

# Journey Into God's Word



I Samuel 16-31

I saiah 23-44

Mark 9-16

My Dear Co-Workers,

I believe that God is calling each of us into a new dimension of faith. As we examine the lives of the great men and women of faith in I Samuel, Isaiah and Mark, we discover that we also can live by faith. (II Cor. 5:7) These individuals stood steadfast by faith in the midst of trials and tribulations. (I Cor. 16:13) They overcame obstacles by faith (Matt. 17:20) with fighting by faith. (I Tim. 6:12) You and I who are saved by faith (Eph. 2:8,9) will also achieve the victories we need daily by faith. (I John 5:4) Remember “faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.”(Romans 10:17)

In our study of I Samuel, we have come to know Hannah, Samuel, Jonathan, David, and Abigail. Each of these individuals demonstrated through their trust in God how victory can be achieved as a result of faith.

Hannah, at a time of political confusion and distress, demonstrated what it was to be a person who lived by faith. She achieved this by being a woman of prayer. (I Sam. 1:10-11) She was also a woman of promise. (I Samuel 1:11) Hannah would pour out her soul in faith before the Lord. (I Sam. 1:15) She had a patient faith. (I Sam. 1:18) Hannah was a woman who fulfilled her promises (I Samuel 1:28) and praised God as she did it. (I Samuel 2:1-10). This woman of faith produced a son, Samuel, whose faith changed the course of the nation of Israel.

Often we are led to believe that there is little we can do to change the course of events in the world in which we live. Samuel showed, at a time of spiritual and moral decay, that one man of faith could make a difference. In I Samuel 16, we see Samuel stepping out in faith, obeying God, and anointing David as the next king of Israel. Saul had turned from God. As a result, his kingdom would be taken from him. Samuel by faith anoints this young boy David, believing God when He says, “The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the

outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart”(I Samuel 16:7). Earlier Samuel, as a result of his faith in God, had told King Saul, “For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has rejected you as king.”(I Samuel 15:23). Samuel by faith obeyed the Lord and anointed David “in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power.”(I Samuel 16:13)

As the Spirit of the Lord came upon David, we see how he moved forth by faith. As you read I Samuel 17, please note how David approached and then overcame the giant Goliath. In Hebrews 11:32 we see both David and Samuel listed among the heroes of faith. Although David could have killed Saul on two different occasions, David put his faith in God and His perfect timing for David to become king and didn't kill the “Lord's anointed.” Such faith inevitably touches the lives of others. Please describe what influence David had on Jonathan's life and in what ways Jonathan demonstrated faith? Even a man of faith like David can, in the heat of the moment, act in a rash manner that he will regret later. How did the faith of Abigail demonstrate in I Samuel 25 keep David from taking action he would later regret? On one occasion when David returned to his camp, he found the Amalekites had stolen everything from him and his men. In fact the situation got so desperate that his men were even talking about stoning David. At that moment David was greatly distressed, but he didn't give up. We read in I Samuel 30:6 that “David found strength in the Lord his God,” and that David and his men went on to defeat the Amalekites and got everything back that had been taken from them. How have you strengthened yourself in the Lord lately when you have felt distressed?

Isaiah offers the children of Israel hope in the midst of their distress. He tells them of God's judgment and of His restoration following the repentance of sin. For the poor who often suffer because ruthless people oppress them, we see how God is a refuge for them. Isaiah declares in chapter 25 verses 1 and 4, “O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago. You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat.” When you feel the pressure coming from every direction, move forth by faith into the peace of God. Remember that because of the resurrection of Jesus there is even victory over death. “He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; He will remove the disgrace of His people from all the earth.”(Isaiah 25:8)

When you are distressed, strengthen yourself in the Lord like David did as you think about these two verses which Isaiah declared concerning the Living God. “You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock Eternal.”(Is. 26:3,4) If you want peace, keep your thoughts and faith in God for, “Lord, You establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished You have done for us. (Is. 26:12) Isaiah shares the hope that Jesus provides by referring to Him as a sure foundation. “See I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed.”(Isaiah 28:17) If you are not trusting in Him and living by faith, no wonder you are distressed so much! Whatever else you are looking for security in will not be sufficient. It’s like what Isaiah 28:20 says concerning having faith in anything but God, “The bed is too short to stretch out on, the blanket is too narrow to wrap around you.” How does Isaiah 29:13 show that just engaging in a lot of religious talk is not sufficient? How does one find the joy of salvation and strength according to Isaiah 30:15? In what way does Is. 31:1 show that trusting in military strength is not sufficient? What is the key to the treasure described in Is. 33:5,6?

“Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire” of God’s presence according to Is 33:15,16? Please describe the joy of the redeemed as it is explained in Isaiah 35? How did Hezekiah’s faith enable him to win the “impossible” battle against the Assyrians in Isaiah 36, 37? Hezekiah’s prayer of faith enabled him to live 15 years longer. Please read Isaiah 38 and describe how Hezekiah expressed his thankfulness. But beware of pride. Even after experiencing these mighty miracles, what happened as a result of Hezekiah showing off what he had in his storehouses to the Babylonians? (Isaiah 39)

Starting in Isaiah 40, we now see Isaiah sharing what mighty things God will do after the children of Israel are taken into captivity. Isaiah talks about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. According to Isaiah 40-44 what great events are awaiting us, as we remain faithful in the work of our Lord Jesus Christ?

When Jesus came the first time, his disciples Peter, James and John saw “a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: ‘this is my Son, Whom I love. Listen to Him!’”(Mark 9:7) Jesus tells us that “Everything is possible for him who believes.”(Mark 9:23) Yet how many times do we find ourselves declaring like the father who had a boy with an evil spirit, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” Hebrews 12:1-3 tells us how we can overcome that unbelief. “Do you see what this means –all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we’d better get on with it. Strip

down, start running and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how He did it. Because He never lost sight of where He was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—He could put up with anything along the way: cross, shame, whatever. Now He's there, in the place of honor, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility He plowed through. That will shoot adrenaline into your souls!"(The Message Bible) As we examine the life of Jesus, we see that, "even the Son of Man did not come to be saved, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."(Mark 10:45) "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross." (Heb. 12:2)

Now let's take a look at that final week before Christ's resurrection. On Sunday, in Mark 11:1-10 we see Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Monday, the next day, He clears the temple. (Mark 11:15-17) Then Tuesday, Jesus' authority is challenged in the temple. (Mark 11:27-33) He teaches and confronts the Jewish leaders. (Mark 12:1-40) Jesus tells His disciples about His Second Coming (Mark 13), and Judas agrees with the Jewish leaders to betray Jesus. (Mark 14:10,11) Jesus knows the time is quickly approaching when He will be executed. There is no record of what He did on the Wednesday prior to His death. Perhaps He spent the day in prayer or spent the day with His disciples in Bethany. On Thursday we see the Last Supper in Mark 14:22-25 and Jesus struggling in prayer in Gethsemane. (Mark 14:32-42) Jesus is betrayed and arrested. (Mark 14:43-52) Then on Friday Jesus is tried by Jewish and Roman authorities and is disowned by Peter. (Mark 14:53)-15:20) Jesus is crucified. (Mark 15:20-41) By fixing your eyes on Jesus and witnessing the faith He demonstrated in this chain of events, how does it help you grow in your faith? Did you notice how Hebrews says, "Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross"? It didn't say, "Who for the happiness set before Him". There is no happiness in going to the cross. Joy is much deeper than happiness. The joy comes from knowing that a resurrection will follow. (Mark 16:1-11) You also can have that joy even in the midst of the trials and tribulations you are facing now. A resurrection is coming.

Never forget that there is hope for Christ is Risen. Jesus Christ has proclaimed, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."(Mark 13:31) To have faith means to believe in Jesus and "stand firm to the end" even as our faith is challenged and opposed. Jesus has told us, "You must be on your guard. You will be handed over.... On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. And the gospel must first be

preached to all nations. Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”(Mark 13:9-13) Such enduring to the end does not earn salvation for us, but marks us as already saved. This assurance of salvation provided through Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8,9) will keep us going in spite of the circumstances. Remember “this is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only He who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”(I John 5:4,5)

My dear brothers and sisters, I want to encourage you in every way to “stand firm.” Remember “we live by faith, not by sight.”(ICor. 5:7) I pray you are beginning to understand what Paul means when he says, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”(Gal. 2:20) Now I must challenge you to, “be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be a people of courage; be strong. Do everything in love.”(I Cor. 16:13,14)

Please join me this week as we read II Samuel 1-12, Isaiah 45-66, and Colossians 1-4. Remember Jesus says, “I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.’”(Matt. 17:20,21) Now is the time to exercise that mountain-moving faith. “Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.”(I Tim. 6:12)

Yours in Christ,

Larry Rice