

1 Samuel 16:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD.

Analysis

And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD.

Samuel's fear of Saul reveals that even mature prophets experience human weakness. God's response demonstrates that divine commands often include practical wisdom for their execution. The cover story of sacrifice was truthful - Samuel would indeed sacrifice - while concealing the full purpose. This instance of divinely sanctioned discretion raises important questions about truth-telling in dangerous circumstances, a theme explored by Reformed theologians regarding legitimate concealment versus lying.

Historical Context

Saul's paranoid behavior had intensified after his rejection, making travel by religious figures potentially dangerous. The distance from Ramah to Bethlehem was approximately 10 miles through territory Saul controlled. Sacrificial feasts were common occasions for family gatherings and religious observance.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How do you balance transparency with wisdom when obedience to God might provoke opposition?
2. What does Samuel's honest fear teach us about the compatibility of faith and natural human emotions?

Interlinear Text

וְיֹאמֶר נָא וְלֹשֶׁם עַל שָׁמְוֹאֵל וְאַמְרָת
and say And Samuel H349 H1980 hear if Saul it he will kill
H559 H8050 H8085 H7586 H2026

וְאַמְרָת לְיְהוָה עֲגָל תְּקַר בְּקַר תְּקַר כְּבַד
and say me And the LORD H5697 an heifer Take with thee
H559 H3068 H1241 H3947 H3027

וְאַמְרָת לְיְהוָה לִזְבֵּחַ בְּאֹתִי
and say to sacrifice me And the LORD I am come
H559 H2076 H3068 H935

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 9:12 (Sacrifice): And they answered them, and said, He is; behold, he is before you: make haste now, for he came to day to the city; for there is a sacrifice of the people to day in the high place:

1 Samuel 20:29 (Sacrifice): And he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me to be there:

and now, if I have found favour in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table.

Matthew 10:16 (Parallel theme): Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.