everyone would have understood it.

From time to time it might be good to do a check and be sure we are not taking offense at the wrong things. We don’t need to be offended if our pet traditions and rituals are rejected, but we need to be highly offended if God’s ways are rejected. Sometimes the line gets blurred.

SAMUEL TRUSTED GOD WITH THE UNKNOWN FUTURE

SCRIPTURE: 1 SAMUEL 8:6-9

But when they said, “Give us a king to lead us,” this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. ⁷ And the LORD told him: “Listen to all that the people are

saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. ⁸ As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you.⁹ Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will claim as his rights.”

EXPLANATION: I can just picture Samuel turning away from the elders and almost running to his place of prayer and laying this situation before the Lord, probably fairly certain that God would reject their appeal for a king. But the Lord tells Samuel to listen to them and give them a king.

This illustrates so vividly how important it is to be sensitive to God’s leadership and not depend on man’s understanding or logic. Even a godly person’s understanding sometimes can be wrong. Samuel was uncertain of the future and he was uncertain of Israel’s future with such a change of direction – but he was obedient to God.

*A word of caution – God will never violate the Bible, but he may very well, and probably will, violate our sensibilities. It made sense to Samuel that he remain the king, but God had other plans.

Very familiar Scripture, but so true. In the Amplified ... *Lean on, trust, and be confident in the Lord with all your heart and mind, and do not rely on your own insight or understanding. In all your ways know (yada), recognize and acknowledge him, and he will direct and make straight and plain your paths (Proverbs 3:5-6).*

In 1 Samuel 8:10-18 through the rest of the chapter, we read how Samuel warned the people how life would change for them. A traditional king, like other nations, would demand everything of them.

SCRIPTURE: 1 SAMUEL 8:19-22

¹⁹ But the people refused to listen to Samuel. “No!” they said. “We want a king over us. ²⁰ Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles.”

²¹ When Samuel heard all that the people said, he repeated it before the LORD. ²² The LORD answered, “Listen to them and give them a king.”

Then Samuel said to the Israelites, “Everyone go back to your own town.”

CONCLUSION: Since we have the rest of the story, we know that Saul became the king and Samuel remained a prophet.

What do we learn from this story?

- Roles in life change
- Sometimes others have to point out to us what we don't see
- If we get a new role, God has a will for us in the new role

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