

THE KIND OF PERSON THE LORD CAN USE TO TURN THE AGE

A central goal of the Lord's move in His recovery is to produce overcomers so that He can return to end this age and establish His kingdom (Rev. 12:10-11). If we aspire to be those who cooperate with the Lord for this purpose, we should pay attention to the kind of person the Lord used to usher in God's kingdom in Israel. That person was Samuel. Concerning Samuel there are two particular points that we should pay attention to. First, he lived as a Nazarite. Second, he maintained such a living under God's government even in the midst of turmoil.

Living as a Nazarite

Samuel was born of the tribe of Levi but not of the house of Aaron. Only the house of Aaron was ordained by God to serve Him as priests (1 Chron. 6:33-38; Exo. 40:12-15). Samuel ministered to the Lord as a priest not by birth but by the Nazarite vow (Num. 6:1-2). To be a Nazarite is not a matter of status or position but of voluntary consecration to the Lord. From his youth Samuel lived as such a one, separated to God and caring only for His interest.

In the consecration of a Nazarite there are four items of separation. First, a Nazarite should not consume anything "that is produced by the grape vine, from the seed even to the skin" (vv. 3-4). This means that a Nazarite does not partake of the intoxicating wine of worldly enjoyments but enjoys Christ, the tree of life, as his life supply. Second, a Nazarite could not allow his hair to be cut (v. 5). That was a sign that a Nazarite was to be absolutely subject to God and to all deputy authorities appointed by Him. Third, a Nazarite was not to be defiled by death, even the death of his close relatives (vv. 6-7). This means that we need to be separated from the natural affection that easily deadens us. Fourth, a Nazarite was to be careful not to be affected by the sudden death of one beside Him (vv. 8-9). As Nazarites we should avoid being affected by brothers and sisters in the Lord who may have been deadened by negative things such as gossip, criticism, and rumors. When confronted with these things, we need to care for life, not only for right and wrong. Sometimes saints who were positive, going on, and growing in the Lord are derailed and lose heart for the Lord and His interest by touching death through other brothers and sisters whom they are close to. The New Testament contains many cases of ones who began well but stumbled due to entanglement in one of these four categories, including Demas (2 Tim. 4:10), Barnabas (Acts 15:39), and all those in Asia (2 Tim. 1:15). Only if we ourselves remain in the way of life will we be able to render proper care to any who have been affected by death.

The essence of the Nazarite vow was not to do something for God but to be pure toward Him, separated unto Him as one under His rule and headship. Samuel did not do great feats for God, yet he was the one used by God to bring in His kingdom. Brother Lee contrasted Samuel with Samson, a Nazarite who lost his separation (Judg. 16:17-19):

Samson also was a Nazarite by his mother's vow, but he was very different from Samuel. When the Bible speaks of Samson and the other judges, it often says that the Spirit of God rushed upon them (Judg. 14:6, 19). But there is no such word about Samuel. A Nazarite does not need rushing power; rather, a Nazarite needs a heart that is a reflection of God's heart. Unlike Samson, Samuel did not gain a mighty victory by slaughtering a great number of others. On the contrary, Samuel was a Nazarite for God's interest. (*Life-study of 1 & 2 Samuel*, 46)

Today the Lord desires to return, to end this age, and to bring in His millennial kingdom. Based on the example of Samuel, what He needs are not those who do great things in His name but those who live a life of voluntary consecration, separated from all other things to Him for His interest, which is the building up of the Body of Christ as the reality of the kingdom (Matt. 16:18-19; Rom. 14:17; cf., Matt. 7:21-23).

Remaining under the Government of God in the Midst of Turmoil

Samuel remained under the government of God, maintaining his Nazarite vow and serving the Lord in purity in the midst of a degraded situation, thereby becoming a channel God could use to restore a proper order under His headship to afford Him a way to establish His kingdom. Samuel learned many things while he was under the custody of Eli, even though Eli himself was not right before the Lord. Positively, he learned to minister before Jehovah and listen to God's speaking (1 Sam. 2:11b, 18-19; 3:1-10). Negatively, he saw the deterioration of the Aaronic priesthood (2:12-36). He witnessed the ark being usurped by the elders of Israel and then captured by the Philistines, God's severe judgment on the house of Eli for its corruption, and the glory of God departing from the Israelites (ch. 4). Rather than weaken Samuel in his future priesthood, these things became sober warnings to him.

Moreover, Samuel was not stumbled, nor did he rebel against Jehovah or any of his deputy authorities. He did not seek to overthrow the house of Eli or the Aaronic priesthood, despite the rottenness he observed firsthand. Rather, he maintained his Nazarite vow, keeping himself under the Lord's headship and away from death, living before the Lord and receiving His revelation by His word (3:19-21). Thus, Brother Lee said:

As a priest Samuel replaced and terminated, in a sense, the stale Aaronic priesthood. He did not rebel against the house of Aaron, and he did not usurp anything of the house of Aaron. There was no revolution; there was only revelation. As Samuel was growing, God arranged the environment to perfect him and to build up his capacity to do everything that was needed for God to change the age. In the recovery the Lord will never allow any kind of rebellion, but He will bring in many changes, adjustments, and improvements, not through rebellion but through revelation. (28-29)

Brother Lee described Samuel as one who "behaved, worked, ministered, and served altogether in a mild, moderate, and proper way of revelation" (39-40). Samuel never acted independently of the Lord but only at His direction. In other words, he did not act according to his own opinion but acted absolutely according to the Lord's leading. When the people of Israel lamented after Jehovah, it was Samuel, in his function as a prophet of God, who charged them to show that they were returning with all their heart to Jehovah by removing all the foreign gods and idols from their midst, directing their hearts to Jehovah, and serving only Him (7:3). If he had abandoned his own purity toward the Lord, he could not have been used by God to restore His people when they repented. When the children of Israel failed, he told them, "Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I would sin against Jehovah by ceasing to pray for you, but I will instruct you in the good and right way" (12:23). Because he was such a person, Samuel became a pivotal figure in the history of Israel (Jer. 15:1), functioning both as the last judge (1 Sam. 7:6, 15-17) and the one who, at the Lord's direction, ushered in the kingdom by anointing first Saul (9:15; 10:1) and then David (16:12-13) to be kings over Israel.

The lessons here are applicable to us today. Suppose we see something that is not right in our local church, even related to the elders. How will we respond? In such circumstances we must be desperate before the Lord to be one with Him, living and acting under His ruling. This is not to say that saints should cover up wrongdoings that damage others or damage the church. Rather, it means that we must look to the Lord so that in everything we will take Him as our life, as our way, and as our Head, even in dealing with wrongdoings and offenses. We should not give vent to our anger, knowing that "the wrath of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God" (James 1:20). The Lord may lead us to pray or to seek proper fellowship. If we give ground to our own reactions and opinions, we may forfeit the opportunity to be used to bring in God's kingdom. We must deal with every hint of rebellion in our being, knowing that rebellion has its source in God's enemy. If we are not under God's ruling in dealing with problems in the church, how can we be used by the Lord to establish His rule so that He can clear up the problems caused by man's rebellion (cf. 2 Cor. 10:6, note 2; 1 Pet. 4:17)?

These principles are manifested also in the call to the overcomers in each of the epistles to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3. Some of the churches there were very degraded, but in no case did the Lord give any ground to rebellion. Rather, He charged the overcomers to be faithful to live in purity in the midst of the churches' degradation in order to be qualified to receive the Lord's reward at His return and to participate in His millennial kingdom.

First Samuel 10:25a says, "Then Samuel told the people the practice of the kingdom." Just as he was able to call the people to direct their hearts to Jehovah and serve only Him because that was his condition already, so Samuel was able to speak to the people about the practice of the kingdom because he was already living such a life, a life under God's ruling, caring only for His interest. This is the kind of person the Lord needs today. This is the kind of person we should aspire to be. Today the Lord as the Spirit is calling for us to be such people. May we be those who put away all encumbering thoughts and feelings, including offenses, and look away unto Him (Heb. 13:1) that we may take Him as our Head and care only for what pleases Him. In this way we can be His overcomers in this age who hasten His return to establish His kingdom.

Further reading: *The Nazarite Vow; Life-study of 1 Samuel*, messages 3-7; "Spiritual Principles, Life Lessons, and Holy Warnings Seen in the History of Samuel," *The Ministry of the Word*, 26:2 (March 2022), 65-91; "How God Establishes His Kingdom," *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Volume 47: The Orthodoxy of the Church & Authority and Submission*, 147-153.