

Calvin's XXIX Sermon on First
Samuel (I Samuel 8:11-22)

We must now explain Samuel's speech to the people of Israel, in which he reminds them that they were still free to withdraw from their plans and to change their original intention to seek a king. Then he says that the king who will reign over them will take their sons for his own purposes and will cause much plundering and robbery. As we said in our last Sermon, these words show that the Lord does not give kings the right to use their power to subject the people to tyranny. Indeed, when the liberty to resist tyranny seems to be taken away by princes who have taken over, one can justly ask this question: since kings and princes are bound by covenant to the people, to administer the law in truest equality, sincerity, and integrity; if they break faith and usurp tyrannical power by which they allow themselves everything they want: is it not possible for the people to consider together taking measures in order to remedy the evil? A difficult question indeed, which in this time is neither pleasant to consider in detail, nor is it even expedient to do so. For we have seen many today who seek an occasion of changing things and allow themselves to go too far in agitating and overthrowing powers and authorities. These matters should be dealt with very soberly. Therefore, it behooves us to be content with what the Sacred Scripture teaches us, that God certainly punishes those who do not merit a good government by leading them into tyranny under bad princes.

I admit it is proper to resist the compulsion of ravening thieves, because it is not legitimate for them to steal from people by force. If anyone takes our property away from us against our will, certainly the hand and vindication of God must be approved. But this is a very different matter from the situation of leaders and superior dignitaries to whom God wills the subjects to be obedient. I admit that there are limits prescribed by God to their power, within which they ought to be satisfied: namely, to work for the common good and to govern and direct the people in truest fairness and justice; not to be puffed up with their own importance, but to remember that they also are subjects of God. Furthermore, they must keep in mind that even if they are elevated to the greatest positions of dignity, still these are fragile and momentary, and that the glory of God is to be advanced by their position.

Samuel clearly warns the people of the royal domination they will have to bear, and that their necks will have to be patiently submitted to his yoke. From which it is clear that it is not possible nor proper for subjects of kings and princes to rebel against them, or to do anything in that direction, even if the rulers are acting in a tyrannical manner and their people are subjected to serious plundering and robbery, and the rulers have no respect for God or for principles of justice.

Still, I admit that there are legitimate remedies against such tyranny, such as when there are other magistrates and official institutions to whom the care of the republic is committed, who will be able to restrict the prince to his proper authority so that if the prince attempts wrong action, they may hold him down. But if these

inferior magistrates do not carry out their duty and do not dare to oppose his tyranny themselves, then private citizens must recognize that these disasters are sent on them by God as a punishment for their sins. For as Scripture teaches us, a well constituted republic is a singular benefit of God, while on the other hand, a disordered state with wicked rulers and perverters of law is a sign of divine wrath against us in order to humble us and call us to a confession of sins so that we might turn to him with our whole heart and call upon him.

This is what Samuel means when he describes how the king will act: that he will do nothing less than heap up wealth and abundance from his subjects. Well, a formerly free people who sought royal dominance and subjected themselves willingly to it, and thus gave up their liberty really deserves no better.

Now let us consider particularly the way Samuel proclaims kings will treat the people. Scripture says: He will take away their sons in order to use them for his chariots and his horsemen, and they will run before his chariot. And he will use them as leaders of thousands and captains over fifties; and they will sow his fields (for kings during that time were more family-centered, whereas today they are more business-like. Today they would consider it undignified for kings to tend fields and to have time for farming, but then the great thing was simplicity and integrity) and to reap his harvests, and make his instruments of war. He will take your daughters for confectionaries, cooks, and bakers and housework. And he will take your menservants and maidservants and your most excellent young men and your asses to put to his own work. And finally, he will take a tenth of your flocks, fields, vineyards, and will give it to his palace assistants and to his servants.

Since in those times (which were not so corrupt as these in which we happen to live) princes allowed themselves so much, and did not abstain from plundering and robbery as described above, let us understand that for long ages evil, avarice, cruelty, whoredom, and tyranny have taken place in this world. Thus even though the world today is innundated with a flood of impiety and iniquity, let us not wonder if we see so much plundering and robbery of people everywhere, and kings and princes thinking they deserve everything they want, simply because no one opposes them.

This proverb has been used by tyrants for a very long time: 'what matters is will, not reason.' In other words they consider themselves bound by no laws. Of course those who have spoken with at least a little virtue have claimed that they lived according to the law. Well, certainly that old saying is utterly arrogant (to go by will instead of reason), but nevertheless it is the accepted procedure in the Institutes of the Roman Empire.

Therefore, since we see that from ancient times there have been those who neither feared God nor loved the law, and have felt they should have anything they wanted, and have relaxed the reins of control over evil, let us realize that today we have far greater reason to humble ourselves before God and to submit ourselves to the yoke, and to

pray that God will reprove their tyranny, which-with today's rulers-threatens us more seriously than ever in past centuries; unless God in his mercy destroys the plots of men.

Now people who have reached those heights of dignified rank must be aware that they should diligently meditate upon the divine Word themselves, and that they need the work of the Holy Spirit that they may rule the people with great moderation, and give the honor back to God; comply with his laws, and so rule their subjects temperately. They must seek divine help to lead them down the right road so they will never deviate from it, but will follow it all the way.

We must next consider these words, which say that the king will take the persons as well as the goods and wealth of his subjects for his own use. When kings do their duty, surely no one will deny that they have the legal right to use the persons as well as the goods of their subjects. For Paul teaches that it is approved by God that kings require tribute and taxes from their subjects, and when they use it for public purposes, they cannot be accused of tyrannical usurpation. God did give kings the power to make use of the persons as well as the goods of their subjects. However, they are not to do this rashly or without good cause, but on the condition that it is for the use of the people and the benefit of the republic.

Hence when we say that it is the responsibility of subjects to submit to kings and to obey them, at the same time it is understood that kings themselves are required to maintain a legitimate administration so that they rule neither severely nor tyrannically, but guide their subjects by mandate from God. They are not to undertake war rashly, nor ambitiously to increase their wealth; nor are they to govern their subjects on the basis of personal opinion or lust for whatever they want.

Now of course when the region or city is assailed by invading enemies, kings have the right to conscribe soldiers, to gather an army, and to lead it into battle. In that case it certainly behooves the subjects to pour out their life for their country and king. Nevertheless, kings have this right only on the condition that they do not take arms rashly nor carry on a private controversy, but rather use their position for the common good and benefit of the republic. Accordingly, subjects are under the authority of kings; but at the same time, kings must care about the public welfare so they can discharge the duties prescribed to them by God with good counsel and mature deliberation.

But if kings govern the republic willfully and on the basis of personal opinion, and seek nothing but their own counsel, it is certain that their subjects will be oppressed with plundering and robbery, without hope of any better future condition at all, but rather in greatest fear of oppression. Thus whoever has obtained royal power and wishes to rule his subjects and retain his authority over them must not trust too much in himself, but carry out his responsibilities with reason and counsel. Let him beware lest in requiring taxes or tribute,

or in disposing the persons and goods of his subjects for his own use, he do anything tyrannically, even though his subjects are obliged to be obedient to him.

Their subjection does not mean that it is ever legitimate for princes to abuse them willfully: rather, the prince must use and enjoy whatever goods and opportunities he has received from God in tranquility, quietness, and peace. This authority is therefore not placed in the hands of kings to be used indiscriminately and absolutely. For what a confused state of affairs would be brought into the world if the distinction between property and goods were not retained? Therefore the goods of private persons are not placed under the power and will of kings. Certainly they have the right to require tribute and taxes, and when necessity requires the collecting of other extraordinary subsidies from their subjects for the welfare of the republic, they have the right to do so.

In sum, as it behooves the people to be subject to kings, by the same token, it behooves kings to submit themselves thoroughly to laws, so they will not persuade themselves that they have the right to do anything they wish, but instead will realize that they are the appointed leaders of the people, so they will depend upon the Word of God and will use all their ingenuity for the welfare of their subjects. But how terribly have corruption and destruction been undercutting this proper order, and for such a long time! For rulers judge everything to be legitimate for themselves and do not consider themselves bound by the law of God, nor do they consider his worship to pertain to themselves.

Herein they are terribly mistaken. For when they cast away the fear of God, then they exercise proud and cruel domination over their subjects, and consider them to be no better than beasts. Of course these rulers consider themselves to be far above the rank of ordinary men because of their dominant position, so that they already desire nothing less than divine honors. Yet it is certain that all royal dominion is meant to be ministerial. Indeed, I must add that kings are to be servants and ministers of God. Therefore it behooves them to consider themselves his commissioned legates to the people, who are to administer his affairs faithfully and are to take care of the people. Even though the power of earthly princes be great in this world, still they must realize that they are ministers and servants of God and the people.

But how few princes think seriously about these things! How many relax the reins of self control and indulge their own will and lust! David himself with such outstanding piety and such excellent prophecy, nonetheless did not observe what was prescribed in the law of God. He taught others the law of God, but when he was exalted to a high position himself, he managed to forget the law. For he brought in many wives for himself; he gathered up a great amount of gold and silver; he accumulated many treasures: all of which were prohibited by the very law to which he had publicly demonstrated himself to be utterly bound in no uncertain way.

Thus when we see that dominant positions have such compulsive power as to blind princes themselves, we must realize how great the benefit of liberty is when God pours it out on someone. But the things Samuel mentions here are clearly punishments, because the people repudiated the inestimable benefit of liberty received from God, and requested a king instead of the governor whom God had raised up for them, with whose authority they were already familiar. Accordingly, it was necessary for these people to suffer the punishment for their rashness in not bearing a condition both pleasant and honorable. Therefore Samuel propounds here the various types of disasters and punishments they will undergo for having sought royal domination.

In general, the most powerful princes and monarchs sin in this way. We can compare them to great rivers whose widespread floods devastate the lands and their fruits in a watery grave. Isaiah uses this simile when he reproaches the constant demand by the Israelites for a covenant with the Egyptians or with the Assyrians who were much more powerful than they, with these words: Because this people have rejected the waters of Siloam which flow gently, and have rejoiced in Rezin and in Remeliah's son. (Isa. 8:6) For none of the rivers at Jerusalem were rapid such as those in Egypt and Chaldea, and so the prophecy calls to mind the waters of Siloam, which he blames the people for holding in contempt, and threatens them publicly that water more powerful and greater than of those rivers will cover Judah, flooding and spreading and reaching up to their very necks. Of course this is a totally metaphorical expression, and by it he does not blame the people for their greediness or vain hopes of wishing to obtain rule of the whole world: but rather, he blames them for making a covenant with powerful kings, whom he compares to mighty rivers, by which the Israelites will be submerged rather than uplifted.

This is what commonly happens to many peoples, as experience itself teaches us. Now where princes take in less wealth, and require only a modest amount of tribute and taxes, their subjects overflow with personal riches. But monarchs are like the most rapid rivers which devastate lands far and wide: especially those who wish to rule 'by will rather than reason' have long ago persuaded themselves that everything is legitimate for kings, and so they think it is beneficial for them to have anything they want. Therefore they are attentive only to their own concerns, and govern the republic by personal desire alone, not by counsel and reason. For this reason they fall away from true humility and humanity. They devise a thousand harmful arts each day, since no one in the meantime dares to oppose them or even to utter one word. But very few, indeed scarcely one out of many thousand, has kept humanity in mind, or lowered himself in simplicity and integrity to place the welfare and benefits of his subjects before his own, so that he might cherish his subjects in mutual concord and peace in the fear of God. On the contrary, how zealous they are not only to enlarge their authority and to confirm it more and more, but also to injure and despoil the people who are subject to them by robbery and all sorts of plundering. Naturally their eyes and ears are closed to the calamities and miseries of suffering humanity so that their cries and groans mean nothing to them. The more they hear the groanings of their miserable subjects

against their tyranny, the more out of control and ferocious they become.

We must learn from this what a great gift liberty is, and how kindly God deals with those peoples upon whom it is poured out, where the magistrates are submitted to his laws and undertake nothing by themselves, but govern affairs by reason and counsel, for which they will at length make returns. Therefore, I repeat, great is the benefit of liberty which comes down from God Most High! Yet those who are subjects to the rule of kings and monarchs, and whom God exercises by their tyranny: if these subjects take action against their rulers, or even meditate rebellion, they would seem not only to lack reason and counsel, but to have lost their mind.

Then among other evils of tyranny which Samuel calls to mind, we notice: they will take their fields and vineyards and oliveyards and give them to their own servants. (I Sm. 8:14) This shows us that men by their malice turn good into evil. Now naturally kings cannot legitimately govern and administer the public business without counselors. This is precisely how a tyrant is distinguished from a legitimate prince: a tyrant rules only by his own will and lust, whereas legitimate magistrates rule by counsel and by reason so as to determine how to bring about the greatest public welfare and benefit. Accordingly, functionaries and administrators of princes, who legitimately administer the republic, are his eyes and hands: hands with which his edicts and decrees are carried out; eyes through which they see what is useful and honest. This in fact keeps princes themselves within proper bounds, so that they administer the republic in fairness and justice.

Then Samuel predicts that their goods and wealth will be spoiled by the king and bestowed upon his servants, which is proved more and more by daily experience. (I Sm. 8:15ff) Certainly princes need functionaries and administrators, for how will a very powerful king be able to rule far and wide unless he can entrust the royal business to certain administrators. Nevertheless experience teaches what these official royal administrators are usually like. Once they have begun to gain authority and favor, they make no end of stealing; but like famished beasts they gape at the goods of private persons and are never satisfied. Hence it happens that one who was born in a low place and class, scarcely able to sustain his family with his income for three days, soon is not content with an income that has burgeoned to ten thousand pounds. He seeks to ennoble his family and household by means of important connections. This gives rise to fraud, robbery, and a thousand ways of plundering good citizens, so that these climbers are all the more audacious to the degree they think they have gained more authority and favor with the prince.

Thus you often see those whose annual income scarcely equalled ten thousand pounds, soon possess over one hundred thousand pounds income. How did they pile up such great wealth in such a short time, except from fraud and robbery with which these buzzards keep oppressing the wretched multitude? You even see them rival each other in evil and robberies, for those who are involved in matters of war and hold important offices

make great profit and booty. You see other public officials and similar ministers of court heap up so much wealth in a short time that they procure personal luxuries and feats with such pride and arrogance that they become intolerable to their own friends and acquaintances. On the contrary, men who are really noble can scarcely support their families on a year's income, and if they wish to increase their estates, they are forced to put up with the greatest difficulties and fear of calamity or other troubles. Thus the administrators of princes who ought to help them order public affairs, are fans by whom the fire is stirred up even more. While they ought to guide princes in the direction of humanity and moderation as much as possible, instead they impel them to severity and cruelty, and stir them up to robbery and plundering of their poor subjects. Why? So that by taking part in the plundering they might enrich themselves off the poor.

Moreover, what Samuel warns them of: that their king will get a tithe of their seeds, vines, and oliveyards had not place among the Israelites. For tithes were granted to the tribe of Levi by the Lord. (I Sm. 8: 15) Of course among all peoples from all times kings have been allowed to administer and to collect the tribute and taxes imposed on their people, and therefore there is no place for a fuller consideration of the question of how it is possible for kings to impose taxes on their subjects and how to administer and collect them. Furthermore, there is nothing in the Holy Scriptures about how they are to collect tribute and taxes from the people.

Now tithes may be by nature appropriate to kings and princes, because it has been present from olden times among all people as common and natural law. But the proportion of one tenth had a special place among the Israelites, as we have already said, since the Levites were to receive this amount as their portion and share. When God divided the Land of Canaan by lot to the particular tribes, he gave the Levites no other possession than the tithes which the others yielded them, along with certain pastures that they might feed themselves and their cattle. If therefore these kings put themselves forward as antagonists to God by instituting a new form of tithing, are they not destroyers of all law?

Let us then learn from this that God is showing that men will never do their duty unless they are drawn by some force, and when they have been raised to other ranks of more eminent dignity, they are like wild animals and beasts which no force can tame. Samuel also shows the rashness of the people which brought so much evil on themselves. Previously they were rejoicing in a special privilege: all other requirements, and these tithes were not paid to kings, but to those whom God had chosen from the other tribes, who could then be free to care for his worship. Besides those tithes no other portion was allotted them that they might live with their brethren.

What a great privilege, I repeat, was this! For if several brothers in one family were required to pay a certain sum of money from their annual income and produce to one of their own that he might be able to live, would they have a just reason for complaining about this transaction? And in fact God gave this very privilege to the Israelites, that tithes might be paid to maintain the Levites.

Yes, indeed, he warns them openly that they will be spoiled of their good. For in addition to the tithes instituted by the law of God, the king institutes a tithe of his own tyranny. Thus he takes upon himself such arrogance and such an important spirit, and exercises tyranny with such cruelty that he does not have enough reverence to mind violating the divine law itself because of his zeal for the wealth of private citizens as well as courtiers and officials; nor does he mind snatching away that which God assigned and allotted to the Levites. Hence, he teaches that the tyranny of kings will be great in the future, that they will desire to arrogate to themselves authority and power which are proper to God alone by imposing and requiring taxes. How is this any different from invading the divine authority itself, and is it not a desire to persuade men to consider them no longer to be mere humans, but rather to adore them as having come down from heaven?

Finally Samuel predicts that they are to serve their king. He indicates by these words (which we explained earlier) that it is never legally possible for subjects to rebel against the magistrate even if the magistrate appears to be tyrannical. Furthermore, this proves how blind the people were for paying no attention to these earnest warnings. Rather, they stubbornly stuck to the opinion with which they were first infected: we must have a king like the gentiles.

Now notice how men whom God has given over to themselves and to their own vile deeds are cast down the road of reprobation, and are carried in a perverse direction by their own desire. For not only was the oration of Samuel intended to condemn the people in a serious way, and to show that they deserve to pay such a terrible price for bringing upon themselves such great evil; but also his oration was intended to make them watch out before it actually happened. It was a forewarning to keep them from ensnaring themselves in a trap from which they would be unable to get free; as though he wanted to compell them in these words: O men of Israel, give heed and consider the outcome of your plans. If you shall have a king in accordance with the customs and institutions of the gentiles, your goods will be spoiled; neither you nor your children, nor your cattle, nor your seed will be spared. Will you therefore choose this slavery to your own destruction, and willingly submit your necks to such a yoke?

This demonstrates the great zeal with which Samuel sought the welfare of the people, that he might deter them from their plan and bring them to a better mind from their present destructive plan. But the result he attained is clearly seen when they rose up against Samuel all the more arrogantly and insolently and stubbornly persisted in their desire to have a king. For they had first asked Samuel to place a king over them who would rule them according to the custom and institution of the other nations. And now, even after they have heard God pronouncing such horrible sentence against their rebellion, they still refuse to heed the voice of Samuel, and obstinately cry out: No, but a king shall rule over us! (I Sm. 8:19)

What terrible arrogance is this, I say, so insolently to reject the warnings of God, and to despise his counsel, and to make his authority so small by replying to Samuel: No, but a king shall rule over us! Let

us learn from this that God can in his own just judgment make us blind and let us crash downwards, when we indulge our depraved and foolish desires beyond reason. Therefore we must gain wisdom from the example of others, lest when we are surrounded with difficulties we should rashly relax the reins by turning to our own counsels, as though they rested on a firm foundation and were good.

For it is generally the case that when we reach the stage of impudence where we prefer to follow what our own reason and lust have dictated, we will never be dissuaded from our intention by any amount of reasons, not even if we are gazing upon death itself. Such is the obstinancy of the human mind that it yields to no amount of reasoning, but with greatest arrogance sticks to its own opinion. Therefore it is our responsibility to prevent that just punishment of God which will certainly come upon us if we overindulge our depraved desires and so become thoroughly blinded, and are cast down the road of reprobation.

Just so, what is said here about the Israelites ought to be an example to us, that we might learn, for we are no better than they. This indeed is the outcome of all human plans which rest not on reason, but on impulse alone and on violent desires: immense unhappiness.

I certainly admit that those who incite sedition and disorder often are on solid ground, if the problem is thoroughly investigated. Thus, the sons of Samuel, we are told, had given the elders of the people cause to complain about them because of their avarice and ambition, and cause to take away their authority and to remove them from their office and dignity. But in the meantime they did not proceed carefully, but carried away by their own desires, gave way to depraved counsels. Instead of finding a healthy remedy, they cast themselves into greater difficulties, and ensnared themselves in a trap, so to speak.

We surely see things like this happening. Hence let us make use of this example. Let us learn to cultivate modesty and sobriety, and to undertake no more action nor work for any changes beyond what is legitimate. And let us pray to God to rule us by his own Spirit; not to give us over to our own plans, and not to allow us to slip back from his Word in the slightest matter; but rather may he cause his word to retain its authority over us that we may rejoice in him as our leader.

When the text says that the Israelites rejected the counsel of God, who does not consider this to be insolent rebellion? Who does not tremble with fear? For they held Samuel to be the authentic prophet of God, and acknowledged him as interpreter of his Spirit, and as the one who pointed the people to the commands of God. What great fury, what insanity it was to reject so obstinately the commands of God, and to reply to Samuel: But no, it shall be thus! We must beware all the more diligently then, as I have said, lest we be carried away by our desires, lest we finally be cast by God down the road of reprobation, and willingly rush ourselves down into destruction.

We must now explain those words where the people request to be given a king over themselves, that they might also be like all these nations. (I Sm. 8:20) God had indeed set the Israelites apart from all

other peoples, and had set up among them an order in which the special favor and care and protection of God shone forth. But in truth they wish to be made like those peoples whom God had rejected, and whom he had not chosen to accept as his personal property. Is this not, I ask, petulantly rejecting and repudiating what was the very benefit of God, by which they had already been so enriched?

It is clear from this that once men have turned away from the right way, they make no end of sinning and are carried on to an even worse state, because they create destruction for themselves and are carried away, since they are ruled by the depraved counsels of their own passionate drives. This is the way of all men who fall away from the truth, who indeed at the beginning sin lightly against the truth, and do not at first adulterate the commands of God. But then when they have gone beyond the restraints of reverence, they are carried precipitously into all dishonesty, so that they are not restrained by the cords of the fear of God or of modesty. Since it is this way, we must use protective remedies and measures lest we be unexpectedly overwhelmed. Experience surely teaches that this people rushed to an ever worse condition, and erred more and more from the way of righteousness, and provoked vehemently the wrath of God against themselves from having willingly repudiated the counsel of God.

Then this passage says that Samuel ordered the Israelites to return each one to his own city since the Lord had commanded this after he had told God all the words of the people. (I Sm. 8:22) This shows that Samuel still retained some authority with the people. For we see that Samuel prayed to God, and that he knew both the will of God and of the people. Here the text repeats what was said earlier in order to confirm it all the more, that we might understand that everything that happened depended on the will of God.

Hence it is clear in the first place how all the more inexcusable were the people who refused to yield to the admonition of Samuel, spoken not with human authority, but divine. And therefore it expressly says that Samuel reported to the Lord what he had heard from the people, so we can understand that the changed status of the Israelites was caused by divine providence, when they shamefully obtained a king by such audacity and arrogance, and in fact sacrilege. Yet it is clear that Samuel had retained even at this point some authority with this obstinate and rebellious people, who heard the command he delivered, in which he ordered them to return home to their own city until the time when they would receive the king whom they had requested.

Now what is their obedient return home but another testimony of their reverence which they still held for him and for his authority and integrity to whom they committed themselves. Thus Paul writes in First Timothy that those who carry out their office faithfully, and who minister well, gain for themselves a good rank. (I Tim. 3:13) But even though Paul is speaking there of ministers of the divine word, nevertheless the same can be said of all magistrates and of all who have been promoted to some distinguished position. Paul then teaches that those who are called to public office must conduct themselves with utmost integrity and fairness, and keep their minds on one end: the

glory of God and the welfare of their neighbors. The authority gained in this way is greater than that gained by many threats. Let the authority of Samuel over this seditious people be an example. For, I say, would those who were until now so turbulent, have willingly returned home without having first accomplished their burning desire; unless the authority of Samuel had carried great weight with them. Otherwise they would have argued with him that he was already old, and since he might prevail over the people by his authority, and take thought for his sons, and use his ingenuity for their advancement, and so when the people were silent, he might easily excuse the sins of his sons - particularly after the people were absent - and thereby they would have destroyed their hope.

It seems very likely that they would have argued in these ways, so it is an unexpected and marvelous thing that they obeyed Samuel who sent them home, since earlier they had dared to reply: No, it must be our way, to what the Lord had said. Hence it was unexpected and marvelous that they willingly went home and trustingly committed the whole matter to Samuel. This shows how great was the integrity and sincerity with which Samuel had governed that people during the time God had given him that authority. As terribly obstinate as they were, almost like madmen, nevertheless they agreed to Samuel's words, and trustingly committed the whole matter to him.

Even though they could have been afraid that something wrong might happen, yet they were aware of the faithfulness and integrity of Samuel, and so they very properly show themselves obedient to his command. Let those who hold government posts learn from this to administer public affairs with such fairness and integrity that they may win for themselves such authority that their words might elicit trust, so they may be able to extinguish the fire stirred up by sedition, either by their own presence or by their words, and so to cut short every attempt at sedition or rebellion.

On the other hand, let those who are subjects learn from this that they are the less excusable if they reject the voices of those who are seeking peace, and if they spurn counsels which try to cut off all occasion of quarreling and dissension. For although the Israelites were clearly seditious and like madmen, nevertheless they agreed with Samuel, whose faithfulness, honesty, integrity, and other gifts they recognized very well.

Now what is going to happen to us if we pay no attention to warnings, if we treat contemptuously righteous and honest men, if finally we reject sane and right counsels? Therefore we are obliged, if perhaps we have leaped beyond the limit of reason, to straighten out our thinking lest we willingly rush into evil and destruction. And let that people therefore be an example, who although they acted obstinately against Samuel, nevertheless accepted the command from him to go home, thereby showing that they had not gone so completely overboard in their stubbornness that they could not acknowledge and respect Samuel as the faithful servant of God. Therefore his authority so prevailed over them that they accepted his word to go home.

Let us learn similarly to subject ourselves to God, and if once we slip from the right way, to return to true maturity of mind so that by turning to God we might obtain forgiveness of sins, and never swerve from obedience to him. And above all, we must beware lest we degenerate to the depths of iniquity, and are cast down the road of reprobation. We must indeed face the judgment of God and immediately beseech his forgiveness, that he would supply us the strength each day by which we might march on blamelessly in his fear, until he shall at last take us to himself.

Let us then pray, etc.

(Translated by Douglas Kelly with valuable assistance from Kenneth Quandt of Berkeley, CA)