

1st Samuel Ch 12

Saul has begun well, Israel had wanted a physical king like all the other nations, they had rejected God as their King, and so God gave them what they wanted. And as we've seen, in the beginning he actually started out doing well. He was a genuinely humble kind of guy (seemingly), and in many ways he even typified the Lord. And in chapter 11 the Ammonites came up against the men of Israel in Jabesh-Gilead and Saul rallied up 300,000 men from throughout all of Israel and another 30,000 from the area of Judah and thoroughly smote the Ammonites. Such to the extent that as they were fleeing from Israel not even 2 of them were able to flee together because the slaughter and confusion that came upon them was so great. And so the people said, "Who were those men who'd rejected Saul as king, bring them out here and let's put them to death." and Saul said, "No one is going to die today, because it's the Lord who has accomplished salvation in Israel." So he was humble enough to recognize that the victory that they'd obtained wasn't due to any great military prowess of his own, but rather it was the Lord who granted them victory, and he was wise enough (for now) to admit it.

So chapter 11 closes with Israel really rejoicing over this great victory, offering sacrifices and peace offerings to the Lord, and Israel is really beginning to place stock in Saul as their king. And Samuel knowing that now Israel is going to be looking to Saul, rather than him as their leader, takes the opportunity at a high-point in Saul's life to help him with the transition of him (Samuel) stepping out of public leadership, and Saul stepping into it. Now we realize that Samuel never officially "stepped down" from leading Israel as a judge, but he at the same time he wouldn't allow his shadow to eclipse Saul.

And so once again Samuel exemplifies godliness in his character. In that he's willing to pass from the scene when God raises up another leader. His heart kind of echo's that of John the Baptist's heart towards Jesus when he said, "*He must increase, but I must decrease*" John 3:30. Samuel wouldn't grasp onto a position that God was changing. And that's an important lesson for us to absorb, when God wants to raise someone up and place them into the position that you've been, or I've been so accustomed to serving in, we need to be willing to let go of the reigns and let God do what God wants to do. Samuel stepped aside, and let this transition take place.

Vs1-2

Couple of things to notice here, 1st of all Samuel says in vs 1 "*I have heeded your voice*" Samuel was making it very clear that it wasn't *his* idea to appoint a king over Israel. *This* idea began in the hearts of Israel, not in the heart and mind of God. God allowed it, and directed its execution, but it was the voice of the *people* that prompted it.

2^{ndly} We see here where Samuel's boys were with the general assembly. Samuel says here, "Here's your king, I'm old and gray, and look, my sons are with you." You remember that he was challenged back in ch 8 to remove his boy's from the office of leadership because they were corrupt. They took bribes and perverted judgment based upon the highest bidder.

And it was a painful time in Samuel's life no doubt, having to deal with his sons, remove them from the ministry because they were ungodly. But we see here that he did just that, when he says, "My sons are with you." What that's basically saying is, "Look, in every thing I've done, I've stood blameless before you, even when it comes to dealing with my own family I did what I had to do in order to maintain the integrity of the ministry."

So he's saying, "You see here they are with you, they're not up on the stage here with me anymore."

So he acknowledges *they* blew it, and he removed *them*, but notice the next sentence, he says, "*But I have walked before you from my childhood to this day.*" From His earliest days, he's been among them in blamelessness, integrity, and uprightness of heart. And he's pointing to his own life as a model of how things can be for us, the point being, the reminder being that kids don't have to have a season of rebellion as we've been so cleverly duped into believing in our society. Samuel is pointing out the fact that kids don't *have* to be lost before they get saved. But that it's possible, and should be the norm rather than the exception that godly parents produce, godly children. Now it's true that Samuel's own boys went astray, it's true that many children go astray, and we hope and pray that eventually they return to the Lord, and sometimes that's just the decision that they make. But Samuel is saying, "Listen, kids don't have to go astray before they come around."

Because so often we think that in our Christian culture today, maybe we've seen the experience of some other Christian parent's children, or some other preachers kids (hopefully and prayerfully not mine) take a walk on the wild side (even as Samuel's kids did) but here Samuel is doing some damage control. He's saying, "It doesn't have to be that way, my own life serves as an example of that." "Don't look to my *kids* as an example of the way your kids are going to go, but rather look to *my life* and look at the way *I went*." Samuel's life is to be the standard, who from the time he was a very young child he had a love *for* the Lord, he walked with the Lord, and was used in a wonderful way *by* the Lord.

We shouldn't fall into the trap of just having almost this sense of expectancy that our kids are going to rebel, or take a walk on the wild side to some degree and then hopefully through prayer and time they'll return to the Lord. But rather I think we'd do well to assume, and believe and trust and pray, and even in a sense demand that our children walk with the Lord *all* their days. That they're not going to go astray and get messed up and then hopefully come back around. Now sometimes that happens, but it doesn't need to be that way, Samuel serves as an example of that. And he says in vs 3

Vs 3-5

This is an incredible testimony for any leader, and it just affirms the integrity of Samuel before the people, and he says here, “Hey, if anyone has anything to say about the way I judged this nation, say it now. If I’ve wronged anyone, or received a bribe, even if I’ve somehow done ill towards you with out even knowing it, then speak up and I’ll pay it back.” Samuel didn’t want to leave any unfinished business with the people if they’d felt somehow that he’d mishandled some case. And they all said, “We don’t have anything to say.” They knew that he’d lived his whole life with integrity, again it’s an incredible testimony, Samuel is saying, “I’m innocent of any wrong doing among you throughout the entire course of my ministry.” Which in his case was his whole life, Paul more or less echoed these remarks when he said in Acts 20 when talking to the Ephesian elders, “*Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.*” Acts 20:26-27 He told Timothy, “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*” 2 Tim 4:7 and That’s the type of comment that Samuel’s making here. And they all consented to that fact and Samuel reaffirmed in vs 5 that the Lord would be the witness against them if they reconsidered after that moment because they’d all testified to the fact that they’d found nothing in his hand that ought not be.

And so now that they’ve had a chance to bring an indictment against him and they haven’t, he has an indictment to bring against them. And so in the next Vs’ it’s not so much a history lesson of the nation that Samuel draws to their attention. That’s not the point, it’s not the chronicles of Israel that he’s demonstrating to them, but rather the righteous acts of the Lord throughout their entire history, towards them. He’s reminding them of God’s goodness.

Vs6-7

This word that’s been translated as “stand still” carries with it the idea of “Court is in session” and I like the phrase because the connotation, or implication is, “You’re about to bear witness to what the Lord has done and is doing on your behalf.” It’s the same word that Moses used when during the Exodus, all the nation was in a frantic panic because there was Mts on either side and the Red Sea in front of them and the Egyptian army was closing in fast behind them. And as they were all full of fear, confusion wondering what to do, and blaming Moses for bringing them out there to die, Moses looked out over them and shouted, “*Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today.*” Ex 14:13 and I love that because it has such a calming effect, so often the enemy gets us in such a panic, and we get confused, we’re filled with fear and we think we’re being hung out to dry, we’re all frantic, we’ve got to do something fast. And yet the Lord is in control, and so often the Holy Spirit has to come along and say, “Stand Still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today.” God knows what’s going on in your life, and He’s going to fight your battles for you, you just stand there and watch, you just bear witness to the goodness of the Lord, court is in session.

Vs8-12

Now this event that he’s speaking of here in vs 12 is the most recent event regarding the nation, so what’s he doing? He’s tying together the events from the Exodus to the present day

and saying that he's done nothing that's *bad* to them, and God has been nothing but *good* to them. Whether it be in discipline, or deliverance, God has been good to them and Samuel has done nothing bad to them and yet they're rejecting them both in asking for a king other than the Lord.

Vs13

You see there it is, this wasn't God's man for the job, this was their man, he fit the prototype of their imagination of what a king needed to be. This is what you've wanted (now Saul was standing there listening to this, Samuel was probably pointing at him, I kind of wonder if he felt like retreating again to the baggage, just sort of shrinking away and disappearing.)

But here's the amazing part in it all, this is the "amazing grace" of it, even though they had rejected the Lord, they had rejected God's order, in wanting a king other than God set over them, God was still going to avail Himself to them. Think about that, would you do that? I wouldn't, if everyone wanted to cast me out, be rid of me, I'd say, "Fine, see ya later, hope it all works out for ya, but I'm down the road." But God doesn't do that, the Love of God will never cease to awe me, no matter how I might turn my back on Him, He'll never leave nor forsake me. Notice this, "You've done all this, you've rejected the Lord" but God says, "I'll still be here for ya."

Vs 14

What's the point here? Don't let past mistakes paralyze you in your relationship with the Lord today. Yeah, they should've never asked for a human king, yeah, they should've trusted the Lord and sought to be like the other nations. But they'd failed in both those areas, now they had a king, so Samuel calls them to serve the Lord where they're at today.

How many times we mess up, and we think, "What's the point of going on with this whole Christianity thing?" But the message here is don't sit around agonizing over the *past*, let the godly sorrow work repentance in you, understand you've got your reaping to do with the choices you've made, and get right with the Lord *today*.

I'm not going to expound on them, but this vs has 4 points in it that I want to draw your attention to briefly that are key elements to a healthy walk with the Lord. 3 Of which are positive, 1 of which is negative, #1 "Fear the Lord", or reverence the Lord deeply, know His position in your life, He's God. Prov 14:27 tells us that, "*The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, To turn one away from the snares of death.*" You fear the Lord, and you'll think twice about certain actions and activities that will bring ruin to your life, relationally and spiritually. #2 "Serve Him", Christianity isn't a spectator sport, we're called to *serve* the Lord, if you're busy about the service of the King, you won't be absorbed and consumed with yourself, and your woes, and the poor me's. Get out of your comfort zone and begin to serve the Lord, get involved in the work of the Kingdom. #3 "Obey His voice", which is to say that just because you serve or do things in the name of the Lord that that allows you some certain graces now and again that maybe others don't.

Don't get caught up in the trap of thinking, "Hey, I do *this* or I give *that*, I serve *here* and sacrifice *there*, I'm entitled to a little indulgence now and then." Hey, the bible is real clear, "*To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*" 1 Sam 15:22 Sacrifice apart from obedience means nothing, Jesus said, "*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*" John 14:15 and Then finally (The negative element to a positive walk with Christ) #4 "Do not rebel against the commandment of the Lord", God will not bless a life of rebellion, we spoke Sunday morning about people who slip into this drone of not sensing the Lord, having difficulty in the relationship with the Lord, and often times their so drunk on sin that they're numb to virtually everything else. And so "*The LORD's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.*" Isa 59:1-2 The bible tells us that, "*Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.*" 1 Sam 15:23 and So as we rebel and stick stubbornly to our guns we wonder why the Lord won't bless us, or speak to us, don't rebel against the commandment, or the Word of the Lord. Do these things, follow these guidelines and you'll continue following the Lord, or to understand it another way, you won't lose any ground, you won't stop, or step out of stride with God.

Vs15

What's the point, every generation seems to think they're somehow exempt from the chastening hand of the Lord, "Yeah, God dealt that way with them, but things are different now." Listen, times may change, but the Lord remains the same, Mal 3:6, "*I am the LORD, I do not change*" Heb 13:8 "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*" God doesn't make exceptions to the rule, honor the Lord, and He'll honor you, rebel against Him and His hand will be against you. It's that simple, now His hand of chastening is much different than His hand of Judgment, don't confuse the two, one is to stir repentance, the other is to satisfy Holiness in ending unrighteousness. And what's in view here is the chastening hand of the Lord, even as a father chastens his children, so God will chasten us.

Vs16-17

What's Samuel doing here, well one thing is for certain, he's praying up a storm, but besides that he's demonstrating to the people that God will ratify everything he's just said. God will confirm to the people that He's behind Samuel's exhortation, Samuel isn't just venting on them and giving them an unnecessary reprimand.

God will endorse everything he's just said, and the deal with the wheat harvest comment is that the season of the wheat harvest was the dry season of the year, so calling rain down from heaven would be nothing short of a miracle.

Vs18

What's the point, even though they've rejected God, they shouldn't be deceived God still reigns; God is still on the throne, not Saul.

Vs19

This is interesting, in one respect they've seen their sin, and the awareness of their sin has shed light on a whole bundle of others, and that's good. But they didn't repent, they didn't say, "God forgive us, we want you to be our King once again." They just asked Samuel to pray for them, that God wouldn't kill them. Now Samuel is noted in the scriptures as a man of prayer and they've just seen the effectiveness of his prayers and so they're asking him to stand in the gap for them.

Vs 20-22

Again what's the call, yeah you've done countless things that you shouldn't have, but don't turn aside from following the Lord *today*. Confess you sin to the Lord, and believe Him that He's forgiven you, and move on, *yesterday* your heart may've been as far away from the Lord as the east is from the west, but *today* serve Him with all your heart. Because where else are you going to go? It's only down hill from the Lord; the only things to turn to apart from the Lord are things which cannot profit or deliver, why? Because "they are nothing" underline that in your bible. They are nothing; Peter echoed this when he said to Jesus, "*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*" John 6:68 No one ever said it was easy following Jesus, but no matter how tough it gets, where else are you going to go? The only other option is to turn aside to empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they are nothing.

And God's not going to forsake you, not because you're so lovable, or because you always make the right choices, but for His Great Names sake. Because it's please the Lord to make you His own, underline that as well, it's pleased God to make you His people, don't ask me why, I'm not that pleasing of a person, but I thank God that pleased Him to make me His own. And because of that I can know that He won't give up on me, for His own glory, and His great names sake.

Vs 23

And here we have the revelation of the sin of prayerlessness. If you're not praying for your brothers and sisters, if you're not praying for your family, if you're not praying for the things that God has committed to your trust and seeking His heart and His mind regarding your life, you're in sin. And you need to bear fruits worthy of repentance in beginning to establish the habit and the discipline of consistent prayer, Paul would say, "*Pray without ceasing*" 1 Thess 5:17 You see the people called upon Samuel to *start* praying for them, Samuel is saying, "What do you mean 'start', I've never stopped, it would be a sin for me to cease." "You may've rejected me, but I'm still praying for you." Remember Ps 109: "*They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, And fought against me without a cause. In return for my love they are my accusers, But I give myself to prayer.*" Ps 109:3-4

And not only will Samuel continue to pray for them, but he will teach them the good and the right way. What do we see here, the intricate, inseparable union between prayer and the word of God. But notice very clearly the priority, the most effective thing we can do is pray, the teaching of the word is to take it's place *under* prayer.

You remember the story of Moses and Joshua, how as long as Moses held up his arms, Joshua would be effective in the battle with his sword, but as soon as Moses' arms would begin to drop, Joshua would be driven back.

Again the picture is the connection between prayer and the Word of God. What's the point, when it comes to the effectiveness of the Word of God, prayer takes priority. The pointedness, the purpose, the precision, and the power of Joshua's sword, was all directly related to Moses' prayer, with out Moses prayer, Joshua's sword lacked the necessary power and precision to fulfill it's purpose in driving back the enemy and beating back the Amalekites. W/out exception you will find that every man or woman of God that's been used in mighty ways by God, they've all been people of prayer, prayer is so important.

Vs 24

We don't serve the Lord so He'll do great things for us; we serve Him because He's already done great things for us in giving us His Son.

Vs25