

**Lesson 46**  
**The Toughness of Faith**  
**Hebrews 11:32**

In our Christian lives, there is a time to be loving, kind and gracious towards others, and there is also a time to be stern, firm and tough. However, the tough approach would be the exception rather than the rule. Even when we must get tough, we must bathe our sternness in love and show genuine concern for the person with whom we are dealing. No one likes to get tough with someone else, but sometimes it is necessary if we are going to obey God rather than please men. When we do get tough, there will often be a negative response towards us.

All Christians, especially those who are called into full-time service by God, must at times oppose people who do things or think things or say things opposite to what the Bible teaches. A man called of God to be a pastor-teacher must be willing to stomp on toes and hurt feelings occasionally because people have a tendency to want their own way, forgetting that God has His ways of accomplishing things. Men in the ministry speak on the authority of God and His Word, and this is a frightfully big responsibility. I do not believe that there is a Spirit-filled minister alive who takes pleasure in pointing out sin in others or going against others when they are doing something that is unbiblical, but they do it because they know it is more important to obey God than to please men.

A minister, making a pun about the ministry, said, “The ministry would be just great if it weren’t for people.” However, all of us know that the ministry is people, and we must learn to take the bitter with the sweet. People need help, and sometimes they need to be honestly confronted about a problem.

Today we are going to look at some aspects of the life of Samuel. Samuel was a prophet, and a prophet represented God before men. He took God’s words and gave them to the people, speaking with the very authority of God. Samuel made the Old Testament Hall of Fame of Faith because he was truly a man who walked by faith in the one, true, and living God. ***“And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets”*** (Heb. 11:32). Samuel, as did all the prophets, had to speak out against the sins of the people, and he was very unpopular with the people, especially when he crossed men in high authority. Samuel was placed in some very difficult situations, and he had to have a “get tough” policy because he knew it was more important to obey God than to please men.

SAMUEL REBUKES THE PEOPLE - 1 Samuel 12:17-25

**Background:**

Israel, under the judges, had been ruled by a theocracy, that is, God was ruling directly over His people through the judges, but the people wanted a king over them. Samuel told them that it was wrong for them to go from a theocracy to a monarchy, but the people insisted, so Samuel

anointed the people's choice and made Saul king in Israel. ***“Then Samuel said to all Israel, ‘Behold, I have listened to your voice in all that you said to me, and I have appointed a king over you’”*** (1 Sam. 12:1).

### **12:17:**

The people of Israel were right in the peak of the wheat harvest and Samuel told them he would pray that there would be a terrible storm, and rain is the last thing a farmer wants when harvesting wheat. Samuel prayed for this terrible storm because the people insisted upon having a king when it was not God's revealed will for them to have a king at that time.

You can bet that Samuel's rating in the “Jewish Gallup Poll” went down to the bottom that day, and the people were infuriated with him because he prayed that their harvest would be wiped out. In a matter of hours, the popularity of Samuel diminished, and the people were irate, rude, and obnoxious with him.

A true minister of God will always have some people who are opposed to him. At any given time, usually 10 to 15 percent of the people are opposed to a pastor, and the pastor must become thick skinned to the criticism, keeping his eyes solely on God and not on men.

### **12:18-19:**

The people would have never changed their attitudes unless the storm had come and wiped out the crop. The people then realized their sin and truly repented.

Samuel stood his ground in spite of opposition, and God brought the people to repentance through adverse circumstances. Samuel chose to obey God rather than please men, and God blessed him and the people.

### **12:20-22:**

Samuel showed a real pastor's heart for the people of Israel in their sin and pleaded with them to go on walking with the Lord and not to rebel at His discipline of them. They were to ride their discipline out in fellowship with God, knowing that God would never abandon His people because He loves them.

### **12:23-25:**

Samuel, instead of rebuking the people more, prayed for them and sought to instruct them in the good and right way, for he knew that God would honor the people if they would get their hearts right before God.

Who is the man God uses? The man who fears the Lord, serves Him from the heart, and rejoices in God's dealings with him. ***“But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word”*** (Isa. 66:2b).

SAMUEL DETHRONES A KING - 1 Samuel 15:19-31

### **Background:**

Saul, as King of Israel, was commanded by God to go to war against the city of Amaiek, and everything in that city was to be totally destroyed.

***“Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘I will punish Amaiek for what he did to Israel, how he set himself against him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt. Now go and strike Amaiek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey’”*** (1 Sam. 15:2-3).

Saul defeated the Amalekites, but he failed to obey the Lord’s command to destroy everything.

***“And he captured Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were not willing to destroy them utterly; but everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed”*** (1 Sam. 15:8-9).

God was so displeased with Saul that He regretted that He had ever permitted Saul to come to the throne. ***“Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel saying, ‘I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not carried out My commands.’ And Samuel was distressed and cried out to the LORD all night”*** (1 Sam. 15:10). This rank disobedience not only broke God’s heart, it also broke Samuel’s heart, and he spent all night in prayer about this matter.

Little do people realize how their rebellion grieves God and breaks their pastor’s heart, but a Spirit-filled pastor always grieves over the sin of his people because he loves them.

### **12:19-21:**

When challenged about his disobedience by Samuel, Saul actually thought that he had been obedient. He rationalized his responsibility before God and failed to be obedient in every aspect of the command. Not only did he rationalize his position, but he also tried to place the blame on the people and not on himself. Saul even had a religious motive for disobeying God, for he fully intended to take the good spoils and sacrifice them to God.

It is so easy to compromise or rationalize our responsibility to the clear commands of God in Holy Scripture. We must remember that our hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know them? Only God knows the true motivation of our hearts and He judges us accordingly.

### **12:22:**

God, using Samuel as His mouthpiece, made it very clear that God is more interested in obedience from the human heart than sacrifice. God hates rebellion and insubordination to Him and will severely discipline His people for their disobedience. Samuel, speaking on God’s authority, looked squarely in the eyes of Saul, the king, the most powerful man in all Israel, and faithfully delivered God’s message to Saul. He said, ***“Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king.”*** This declaration by Samuel took great

faith, for Saul could have easily had him thrown in prison or put to death. You know that when Saul first heard this declaration he reacted negatively and probably violently. He was undoubtedly furious with Samuel, but Samuel was just doing his duty before God.

### **12:24-26:**

Again Samuel stood his ground, and God blessed Samuel, and Saul repented of his sin. Saul pleaded for Samuel's blessing and a change of his decision, but Samuel would not budge. No amount of begging or pleading would change Samuel's mind, for he was merely carrying out God's revealed will to the letter.

In a local church, a pastor is called upon to do much counseling, and it is a great blessing to be a counselor. However, sometimes the pastor must disagree with the counselee, because the counselee is going against God's revealed will in the Bible. Often people want the pastor to agree with their rebellion so the conscience can be soothed. Perhaps a Christian is about to marry a non-Christian, or a Christian has a critical attitude, or a Christian is openly opposing an elder or the pastor, or a Christian wants to get a divorce when there are no biblical grounds for that divorce, or whatever. A pastor must stand on God's Word even if it hurts the one being counseled. It is not easy to be a Christian counselor, but it is more important to obey God than to please men.

### **12:27-29:**

Samuel stood fast on God's word and would not in any way compromise, even if it meant incurring the wrath of the King. Samuel had a genuine faith that evidenced itself in works. Samuel would not change his mind because God had not changed His mind.

If your pastor or elders must sometimes oppose you on some issue that is clearly spoken of in Scripture, what will be your attitude? Pastors and elders dare not compromise God's standards to please men, for they must one day give a special account to God.

***“Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you”*** (Heb. 13:17).

### **12:30-31:**

Samuel never changed his declaration, but he did respect King Saul, for he had been officially dethroned but not actually dethroned. Samuel respected the authority of a “has been” king because he was still acting as king. It took faith for Samuel to be in subjection to Saul, but by faith he was obedient and God blessed him.

SAMUEL ANOINTS A KING AGAINST TRADITION - 1 Samuel 16:1-13

### **Background:**

Months passed, and it was time for Samuel to officially appoint a new king to take Saul's place. Remember, Saul was still acting as king in Israel, and he could do so until Samuel officially anointed a new king.

**16:1:**

God spoke to Samuel and told him to go to Jesse, the Bethlehemite, for He had selected a king among his family.

**16:2:**

At first Samuel hesitated, because he knew that Saul, now completely crazy, would have him killed as soon as he heard about it. Even men of God get frightened when they know their lives are at stake.

I have had my life threatened twice by men I had to oppose because of some sin in their lives. Yet, God has protected me both times, but I would be lying if I told you I was not momentarily scared. I was forced to claim Psalm 56:3: *“When I am afraid, I will put my trust in Thee.”*

**16:2b-5:**

God told Samuel to invite Jesse to make a sacrifice and at the right time God would show him what man to appoint as king. In spite of the great danger to his own life, Samuel obeyed God and went to Jesse, for it is more important to obey God than to please men. If God be for us, who can be against us?

**16:6-7:**

The oldest son of Jesse made an immediate impression upon Samuel. Eliab was strong, mature, and exceptionally good looking. By tradition, Eliab should have been king, for he was the eldest son. Humanly speaking, he was an attractive man, and Samuel was almost swayed towards Eliab. However, God intervened and spoke to Samuel, probably while he was in prayer, and told him not to look on the outward appearance, but God is impressed with the heart of a man. Eliab obviously did not have a heart for God.

How easy it is to pick a pastor for a church because he and his wife are a handsome couple or he is a suave speaker and a guy everyone likes, but often these kinds of men do not really have a heart for God, and a church is cursed instead of blessed.

**16:8-10:**

Seven of Jesse's sons were interviewed by Samuel, and not one of them was God's choice to be king. God chooses whom He pleases for positions of authority, and none of these men was God's man. They apparently did not have a heart for God.

Can you imagine the jealousy, frustration and envy of those brothers when they were rejected by Samuel? The sparks must have been flying in their minds, and they despised Samuel.

Accepting rejection was part of Samuel's job, and we learn from this that no man should enter the ministry, especially the pastorate, who cannot accept rejection at times.

**16:11-13:**

Jesse sent for his youngest son, David, and this was God's choice for the office of King of Israel. Samuel, by faith, anointed David who officially in God's sight became the new king, even

though it was some time after that he actually ascended to the throne.

Why did Samuel anoint David? Because David had a heart for God.

***“But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you”*** (1 Samuel 13:14).

Do you have a heart for God? Are you a man or woman after God’s own heart? God uses the person whose heart beats for God. David could say, ***“As a deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God”*** (Psalm 42:1).

## CONCLUSION

### Saved

Christian, sometime you may love Christian brothers or sisters so much that you will have to get tough with them and rebuke them, knowing full well that this might cause animosity on their part towards you. Even closer to home, perhaps someday you may have to be rebuked by another Christian or by a concerned elder or pastor. What will be your reaction? You should rejoice and do what you can to correct every fault that is pointed out, for this is basic to your spiritual growth.

***“He who rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with the tongue”*** (Prov. 28:23).

***“Do not reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you, reprove a wise man and he will love you”*** (Prov. 9:8).

The man after God’s own heart will welcome objective criticism and seek to do something about it.

### **Unsaved**

For you without Christ, please learn the lesson that God has for you. Salvation is not just a matter of the head but also a matter of the heart. God wants your heart as well as your head. To be a Christian not only means that you believe in Christ to save you from your sins, but that you also follow Him with your heart, realizing that He is Lord and King. God wants your heart, and you must believe in Christ from your heart or you cannot be saved.

***“... that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation”*** (Rom. 10:9-10).