

Text: 1 Samuel 25:1

Title: "A memorial of the soldier Samuel"

Time: Memorial Day 5/26/2025 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: We celebrate Memorial Day to honor the selfless sacrifice of those who have given their lives for our country. The freedom we enjoy this morning was not free. It was purchased for us at great cost. I came across a poem that reminds us of the value of this form of sacrifice called, "Freedom Isn't Free":

"I watched the flag pass by one day,
It fluttered in the breeze.
A young Marine saluted it,
And then he stood at ease.

"I looked at him in uniform
So young, so tall, so proud,
With hair cut square and eyes alert
He'd stand out in any crowd.

"I thought how many men like him
Had fallen through the years.
How many died on foreign soil,
How many mothers' tears?

"How many pilots' planes shot down?
How many died at sea?
How many foxholes were soldiers' graves?
No, freedom isn't free.

"I heard the sound of Taps one night,
When everything was still,
I listened to the bugler play
And felt a sudden chill.

"I wondered just how many times
That Taps had meant 'Amen,'
When a flag had draped a coffin.
Of a brother or a friend.

"I thought of all the children,
Of the mothers and the wives,
Of fathers, sons and husbands
With interrupted lives.

"I thought about a graveyard
At the bottom of the sea
Of unmarked graves in Arlington.
No, freedom isn't free. "

We honor the loss of brave fighting men and women on Memorial Day in a way that is similar to how Samuel was honored on the day described in our text. Samuel was certainly a great military leader in Israel's theocracy. Before becoming the chief advisor to the kings who would defeat Israel's enemies, this prophet had taken up arms in defense of his country against those same enemies as Israel's last theocratic judge.

Samuel, however, fought even these battles as conflicts of spiritual warfare. Samuel's weapons were not merely carnal, "but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds (2 Cor. 10:4; 1 Sam. 7:7-11). Against the stronghold of Philistine oppression, Samuel's weapons were the offering of a suckling lamb and the cry of prayer to the Lord. He fought God's battles with Christ-centered worship and prayer.

We may never be called upon to serve in our nation's military, but our country needs men and women of God who honor the memory of the fallen by using their freedoms to be the spiritual blessing to our land that Samuel was to his. In so far as Samuel's warfare was the conflict of the ages between good and evil, right and wrong, truth and error, God and the god of this world, his war is our war, and we can find encourage-

ment and instruction this morning by taking the time to memorialize a survey of his life and ministry. We will notice just ten of his outstanding characteristics together. More could be cited.

I. Samuel was blessed with a God-fearing home as a boy (1:19-28).

Application: Samuel's name means *asked of God* (v. 20). Hannah asked God for Samuel, and when He gave her him, God asked for Samuel back again. That is the way it is supposed to work with our children. God gives them to us, and we give them back to God for His purposes, praying that He would save them and use them for His glory.

Samuel's work was in a very important sense Hannah's work. The scriptural accounts of the lives of many of God's warriors make much of their important start in the arms of a loving, godly mother (Eve, Sarah, Jocabed; in the lineage of Christ—Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary). Certainly, our nation is blessed with the sacrifice of many a sorrowing mother this weekend. Following their example, we must be willing to give our children back to the Lord.

II. Samuel took a stand for God as a boy (2:22-26).

Application: We may have some boys and girls here this morning that think that their stand for God as a child is not very important. Samuel's life teaches us the opposite. Had Samuel succumbed to the influences of the older Hophni and Phineas, we would not be reading about his wonderful life in our Bibles. These early battles may have been the most difficult and significant of his long life.

Samuel was not protected from those battles as most parents wish their children to be, but he was victorious in the midst of them. He learned, by his own experience facing evil, what it

was to stand like a man of God, though only a boy. As a parent I have often longed for the day when our children were exposed to fewer ungodly influences than they are today. But then remembering Samuel's circumstance reminds me that even in a godless environment like the one our kids grow up within, young Samuels can be faithful.

III. Samuel responded to the call to serve God in a very dark day (3:1-10).

Application: Samuel's Israel was very much like our America today. What they have in common is how rare the understanding of God's Word has become (v. 1). By the end of this chapter, the Lord has made that correction (vv. 20-21), and he has done so by calling out a single name, "Samuel."

2 Chron. 16:9, "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." When the Lord looked for a man for Samuel's evil day, He found young Samuel. He found one who would respond, "Speak Lord, for thy servant hears." Who will the Lord find in our day to speak faithfully His word? Who will follow Christ as a baptized disciple and disciple-maker? Where is the man by whom the Lord appears in our Shiloh again?

IV. Samuel grew as a man who loved the Word of God (3:19-21).

Application: The word of Samuel (v. 19) and the word of the Lord (v. 21) are intertwined in this passage. They are the same because Samuel was a prophet of the Lord, not of his own ideas and opinions (v. 20). That is how Israel came to truly know their God again. To know the Lord is to know His Word, and in order to know His Word prophets must teach not what they think, but what God's Word says.

To grow in the knowledge of the Lord the way Samuel did is to have God's Word increasingly become our word. Samuel would have cherished the opportunity you and I have to own a Bible. We must be a people of the Word of God. Do we use our Bibles the way Samuel would?

V. God used Samuel's preaching and praying to bring revival to Israel (7:1-6, 12-15).

Application: As the song that mentions the Ebenezer of this passage (Come Thou Fount, v.2) says, the Lord is the fount of every blessing. He must be pleased for revival to come. Samuel understood that the demands of revival are that no compromises be made with the idolatry of this world (v. 3). Repentance must be total and allegiance to Yahweh must be exclusive. He also understood that when the blessing of revival comes, it is God who has done it (v. 12). After 20 long years of lamentation, they finally raise their Ebenezer (meaning *stone of help*).

VI. Samuel's ministry was rejected by the people of God (8:1-7).

Application: Perhaps there is nothing sadder for a country than to reject those who have served it faithfully on the battle field against the enemy. Veterans deserve better, and here Samuel, veteran of the Lord's battles, deserved better. Samuel's experience is a common one for anyone who wants to serve the Lord faithfully in this cruel world of sin ruled by Satan. Yet the Lord comforts him with the assurance that the rejection of him was really the rejection of the Lord (v. 7). Ultimately, ministering faithfully like Samuel requires the pursuit of the Lord's "Well done," not man's.

VII. Samuel lovingly cared for the needs of his successor (9:22-10:1).

Application: In spite of the age difference, in spite of the evident difference in qualification, in spite of the personal injustice the anointing of Saul involved for Samuel, and in spite of any other fleshly resistance that would have inhibited the old prophet from doing so, Samuel enthusiastically and lovingly cares for his successor, who so desperately needed his help. Are we caring for our replacement?

VIII. Samuel was a man of fervent prayer for God's people (12:16-25).

Application: Samuel prayed powerful prayers that God answered with signs from the weather. But as marvelous as that prayer was, the harder answer was his prayer that the people of Israel would follow after their God. That prayer was an ongoing burden, and Samuel understood that prayerlessness in this regard was sinfulness (v.23). Somehow the answers to those prayers came less easily.

IX. Samuel prioritized obedience (13:8-14; 15:10-23).

Application: Jesus said that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments. Samuel loved the Lord, and that love constrained him to obey the Lord's commandments. It is possible to worship without obedience. Paul mentions men in 2 Timothy 3 who have a form of godliness but deny its power. The power he speaks of in that passage is the power of a changed life — the life that is no longer a lover of self, a lover of money, nor a lover of pleasure more than of God (vv. 1-9).

Disobedient Saul was trying to cover his sin with this form of godliness that was powerless when it came to changing his life. Samuel explains that God sees our worship with no desire to obey as rebellion and witchcraft, as iniquity and idolatry. He would lose God's blessing on his life because he refused to obey.

X. Samuel died having made an eternal difference (25:1).

Application: All Israel gathers, mourns, and buries. But the work goes on in the life of one deeply touched by Samuel's life. Because Samuel lived, David's future is bright, and Israel's is as well. He had made a difference, and the size of that difference is measurable in terms of the difficulty of his day. Samuel ministered first in the days of Eli, then in the days of Saul. He knew the days of David were coming, but that day would not be his day of ministry. The difficult day was Samuel's day to make a difference. It is ours as well.

Conclusion: Blake offers a proper epitaph to memorialize Samuel: "It was the lifelong aim and effort of Samuel to show that it made the greatest difference to them in every way how they acted toward God, in the way of worship, trust, and obedience. He made incessant war on that cold worldly spirit, so natural to us all that leaves God out of account as a force in our lives, and strives to advance our interests simply by making the most of the conditions of material prosperity. . . .

"What a living temple, what a Divine epistle, written not in tables of stone, but in flesh tables of the heart! What glory and honour had . . . that man's life been to the nation, so uniform, so consistent, so high in tone! What a reproof it carried to low and selfish living, what a splendid example it afforded to old and young of the true way and end of life, and what a blessed impulse it was fitted to give them in the same direction, showing so clearly "what is good, and what doeth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." May God give our churches and great nation Samuels again!

Psalm 99:6 tells us that Samuel is in the category of men who called on the name of the Lord along with Moses and Aaron. When it comes to Moses and Aaron, Hebrews 3 reminds us

that Jesus Christ is our better Moses and better Aaron, the Apostle and High Pries of our profession.

Perhaps we can say of our Savior this morning, that He is also our better Samuel. As the promised Messiah, Jesus is certainly the One God's people have always asked for. Old Simeon asked in the first century, and the Lord allowed his eyes to see the one given as our answer. We ask for His coming again to-day. But also as we think of the great traits of Samuel, in each Jesus Christ is still greater.

He was blessed with a God-fearing home; He took a stand for God as a young boy; He responded to God's call to service in a dark day; He grew to be a man who loved God's word; God used His preaching and praying to bring revival; although His ministry was ultimately rejected by Israel; He lovingly cared for His successors; He was a man of prayer, prioritized obedience, and best of all, He died making an eternal difference for you and for me. He died for our sins and rose again, so that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Will you call to your better Samuel for your salvation?

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching