

“The Real vs The Ideal”
1 Samuel 7
February 24, 2019
Faith Presbyterian Church – Evening Service
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I’ve decided to return to the Book of Samuel in the coming Lord’s Day evenings, which I began preaching from last summer. It’s a little odd in some ways to begin today several chapters into a book, but it still seemed to me the best way to move forward.

That puts us in First Samuel chapter seven this evening, and in need of a little reminder of where we are in this book.

In First Samuel chapters one through six we have seen God promise to bring down evil rulers and raise up the lowly faithful among his people, Israel, and then we have seen him do it. He brought down Hophni and Phineas and raised up Samuel.

We have also seen God’s saving care of his people in these chapters. When *they* acted like pagans, when *they* broke his covenant, when *they* did things that deserved exile ... rather than exiling his people, Yahweh, the God of Israel, took onto himself the exile that *they* deserved, letting his ark be taken captive by the Philistines instead of them.

We have also seen Yahweh conquer his enemies through his apparent defeat in that same event. The Philistines took the ark captive and placed it in the temple of Dagon their god, as if Yahweh himself were a captive of Dagon. Then we saw Yahweh literally tear down the idol of Dagon and bring judgment on the Philistines until they sent the ark back to Israel. And so, Yahweh returned to his people like a victorious conqueror.

But then, even after all that, after Yahweh had struck the decisive blow to the Philistines and their god, Israel still failed to give Yahweh the reverence and respect that he deserved, and so Yahweh struck his people in judgment and discipline. In response, the Israelites then sent the ark to the Gibeonite community of Kireath-jearim.

And that is where we pick up tonight in the Book of Samuel.

As I have done up to this point in this series, I will continue to restore the covenant name of God in the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh, where the ESV has followed the tradition of replacing it with the title “the Lord”. You can find further discussion of those terms in the preface to most modern Bible translations. In the ESV it’s under the section titled “Translation of Specialized Terms.”

With all that in mind, let’s look to our text this evening, First Samuel, chapter seven, beginning with verse one ...

And the men of Kiriath-jearim came and took up the ark of Yahweh and brought it to the house of Abinadab on the hill. And they consecrated his son Eleazar to have charge of the ark of Yahweh.² From the day that the ark was lodged at Kiriath-jearim, a long time passed, some twenty years, and all the house of Israel lamented after Yahweh.

³ And Samuel said to all the house of Israel, “If you are returning to Yahweh with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroath from among you and direct your heart to Yahweh and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.” ⁴ So the people of Israel put away the Baals and the Ashtaroath, and they served Yahweh only.

⁵ Then Samuel said, “Gather all Israel at Mizpah, and I will pray to Yahweh for you.” ⁶ So they gathered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before Yahweh and fasted on that day and said there, “We have sinned against Yahweh.” And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah. ⁷ Now when the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the people of Israel heard of it, they were afraid of the Philistines. ⁸ And the people of Israel said to Samuel, “Do not cease to cry out to Yahweh our God for us, that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines.” ⁹ So Samuel took a nursing lamb and offered it as a whole burnt offering to Yahweh. And Samuel cried out to Yahweh for Israel, and Yahweh answered him. ¹⁰ As Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel. But Yahweh thundered with a mighty sound that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion, and they were defeated before Israel. ¹¹ And the men of Israel went out from Mizpah and pursued the Philistines and struck them, as far as below Beth-car.

¹² Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen and called its name Ebenezer; for he said, “Till now Yahweh has helped us.” ¹³ So the Philistines were subdued and did not again enter the territory of Israel. And the hand of Yahweh was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. ¹⁴ The cities that the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron to Gath, and Israel delivered their territory from the hand of the Philistines. There was peace also between Israel and the Amorites.

¹⁵ Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. ¹⁶ And he went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah. And he judged Israel in all these places. ¹⁷ Then he would return to Ramah, for his home was there, and there also he judged Israel. And he built there an altar to Yahweh.

This is God’s Word.

When we think of dangerous threats that we face in our spiritual lives, our relationships, and our church – of the threats that really have the potential to derail any one of those things, I think we often think of big and dramatic things.

We think of the dramatic temptations or the overwhelming unbelieving arguments that threaten to pull someone away from the faith.

We think of the extraordinary moral failure, or the seductive man or woman that threatens to pull one spouse away from the other.

We think of the big and pronounced attacks or schisms that threaten to pull apart a church.

And certainly, all of these things exist. All of them need to be guarded against. All of them are real threats.

But I think that far more often the biggest threats to our spiritual lives and our relationships are much more mundane than any of that. Far more often they are ordinary things we don’t think

much about until they overtake us. There are a variety of such mundane threats. But one significant one is disappointment.

Disappointment that discourages us. Disappointment that festers and grows. Disappointment that leads to the slow drifting apart of what God has brought together.

And disappointment primarily grows out of mis-match, out of an incongruity, between our expectations and reality. Between our ideal picture of how things *should* be, and the reality of how things *actually are*.

How many, for example, have walked away from the Christian faith not because of some overpowering argument or temptation, but because they expected (maybe they even were told) that the Christian life would be one thing, but in real life it was something very different. The reality of the Christian life was wildly different from their expectations. And so, in disappointment they wandered away.

And how many marriages have come apart – either in divorce, or in a marriage that persists but is cold or unhappy – not because of a dramatic sin, but because each person expected one thing but got another. They expected their relationship with their spouse to progress in one way, but it did not. They expected their spouse to grow and mature in one way, but they did not. And disappointment set in, and with it, coldness, and division, and distance.

And how many churches have suffered schism and division not *really* because of dramatic doctrinal differences, but because different people, different groups, thought the church would grow and develop and mature in one way, thought that all sorts of positive changes would come about quickly with one change, and it didn't. And so, disappointment turned to bitterness. And self-righteous discontentedness led to bickering and division.

Of course, not all such troubles come about because of this kind of discouragement, but many do. It is a threat we so rarely speak of despite the havoc it can wreak on our lives.

And at the root of that disappointment is usually the difference, the deep incongruity between our expectations, and reality – between our idealized vision for how some aspect of life *should* go, and how our lives go in reality.

I was struck by that fact as I studied our text this week. Because Israel grows in this chapter and God delivers them. This is a positive and encouraging text. But when we look closely at this passage, what we see is spiritual growth in the trenches, and the messiness, and the reality, of the real world.

It's not pretty. It's not the ideal of what we would hope for. It's not what we *want* it to look like. But it *is* real. And it *is* growth. And it *is* brought about by our very real God.

That Israel grows in this chapter, that Israel grows between Kireath-jearim and Mizpah is hard to deny. In chapters 4-6 the Israelites were acting like pagans in how they treated Yahweh, but here in chapter 7 we see them humbly approaching God as he had told them to. In chapters 4-6 Israel was indignant as to why God had not helped them, and in chapter 7 they are confessing their sin and placing themselves in his hands. In chapters 4-6 Israel is defeated by their enemies because

of their arrogant self-reliance and deafness to the Lord, and in chapter 7 they defeat their enemies through humble reliance on Yahweh. The growth really is substantial!

But it doesn't look like what we might expect it to. In this chapter, the Holy Spirit gives us an elaborate picture of what spiritual growth often looks like in the real world. And as he shows this to us, I think he also challenges us to reexamine our own expectations.

We have idealized thoughts on what spiritual growth should look like. But we have a *real* God who works out his purposes by bringing *real* growth to his people in the *real* world.

And that is what I want us to think about together tonight. What I want each of us to ask ourselves tonight is this: In your spiritual life, in your relationships, in our congregation, where have you adopted idealized expectations for how growth will look, which will lead you to bitter disappointment, and how can you be encouraged by opening your eyes to the real ways that our God ordinarily works?

That was a big sentence, so let me say that again:

In your spiritual life, in your relationships, in our congregation, where have you adopted idealized expectations for what growth will look like, which will lead you to bitter disappointment, and how can you be encouraged by opening your eyes to the real ways that our God ordinarily works?

Put a little more simply: Where do you need a more realistic set of expectations for what spiritual growth in your life and the lives of those around you is likely to look like?

I'm going to point us to five ways that our text brings that out tonight. Five is a lot. I'll probably regret it. It kind of risks muddying our focus a bit. But each one is really just one instance of this same pattern – acknowledging our idealized expectations and then opening our eyes to the real ways God ordinarily works.

The Bible as a whole is a wonderful textbook on the real ways that God ordinarily works. Our text tonight is just one of many examples. No one's overly idealized expectations for growth comes from careful study of the Bible. The Bible is *very* realistic on what that growth often looks like. That realism is often in the background of what we are focusing on in a given passage of Scripture. Tonight, I want to bring it to the foreground.

But before we do, let me make two disclaimers:

First, I'm not saying tonight that we should not desire the ideals which I might mention. These ideals are not bad as ideals – as things we might long for, as things we might aim for. They are good *ideals*. They are bad *expectations*. And there is a significant difference between the two.

Second, I am not saying that these ideals never happen. They sometimes do. Many of us know or have read of believers who have embodied one or more of these ideals. Some of us have maybe experienced some of these ideals ourselves. That is wonderful. It is a gift of God. When I speak of the real or realistic ways we see in our text, I'm not saying they are the *only* ways God works. I'm saying they are the ways God *ordinarily* seems to work. The extraordinary does happen, and when it does, it's beautiful. But we are not supposed to set the extraordinary as our expectation.

So, with that said, let's consider five contrasts in our text between our ideals for spiritual growth and the ordinary appearance of real spiritual growth as God brings it about.

The first thing our text reminds us is that idealized spiritual growth is quick, while real spiritual growth ordinarily takes time. Sometimes a lot of time.

That we live in an impatient age should be beyond dispute. For an often-used example, just think back to the last time you decided you wanted something, you jumped on your computer or phone to get it, and then you became not just frustrated ... but almost indignant ... when you found that you couldn't buy it with two-day shipping. That you couldn't ensure that the thing that just popped into your head moments ago would be delivered to your door within 48 hours. I know I've done that. And it didn't just feel frustrating, it felt ... wrong. It felt unjust.

Now, I realize that I am too young to give convincing illustrations about how things used to be ... but I actually do have memories of when I was in high school and I wanted a specific book and I not only had to drive to a book store, but when they didn't have it, I then had to order it at the book store and wait a couple weeks before they'd called me to tell me it had come in. But now ... I want it ... no, I expect it *now*.

Of course, I think every culture has been impatient in its own way. But we have maybe brought it to a new level, don't you think?

And this affects how we view everything, including spiritual growth.

When it comes to our own spiritual growth, we are always looking for that book, or that conference, or that technique that will transform our spiritual walk or end our battle with that temptation right away.

When it comes to our relationships, we want those steps that will transform our marriage or our children in weeks or days, not in years or decades.

When it comes to how many Christians relate to their churches, when they identify a problem and point it out, they expect it to be fixed, they expect the church to grow and mature beyond it quickly, and if the church takes too long to grow in that specific area, then they move on to worship somewhere else.

We have an idealized expectation that spiritual growth should happen quickly.

And then look at our text. In chapter five God defeats Dagon and the Philistines and shows his power over the pagan gods. In chapter six he disciplines Israel as a rebuke for not honoring him rightly. Israel has been told what their problem is. They've been given a clear picture of how they need to grow. And what happens next?

Verse 2: "From the day that the ark was lodged at Kiriath-jearim, a long time passed, some twenty years."

Twenty years pass from verse one to verse five. Those years are summarized in verses two through four. It took twenty years of Samuel preaching to, and teaching, and rebuking, and encouraging the Israelites before they finally put their idols away decisively and Samuel could gather them before the Lord at Mizpah.

It should not have taken 20 years.

But it did.

We can imagine the patience that took for Samuel. But God calls us to the same patience.

He calls us to that patience in our relationships. Disciple-making in our children takes years, not weeks. Spouses and marriages grow and mature over decades, not months. That friend of yours, the one who is still struggling with and talking to you about the same sin or struggle that they've been talking to you about since as long as you can remember ... will you have the patience of Samuel with them? Or will you give up on them, because they failed to meet the ideal of quick spiritual growth?

The Lord calls us to patience in our church as well. Not everyone can see every area that needs growth in a church or in a minister. But everyone can see *something*. Seeing weaknesses or areas in need of growth is not alone a sign of spiritual expertise. Patiently and persistently working on those areas like Samuel *is*. Samuel's patience is not passive, it's persistent – a patient persistence. We'll say more on that a little later. But in what ways, when it comes to our church, might you be prone to impatience? In what ways do you need to look to Samuel's patient persistence instead?

The Lord also calls us to a form of patience in regards to his work in our own lives. We each have a struggle or a temptation which we'd like the Lord to remove from us. We'd like to be done with it already. But the temptation remains. We still have to fight it. Will we trust the Lord's timing in removing that temptation, and patiently rely on him to keep fighting it, no matter how sick we are of it?

Idealized spiritual growth is quick. Real spiritual growth usually takes time. That's the first contrast we see in our text.

Second, idealized spiritual growth is marked by special moments, while real spiritual growth is often marked by unexpected attacks.

You've got to feel for the Israelites on this one. We see this in verses five through seven. Israel finally has repented. They have put away their idols. They have gathered for worship. They have commemorated their repentance in this symbolic pouring out of water before the Lord. They have confessed their sin openly. This is shaping up like the spiritual high points we imagine. The service was probably beautiful. Samuel's instruction, his preaching, was probably wonderful. These are the kind of special moments we relish – the kind of things that today we frantically take pictures of to share on social media.

And then verse seven. "Now when the Philistines heard that the people of Israel had gathered at Mizpah, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel."

The Philistines gather to attack. Why now? We don't know, but as Robert Alter points out, it would seem that either the Philistines misunderstood why Israel was gathering and thought Israel was about to attack *them*, or they saw that Israel was gathered for religious purposes, and more vulnerable than normally, and thought they'd seize the opportunity to attack. [Alter, 37]

The thing that is noteworthy though, is that it is because of the attack that even greater spiritual growth happens. The gathering for worship and repentance, the Kodak-moment or the Instagram-worthy spiritual gathering was not itself bad – it was a good thing. But even deeper growth came not in that, but at the point where the special moment completely fell apart under the threat of military attack.

I don't know if Samuel recognized that right then and there. But he kept Israel focused on the Lord and therefore helped bring that growth about. And at least in the text we don't hear Samuel complaining about how God let the Philistines ruin the beautiful service that he had put together.

Special moments are good and important. We should have them – we'll consider that in another sense in just a bit.

But we should recognize that often God brings real growth – to our hearts, to our friendships, to our marriages, to our families, to our churches, in the context of unexpected attacks.

The challenge for us is to keep our eyes on that truth like Samuel did, rather than overvaluing the special moments we try to create.

I think all of us have examples of this in our lives. Of an unexpected trial that grew you personally. Of a parent responding in compassion when you messed up, in such a way that it nurtured your relationship. Of a spouse whose love in the context of a challenge deepened your love and respect for them.

We don't go looking for those kinds of trials. Our text doesn't tell us to. But it does tell us not to be surprised when they come, and to look for ways to encourage growth in ourselves and in others in the midst of them.

So, second: Idealized spiritual growth is marked by special moments, while real spiritual growth is often marked by unexpected attacks.

Third, idealized spiritual growth is marked by trusting calm, while real spiritual growth is frequently marked by trusting while trembling.

Now again, there is nothing wrong with trusting calm. As Dr. Jack Collins would say: Don't hear what I'm not saying. That can be an amazing thing – a gift from God, or the fruit of his faithful work in us.

But often God works when his people are trusting while trembling. And not *all* calm is due to trust.

It's helpful to compare Israel in chapter four with Israel here in chapter seven [Davis, 74]. In chapter four Israel was calm and confident going into battle with the Philistines, and it's the Philistines who are afraid. But Israel was calm for the wrong reasons. They thought that they could manipulate and control Yahweh to their own ends. And in the end Israel was defeated.

But what happens here? "When the people of Israel heard [that the Philistines were gathering], they were afraid of the Philistines. And the people of Israel said to Samuel, 'Do not cease to cry out to Yahweh our God for us, that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines.'"

Israel was afraid of the threat before them. They were not prepared for war. They were trembling. But even so they trusted in the Lord. They cried out to him and asked Samuel to do the same. And the Lord delivered them. He defeated their enemies.

God often puts us, his people, in similar positions. Dale Davis puts it like this – he says "Sometimes [God] may box us in, place us in a situation in which, one by one, all our secondary helps and supports are taken from us, in order that, defenseless, we may lean on his mercy alone. More and more God's people must walk in the way of desperation – [in other words, in the way of] prayer. Once we see this, we will no longer regard prayer as a pious cop-out but as our only rational activity." [Davis, 75-76]

In our lives, in our relationships, in our families, even in our church, sometimes God is most at work when, as Davis says all our other resources seem unable to help, and we "no longer regard prayer as a pious cop-out but as our only rational activity."

And if you're not sure what trembling trust looks like, I'd encourage you to read through the psalms. Just start reading through them. There we have for us many models of what prayers of trembling trust look like – prayers offered, when they are the only rational activity left to the one who is praying.

When you are afraid, when you are at your wits end – *that* is the time to pray. *That* is the time to trust. Not later. Not after you've calmed yourself down.

Idealized spiritual growth is marked by trusting calm, while real spiritual growth is often marked by trusting while trembling. That's number three.

Fourth, idealized spiritual growth always remembers the Lord's past faithfulness, while real spiritual growth needs constant reminders.

It's worth looking at what Samuel does after the Lord delivers Israel. He doesn't say, in verse twelve "Well, of course this was so incredible that no one here will ever forget it." That would be the ideal. That's probably how it *should* be.

But Samuel is a realist. And so instead he sets up a monument. He names it Ebenezer, which means "stone of help" and he declares to Israel "Thus far has Yahweh helped us."

When God does great things, we often foolishly, idealistically think we will remember them the next time we face a trial. But we often forget. And we can learn from Samuel the need to set up those reminders, those Ebenezers that say to us, "Thus far has Yahweh helped us."

And that can take different forms.

Sometimes they are that we not only celebrate but think rightly of certain anniversaries and dates. In the Lutheran tradition I grew up in a family was given a candle at the baptism of an infant to light each year on the anniversary of their baptism, to help the child and the family remember their baptism – to look back at their formal ingrafting into the Body of Christ, the family of God and say, “Thus far has Yahweh helped us.” My wife and I have not taken up that practice in our family yet ... but it might not be a bad idea.

In the same way anniversaries in marriage are times not just to go on a special date, but to look at the spouse the Lord has given you, to look at all you’ve gone through together and say, “Thus far has Yahweh helped us.”

There can be a range of anniversaries that should serve as such a reminder for you, as something to push you to remember what you all too easily forget.

Other times it can be in moments of trial when we need to stop ourselves and look back and remember the trials the Lord has already brought us through and say, “Thus far has Yahweh helped us”, and then move forward with a new confidence.

Of course, the Lord has also built such reminders into our lives in the Sabbath and the Liturgy. Every week he brings us back to his house to worship and hear his word, because he knows that otherwise we will forget what he has done for us.

And every week, once we are gathered, he calls us to worship, he assures us of his forgiveness of our sins, he calls us to follow him, he holds the gospel before us through his word and his table ... because otherwise we will forget. Commentator Dale Davis said that at one point he tried to get his church to carve those very words onto the front of the communion table: “Thus far has Yahweh helped us.”

What memorials, what reminders, what Ebenezers has the Lord already put in your life that you need to pay more attention to? What new ones do you maybe need to build into your life?

We have something of an Ebenezer coming up in May. It will be a celebration of the Rayburns, and it should be that. But it will also be a reminder of how far *the Lord* has brought us.

Because eventually the novelty of my being the new minister here will wear off. You know that, right? And my shortcomings will become more clear. And some of you will begin to wonder ... How we will continue as a congregation without Pastor Rayburn at the helm? Those realities and that question will sink into your mind. And that will be good in a few ways. It will be good because it will help you see a little more clearly what a blessing Rob has been to this church. But it will also be good because then in May we can look at all the Lord has done in the last 41 years and we can say together “Thus far has Yahweh helped us,” and he has not brought us here for nothing. And ultimately, our help is in the name of Yahweh – not in the senior pastor. And that celebration will help us remember. It will be an Ebenezer for us.

Idealized spiritual growth always remembers the Lord's past faithfulness, while real spiritual growth needs constant reminders.

Fifth and finally, idealized spiritual growth happens in big leaps, while real spiritual growth requires persistent care. We see this in verses 15-17 and in some ways, it brings us back to a picture similar to what we saw in verses 1-4, though maybe with more of an emphasis on persistence here where there was an emphasis on patience there.

After all that has happened, you'd think Samuel would take it easy. Surely this significant event would set Israel straight for a while. But again, Samuel knows better. And instead he lives his life on a circuit from Bethel, to Gilgal, to Mizpah, to Ramah. Round and round, year by year. Instructing the people of God, providing spiritual care for them. That is what that word "judging" is getting at there – judging not in the sense of deciding disputes (though that may have been included), but it was, as one commentator put it, "reproof, instruction, and counsel for living under Yahweh's lordship." [Davis, 79-80]

And so it is for us. We often want silver bullets for our lives, our relationships, our families, our churches. We want that one intense conversation to be the thing that brings change to our child's sinful habits, or the sinful patterns in our marriage. Or we want that one reform or sermon that will bring change to our congregation. In one area or another, we want to see big leaps of growth. But that's not how God typically works. We need to *expect* to have to do the hard, repetitive work of spiritual care in our hearts, our marriages, our children, our friendships, our congregation. The repetitive follow-up conversations with that child. The repeated interactions of confession and forgiveness in a marriage. The persistent work that keeps a church healthy.

Davis writes: "It is instructive to have glimpses of Samuel in both a major crisis and routine duties. The Lord's servant usually has both, but frequently far more of the latter. Crucial breakthroughs [...] are exciting but patient consolidation [...] is necessary if their impact is to be preserved. Fresh commitment requires plodding instruction to sustain it. The circuit through Benjamin is never as glamorous as revival at Mizpah, but it is the road for many of us. Yahweh has his altars there as well." (80)

Where in your life, in your relationships, in this church, is God calling you to a repetitive circuit of ministry of your own, year after year. What does that look like for you?

With all that said, we can become discouraged.

Patiently waiting, unexpectedly being attacked, trusting while trembling in fear and desperation, depending on constant reminders because of our own forgetfulness, requiring persistent care – how can this be the road to spiritual growth? How can we have any hope of spiritual victory in this?

And that question should bring us right back to the heart of the text, that *we* are to cry out to the Lord, and *he* will fight our battles.

As David Firth puts it “The point is that the victory belongs to Yahweh alone: it was achieved neither by Samuel as a military leader, nor through any king. It is Yahweh whom the nation needs, and they in faithfulness simply need to follow him as their king.” (108)

You are not competent to win the spiritual battles in your heart. It is not in your power to change the hearts of your friends or family. It is not in your power to purify and perfect Christ’s church. None of that is in our power! But it is in the power of the Lord. That is *his* work.

The Lord of course calls us to many things in the midst of that work. But one of the things he calls us to is to fight the temptation of disappointment – that is, to fight the temptation to walk away in disappointment when God does not work according to our desires in each of those areas ... when he doesn’t meet *our* ideals for spiritual growth in the different aspects of our lives.

Our challenge is to trust him and let go of our idealized demands and expectations which so often lead to spiritually threatening disappointment. Because in the end, *he* will bring us a *real* victory far greater than our ideals can.

And so, let us wait patiently on the work the Lord is doing in us, in others, and in his church. Let us not be surprised when attacks come out of nowhere from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Let us trust in the Lord’s power to defeat our enemies, even as we tremble. Let us attend to the reminders the Lord sets before us, and knowing our own weaknesses, let us even set up some of our own reminders. And let us do the persistent work of spiritual care in our hearts, our relationships, and our congregation.

And as we do those things, let us trust that the battle belongs to the Lord. The victory will be his.

For “Thus far has Yahweh helped us.” And he is not finished with us yet.

Amen.

This sermon draws on material from:

Alter, Robert. *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999.

Davis, Dale Ralph. *1 Samuel: Looking on the Heart*. Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2000.

Firth, David G. *1 & 2 Samuel*. Apollos Old Testament Commentary. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009.

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