

Articles by J. B. Stoney

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Disappointment

Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways; now make us a king to judge us like all the nations (1 Sam. 8:4,5).

This is a great trying moment for Samuel, but one of great instruction for him, and for us through him. When the one who has known the blessing of dependence on God has been drawn aside into thinking and acting for himself, no greater mercy can be vouchsafed to him than that he should be involved in such straits that nothing but the return to dependence on God can afford any relief. There were two painful truths in the petition of the elders which must have greatly tried Samuel.

1. The failure of his policy through his own sons. This is the point where every man would feel most, and the better the man, the more would he feel it. It was clearly nature in Samuel to make his sons judges in the land when he was old. He had enjoyed for a long period of his life the fruits of his first great and deep exercises of dependence; but now, when he is old, he seems to lapse into worldly arrangements, in making his sons judges.

2. The wilfulness and ungodliness of the nation in asking for a king. Poor Samuel! His family had disappointed him, and his nation had grievously requited all his labors and service. What a moment! What could the aged Samuel do?

We read, And Samuel prayed unto the Lord (8:6). The perplexing strait has been used to restore his soul into

the old and well-known channel of dependence. Samuel illustrates to us how blessed dependence on God is, and how great are the deliverances which flow from it. Samuel was the link between the judges and the kingdom, or the type of the faithful in the interval between the manifested failure of Israel, as a people governed by God, and the setting up of the kingdom. He also connects us with the kingdom, and is himself superseded by God's anointed king, even David.

God answered him in a most gracious way. They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them (8:7). Samuel is now educated in a very different line from that in which his public history opened. Now an old man, and at the close of his life, and of his testimony to the blessedness of dependence on God, he must endure with patience, and cooperate, as long as he can. While this experiment is being carried out, he must suppress all the sad and bitter feelings which might crowd on his mind. He must wait on God, and wait for the end, until God brings it to an end.

The people refused to obey the voice of Samuel and Samuel receives further instruction. And the Lord said to Samuel, Harken unto their voice, and make them a king (8:22). Samuel, in obedience to the Lord, submits to the trial of man's king and owning him as acknowledged of God, until the contrary was manifested. But, at the same time, Samuel observes two lines of action.

1. Faithfulness to the people, in warning them of their apostasy, and the retribution due to it. Ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day

(8:18). Samuel fully and explicitly expounds to the people their apostasy and its consequences; but, at the same time, he equally commends himself to us by his ready help and forbearance with Saul, so long as it was possible. His sons a failure and reproach, the nation renouncing dependence on God, seeking a king who should supersede himself, and yet Samuel moves on through it all.

2. Faithfulness to God, which led Him to disown the king the moment he relinquished the principles ordained of God. Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee; for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel (15:26). It is charity to bear with man as long as it is permitted by God's Word; but charity must cease when any inroad is made on God's commandment; every feeling for man must give way in order to vindicate the decrees of God. And the one who, like Samuel, has learned to walk in forbearance and charity towards a Saul, while at the same time protesting against the principle of independence, will at length be given an opportunity of exposing the assumption of the flesh.

The New Place

In Exodus and Joshua we find the two great parts of the work of Christ typified; the one, by the Red Sea; the other, by the Jordan. In one, we have Christ's dying for us; and in the other, we have our dying with Him.

Where does the crossing of Jordan bring us? Exodus 15:17 tells us. "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, the place that thou, Jehovah, hast made thy dwelling, the Sanctuary, Lord, that Thy hands hast prepared." In the epistle to the Colossians the Red Sea and the Jordan coalesce. We are brought to God, but there is another thing, and one which we have practically to learn, even that we have died with Him.

In Colossians 2:20, we have "died with Christ from the elements of the world." We have ended our history, and practically we have a new place. His death puts us outside everything. His death for us removes all between God and us; our death with Him removes all between us and God. At the Red Sea the enemy's power was completely broken. In Jordan I have died with Him, I am free from Satan and the flesh where they both are, and I am introduced into a new scene.

There is not a thing against me; all was ended in the cross of Christ. I am clear of every single thing that barred me from the presence of God. A person says, "I do not feel it"; I am not asking you to feel it, but to believe it. The thief on the cross, a man who was a scandal to the Jew, an offscouring to society, was taken from the lowest depths of shame and misery, and put

into the brightest and most blessed place in company with Christ that day; he was in the new place that “day.”