

## "By faith . . ."

### 17. Samuel (Heb. 11:32)

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**I**N THE WORDS of Hebrews 11:33, Samuel "through faith . . . wrought righteousness", not his own righteousness, but God's. His words and his works sprang from a desire to hearken and to be obedient to the Lord Who called him to minister to Him (1 Sam. 3:1,10).

What is recorded of Samuel? What did he *do*? It is written that he "worshipped" (1:28); he "ministered" (2:11,18; 3:1); he was "established [mg. faithful]" (3:20); he "judged" Israel "from year to year" (7:16,17); he spoke the word of the Lord to Israel (8:9,10); he "heard all the words of the people", in spite of their refusal to obey, and "rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD" (vv. 19,21); he "communed with Saul upon the top of [his] house (9:25); he "hewed Agag in pieces" (15:33). In all his dealings Samuel was faithful, and, as Paul said of himself, spoke forth "the words of truth and soberness" (Acts 26:25).

Samuel is noted as a man of prayer (1 Sam. 7:5,8,9; 8:6; 12:17-19; 15:11). The Scriptures specifically commend Samuel for his prayerfulness and obedience: "Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His name; they called upon the LORD, and He answered them" (Ps. 99:6; cf. Jer. 15:1).

Samuel's first message was not an easy one to deliver (1 Sam. 3:15), and when, towards the end of his life, he was commanded to go to Bethlehem to anoint a new king, even though he feared for his life yet he was obedient (16:1-4). Our Lord said: "I must work the works of Him That sent me" (Jno. 9:4); Samuel demonstrated the same disposition.

Samuel's example of working righteousness all his life agrees with Peter's words: "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth Him, and *worketh righteousness*, is accepted with Him" (Acts 10:34,35). It is evident, then, that in order to work God's righteousness we must be no respecter of persons. In this we endeavour to manifest the character of the Father Himself.

The opposite case is stated in James 2:9: "but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin". In this too, Samuel, as judge and prophet, was above reproach. Consider when he spoke to Israel and

"shew[ed] them the manner of the king". God told him to "protest solemnly" to the people, that is, to protest by reiteration, the Hebrew word occurring twice to make the point (1 Sam. 8:9,10). And so he did.

In the ministry of Samuel there was no prophesying of 'smooth things', but rather, "If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve Him only" (7:3). Later he said: "I will teach you the good and the right way" (12:23). After the happy picture given us of Samuel communing with Saul and of them going together, "both of them, he and Samuel, abroad" (9:25-27), he later had to say to him: "Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which He commanded thee" (13:13). There is no respecting of persons here, only the faithful working of God's righteousness.

Samuel practised what he preached. His maxim to Saul was, "that thou do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee" (10:7). So Samuel did what Saul should have done. He "hewed Agag in pieces" (15:33), destroying utterly the enemy with whom God had sworn He would have war from generation to generation (Ex. 17:16). This typifies the constant battle we should be warring against sin. There was to be no compromise, only God's destruction of sin through His servant. So in this, too, Samuel wrought God's righteousness. Again Samuel's words held true for himself when he declared, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. 15:22).

Hebrews 11:39 concludes: "these all . . . *obtained a good report* through faith". Samuel indeed obtained a wonderful "report" from God and man. When he was old and grey-headed he said to the people: "Behold, here I am: witness against me before the LORD . . . that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness" (1 Sam. 12:3-5). As God said to Eli, "them that honour Me I will honour" (2:30). Samuel will be honoured indeed when, through faith, he receives the promise at last.