

1 Samuel 12 — Samuel's Farewell Address

April 25, 2022

Good morning CrossWinds! If you are new, my name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. For the last two weeks, we took a break from our studies in 1 Samuel to focus first on Palm Sunday and then the resurrection of Jesus. If you weren't here, it was a great Easter service. I am grateful for the amazing team of people who worked hard on both campuses to pull off last week's services. The worship team on both campuses did a great job as well as ushers, greeters, and many others. Tyler — our AVL guy — worked extra hard clearing the stage, taking down the old projectors and screens and setting up one new projector and screen that we are demoing. It was a lot of work.

Speaking of the Spencer campus, for Easter, they had an Easter family carnival for the kids. Since we own the north side of the north mall, we have the right to use the main common area of the



mall. That is where they set up games and had lots of family fun. It was a great way of reaching and serving the community.

While I am on the topic of the Spencer campus, I should give you a quick update on construction on the new Spencer campus. Demolition work is done. We are putting up the walls and making great progress. Most of the office area is framed in. We started framing in the auditorium this week. We are still working Tuesday nights and Saturday mornings. We would love to have you if you can make it.

As a pastor, while it is exciting to see all the physical work taking place on both campuses, even more exciting is the good work taking place in the lives of so many in the CrossWinds family.



There is a men's Bible study taking place Wednesday mornings where the men are keeping their fingers in the text as they study the book of James. AWANA is wrapping up. They did a great job this year as they helped the kids understand the good news of Jesus. Pastor Kris has done a great job with the youth group. The deacons work hard caring for people in need and helping with benevolence. As one of your pastors, it is great seeing God at work in your lives. It is a privilege to see so many of you helping one another practically and in your walk with Jesus. It is great seeing each of you work to reach our community with Jesus.

Let's pray and then get into our study.

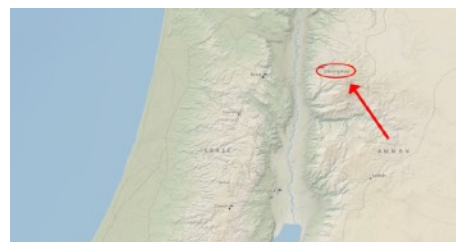
Heavenly Father, thank you for all the good work you are doing in the CrossWinds family and through the CrossWinds family on both campuses. Thank you that you have not designed us to be alone. Thank you for giving us spiritual gifts to serve one another and build up one another in the church. At CrossWinds, help us to fall more deeply in love with Jesus together than we ever could on our own. Amen.

When we left off in 1 Samuel, the people came up with a really bad idea. In 1 Samuel 8, they asked Samuel for a king so they could be like the other nations. Prior to this, God was their king. They rejected God as their king and wanted to replace God with a human king. The people of God wanted to be protected by a king and a human army they could see, rather than a God they needed to trust.

God decided to grant their request. He gave them a king. God gave them the kind of king they wanted. He fit all the optical qualifications. His name was Saul. He was tall, good-looking, and young. That was the kind of king the people wanted. While Saul looked good on the outside, it quickly became apparent he had some major character flaws on the inside. One of his glaring problems was that he was a passive leader. For example, even though he knew he was already privately anointed as king by Samuel, when it came time for his public anointing as king, he was nowhere to be found. He was hiding in the baggage. That isn't a strong vote of confidence for his leadership.

Before that, when Saul was privately anointed as king and God sent the Holy Spirit on Saul in powerful ways so he experienced all kinds of supernatural signs, he didn't do what God told him to do even though he clearly knew God was with him. God told Saul to attack the garrison of Philistines at Gibeah, but he didn't do anything about it. When we finished 1 Samuel 10, even though everyone knew Saul was anointed as king, nobody respected him as the king. He was a joke. After being anointed king, he simply went back to the family farm and plowed the field. Even the army God sent back with Saul slowly evaporated around him because he did nothing. When we finished 1 Samuel 10, we were wondering if Saul would ever rise to his appointed task and lead the nation.

All that changed in 1 Samuel 11 with a man named Nahash. He was the king of the Ammonites. He ruled a portion of the area east of the Jordan River. He rose up and began



conquering cities around him. He had a nasty way of branding the people he conquered. He gouged out everyone's right eye. When we picked up the story in 1 Samuel 11, Nahash had already conquered all the cities east of the Jordan except one. The only city left was Jabesh-gilead. He surrounded the city. The people of the city sent to the rest of Israel a desperate call for help.

When the messengers from Jabesh-gilead came to Gibeah, where Saul lived, the news of the impending doom and eye-gouging of the city unless it was rescued was especially hard to hear. As we learned earlier in our study, there was a family connection between Gibeah and the people of Jabesh-gilead. Most of the wives of men of Gibeah had come from Jabesh-gilead. The impending demise of Jabesh-gilead and the gouging out of its citizens' eyes was an attack on family. This is what finally moved Saul into action.

The Holy Spirit came on Saul, and he rallied the nation. The Israelites surrounded Nahash and destroyed his army. When we left off the story, the people went to Gilgal to renew the kingdom. They were going to reaffirm Saul as the nation's king.

1 Samuel 12, which we are studying today, contains one of the speeches Samuel gave to the people while at Gilgal. It has some incredibly important lessons in it on how God's grace worked in the lives of the people of Israel and how it works in our lives today. Let's read the text and dive into our study.

And Samuel said to all Israel, "Behold, I have obeyed your voice in all that you have said to me and have made a king over you. And now, behold, the king walks before you, and I am old and gray; and behold, my sons are with you. I have walked before you from my youth until this day. Here I am; testify against me before the Lord and before his anointed. Whose ox have I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or

from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? Testify against me and I will restore it to you.” They said, “You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man’s hand.” And he said to them, “The Lord is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand.” And they said, “He is witness.” And Samuel said to the people, “The Lord is witness, who appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. Now therefore stand still that I may plead with you before the Lord concerning all the righteous deeds of the Lord that he performed for you and for your fathers. When Jacob went into Egypt, and the Egyptians oppressed them, then your fathers cried out to the Lord and the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place. But they forgot the Lord their God. And he sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab. And they fought against them. And they cried out to the Lord and said, ‘We have sinned, because we have forsaken the Lord and have served the Baals and the Ashtaroath. But now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, that we may serve you.’ And the Lord sent Jerubbaal and Barak and Jephthah and Samuel and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you lived in safety. And when you saw that Nahash the king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, ‘No, but a king shall reign over us,’ when the Lord your God was your king. And now behold the king whom you have chosen, for whom you have asked; behold, the Lord has set a king over you. If you will fear the Lord and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God, it will be well. But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you and your king. Now therefore stand still and see this great thing that the Lord will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call upon the Lord, that he may send thunder and rain. And you shall know and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking for yourselves a king.” So Samuel called upon the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day, and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. And all the people said to Samuel, “Pray for your servants to the Lord your God, that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins this evil, to ask for ourselves a king.” And Samuel said to the people, “Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart. And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty. For the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name’s sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself. Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way. Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king.” 1 Samuel 12:1–25 (ESV)

The Situation

Samuel began by summing up the situation.

And Samuel said to all Israel, "Behold, I have obeyed your voice in all that you have said to me and have made a king over you." 1 Samuel 12:1 (ESV)

Samuel considered the people's request for a king to be an insult to his leadership. It was also an insult to God's leadership. In earlier chapters, you will remember that Samuel took the time to warn the people of what would happen if they had a human king instead of God as their king. A human king would constantly take from them. A human king would end up enslaving them. A human king would tax them heavily. Samuel warned them that a human king would always take more from them than he would give to them. If they kept God as their king, it would never be that way. The people wouldn't listen. They insisted on having a human king. Samuel did his best to fulfill their request. God gave them the king they wanted.

And now, behold, the king walks before you, and I am old and gray; and behold, my sons are with you... 1 Samuel 12:2a (ESV)

Samuel was making a contrast. "Here is the king you wanted. He is tall, good-looking, strong, and young. Here I am. I am old, gray, and crusty." It is as though Israel's future and her past were represented by these two men. It was not difficult to see which was more attractive. Samuel was as old as dirt. Saul looked like a male model in a magazine. Which one would you rather have as your leader?

Saul, the new king, had just won an amazing victory over the Ammonites. Samuel looked like he had one foot in the grave. It looked like it was time to

replace the old order of Samuel and his leadership with something better.

Samuel said, "Not so fast. Looks can be deceiving."

The Righteousness of the Old Order

Samuel told the people, "Before you celebrate too fast because you have a new king and he won a battle, let's take a look at what you had before you asked for a king." Was there anything wrong with it? First, Samuel looked at himself as a leader.

...I have walked before you from my youth until this day. 1 Samuel 12:2b (ESV)

Samuel said he walked, which means lived, in front of them for a long time. Samuel began serving the people as a youth when he was given to Eli to serve at the tent in Shiloh as soon as Samuel was weaned. He had a long life of serving the nation. Now he was old and gray. Since they knew him so well, he asked them a question.

Here I am; testify against me before the LORD and before his anointed... 1 Samuel 12:3a (ESV)

Samuel knew that people tend to resent and distrust someone who is given authority over others because people in positions of authority tend to misuse their power. We see that all the time in the news. We hear about people who are corrupt in positions of authority. They don't serve people. They push their own agendas. They manipulate.

Samuel invited the people to bring accusations against him before the Lord and before his anointed, which was Saul. He said, "Guys, take a free shot on me. I have served you since I was weaned. Now I am now old and gray. Let

me know if there was anything I did wrong or a way I misused my power or abused my authority." Samuel got pretty specific.

“...Whose ox have I taken? Or whose donkey have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? Testify against me and I will restore it to you.” 1 Samuel 12:3b (ESV)

"Whose stuff have I stolen? Have I used my position as leader over the nation to steal from the nation? Whom have I defrauded? Have I ever used my position for coercion or manipulation? Whom have I oppressed? Have I ever taken a bribe to blind my eyes to justice? If there is anything I have done like this, let me know and I will restore it."

I love the answer of the people.

They said, “You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man’s hand.” 1 Samuel 12:4 (ESV)

This is amazing. After a lifetime of leading people, nobody in the nation was aware of any way Samuel lacked integrity. Nobody in the nation was aware of any way he misused his position of authority over the nation. That is amazing. That is rock-solid leadership integrity. Could you imagine what it would be like for the media today if Samuel was a modern-day political leader? The media would go out of business. They wouldn’t be able find anything bad to say about him! This is amazing.

When I read this passage in my Bible years ago, I wrote down in the margin, “This is the kind of pastor I want to be when I retire.” I want to be able to retire like Samuel and know there are no skeletons in my closet. There is no corruption I hid. If someone wants to scour my life for dirt, I have nothing to worry

about because there is nothing to find. Integrity is incredibly valuable because it is in short supply today.

I am sure I am not the only one wanting to live my life with the character and integrity of Samuel. I am sure all of us want to live that way. We want to finish well without regrets. Maybe this is your sermon application this morning. As I talk about the importance of integrity and finishing well, the Holy Spirit is bringing to mind a broken relationship that you need to take the initiative to repair. Maybe the Holy Spirit is bringing to mind an area of your life where there was less-than-admirable integrity. If so, today is the day. Now is the time to decide to do the hard work of making it right. All of us want to be able to say with Samuel, "Is there any way I lived my life without integrity?" May we then have the people around us tell us we have always done the hard work of making things right and living as a man or woman of character.

While we are considering Samuel's rare character, it is worth noting that the biblical picture of a good leader is someone who is like Samuel. That is someone who sees himself as nothing more than a servant of the people. He does not use their position to manipulate. When you are looking for good church leaders, you are looking for someone who joyfully serves others.

But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. Luke 22:26 (ESV)

A good leader in the church is a humble servant.

And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil... 2 Timothy 2:24 (ESV)

Again, a leader in the church is described as a servant.

...not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. 1 Peter 5:3 (ESV)

Peter said leaders in the church are not to be domineering over others but should live their lives in such a way that they set an example for the rest of the church to follow. Their lives can be imitated.

Let's return to the text.

And he said to them, "The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand." 1 Samuel 12:5a (ESV)

In Samuel's speech, the first point he made was when the people insisted on a king, they couldn't say it was because Samuel was failing them as a leader. There was nothing wrong with the old style of leadership.

Now Samuel moved to his second point. Even more faithful than Samuel's leadership over the nation was God's leadership. In spite of God's incredible faithfulness to them, the people turned their backs on God and wanted a human king instead of God as their king.

And Samuel said to the people, "The LORD is witness, who appointed Moses and Aaron and brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt." 1 Samuel 12:6 (ESV)

To demonstrate just how faithful God was to them, Samuel gave a little history lesson, starting with the Exodus. God rescued their forefathers who were slaves in Egypt. "Remember when your forefathers were forced to drown all their male children in the Nile? Remember when they were forced to make bricks without straw? God raised up Moses and Aaron to lead the nation out of terrible oppression. Of course, Moses and Aaron were not perfect leaders, but in the

matter of rescuing the people from Egypt, it would be difficult to find fault with them."

Now therefore stand still that I may plead with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous deeds of the LORD that he performed for you and for your fathers. 1 Samuel 12:7 (ESV)

This was Samuel giving his little history lesson of God's faithfulness to them in the past.

When Jacob went into Egypt, and the Egyptians oppressed them, then your fathers cried out to the LORD and the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place. 1 Samuel 12:8 (ESV)

This covered the period of time from Genesis to Joshua. God faithfully saved his people with the plagues in Egypt. He parted the Red Sea. He fed them manna in the wilderness. He gave them water from a rock. He knocked down the walls of Jericho when they came into the Promised Land. God faithfully fought for them, protected them, and cared for them for the last 200-300 years!

That doesn't mean having God as the king over his people was always pleasant. There were times when God's people rebelled. They forgot about him. They walked away from him. In those seasons, God let the enemies of his people conquer his people. When God's people suffered, they repented. As soon as his people repented and sought him, God always came to their rescue. So even when God allowed suffering into the lives of his people, it was a good thing. The suffering was designed to bring them to repentance, to bring them back to God when they wandered away from God.

But they forgot the LORD their God. And he sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab. And they fought against them. 1 Samuel 12:9 (ESV)

God's people had a great history of God saving them in the past. If they faithfully walked with God, God always saved them. If God didn't save them, it is because there was an issue of sin, an issue where repentance was needed. Here came Nahash wreaking optical destruction. Instead of crying out to God for help and examining their lives for places where they need to repent, the Israelites immediately demanded a human king to save them like the other nations because they no longer trusted God as their king, even though God had never let them down.

Here is a great application for us. We are no different from the Israelites. When we face a crisis, it is easy to immediately go after the solutions we see in the world around us. Instead of turning to the God who loves us and delivers us it is easy to just look to a completely worldly solution that we come up with of our own strength.

Look back on your life. So many times we have come to the bottom of ourselves, and in desperation, prayed to God for rescue. In those times, he comes to our aide. Why is it we don't start with God instead of our own strength? Why is it we prefer to trust our own strength and worldly ideas instead of God? In that way, it is easy for us to be just like the Israelites.

And they cried out to the LORD and said, 'We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD and have served the Baals and the Ashtaroth. But now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, that we may serve you.' And the LORD sent Jerubbaal and Barak and Jephthah and Samuel and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you lived in safety. 1 Samuel 12:10–11 (ESV)

Samuel pointed out that every time the people sinned, they suffered. Every time they repented and called out to God, God sent them a deliverer to

rescue them. He named off a few of those judges. God had always been a faithful king over the nation. He always rescued his people when they called to him. Whenever he let them suffer, it was to bring them to repentance and back into a right relationship with him.

The Foolishness of the New Order

And when you saw that Nahash the king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' when the Lord your God was your king. And now behold the king whom you have chosen, for whom you have asked; behold, the Lord has set a king over you. 1 Samuel 12:12–13 (ESV)

Here is a new piece of information. Nahash's threat and his love for taking people's right eyes were only introduced to us in 1 Samuel 11. It seems he was busy conquering cities and taking eyes as far back as 1 Samuel 8. Remember, he conquered all of the cities east of the Jordan River. Jabesh-gilead was the last city to conquer.

Now we see that it was Nahash's threat that motivated the elders' demand for a king. The Philistine problem in the west was under control. God thundered against the Philistines 20 years before and kept them in check, but the new danger from the Ammonites in the east put the elders of Israel in a panic. The elders didn't turn to God to protect them. Instead, they wanted a king like Nahash to defend them from Nahash. They no longer trusted in God as their king.

Samuel said, "Think about what you have done and what you asked for. Did you forget all the good deeds God has done for you? Manna from heaven, plagues on Egypt, crossing the Red Sea on dry ground, knocking down the walls of Jericho, even thundering against the Philistines only 20 years ago." The Israelites forgot all the good things God had done. They gave up on God so they

could have a human king. "Now that you have asked for a king, can't you see the foolishness of what you have done? Yes, Saul is tall. Yes, he is good-looking. Yes, he is young. Yes, he just won the battle against Nahash, but he is not and will never be even close to being the Lord! What kind of fool would exchange the supernatural protection of God as their king for a mere human being as king? What kind of insanity does it take to put more trust in a human being for your future than in God? I don't care how tall and impressive Saul looks, he is and never will be like your God."

While the people were celebrating their choice of Saul as their king, Samuel was trying to help the people understand the stupidity and wickedness of their decision to reject God as their king.

What was Israel to do with this new king?

The Ultimatum

If you will fear the LORD and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well. 1 Samuel 12:14 (ESV)

The only future for this new arrangement would be if the king and the people feared, served, and obeyed the Lord. If Saul and the people both served the Lord, things would be OK. If both Saul and the people followed the Lord, the earlier rejection of God would be reversed. It would be forgiven. In other words, the people needed to repent of their sin to reject God as king. If they repented, God would forgive them of that great sin and make the new arrangement work.

If either the people or the king failed to follow the Lord, the end would be disaster.

But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you and your king. 1 Samuel 12:15 (ESV)

The choice was simple. The only way forward was for the people and Saul, their new human king, to submit to God and follow him. If they don't go there, they would be destroyed.

There is a great application for us in these verses. Samuel told the people that even though the people of God sinned by asking for King Saul, even though Saul's kingship was a rejection of God and offensive to God, if they and Saul would humble themselves before God and be faithful to him, then God would forgive them and would be gracious to them. He would make the new arrangement work. He would bless the king and his people. If they didn't do this, God would fight against them.

This principle holds true for us. What happens when we find we have made a bad decision or realized we have fallen into sin and are at odds with God? The Bible teaches us the right response is to humble ourselves right where we are, confess our sins, trust in the Lord, and recommit ourselves to new obedience and to following his Word. If we do that, God is ready to forgive, even if we made a choice that has lasting consequences we cannot change!

Sometimes a Christian will find he or she has made an unwise decision and accepted a job he or she shouldn't have accepted. This person cannot go back now. Sometimes people will be in rebellion against God or drifted away from God, like the Israelites and now they realize they are in the wrong college or have married an ungodly spouse. They cannot go back and change their sinful decision. They are stuck with the consequences of their sinful decision. Here is

the comfort. God does not abandon us. When we turn to the Lord right where we are, humble ourselves before him, and begin walking in faithfulness, we can be certain that even as we face the difficulties and suffering of our sinful choice, God will show his favor to us in those times and begin using us for his good purposes.

This is the same situation the Israelites found themselves in. The reason they had a king is that they foolishly rejected God as king. It was a really bad decision. God was so kind. If they and their king would just begin following him right where they found themselves, God would make this less-than-the-best arrangement work.

This brings us to another application. There is no problem where Christians cannot be blessed by God's gracious help if they repent of their sin, obey God, and seek him. Confession, repentance of our sin to God, obeying God's Word and will, and seeking to walk with God is the all-purpose solution to every problem we face. It always works because God is always incredibly gracious and ready to receive us when we repent of our sin and call out to him.

As the Israelites were considering the choice in front of them, God gave them a visual aide. Sometimes visual aides communicate better than words.

“Now therefore stand still and see this great thing that the LORD will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call upon the LORD, that he may send thunder and rain. And you shall know and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking for yourselves a king.” 1 Samuel 12:16–17 (ESV)

This miracle may not sound impressive, like the Israelites crossing the Red Sea on dry ground, but it is impressive nonetheless. The wheat harvest was in early summer. It was during the dry season when no rain fell. To show the people the amount of power God has at his fingertips and how deeply upset God

was with their decision to reject him for a human king, Samuel had God show his displeasure through the weather.

Think about this. The people were choosing a human king who could not control the weather and rejecting God, who can instantly control the weather, as their king. I think they made a bad choice.

So Samuel called upon the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day, and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. 1 Samuel 12:18 (ESV)

Samuel prayed, and it rained that day in the dry season. This is like getting snow in Miami. Interestingly, the Hebrew words translated as “thunder” and “rain” only appear together in one other passage in the Bible --- Exodus 9, which tells us how God used thunder and rain to destroy the crops of the Egyptians as a plague.

The point is that this wasn't a little sprinkle of rain. It was a torrential downpour with intense lighting. It was crazy scary weather. It seriously freaked people out. The response of the people was to greatly fear both Samuel and the Lord. This visual aid of the crazy storm in the dry season helped the people understand how displeasing it was to God when they rejected him and asked for a human king.

What were they to do now that they finally understood the greatness of the sin of rejecting God?

Repentance

And all the people said to Samuel, “Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins this evil, to ask for ourselves a king.” 1 Samuel 12:19 (ESV)

Finally, the people saw their sin. Finally, they realized how wicked it was to ask for a king and to reject God as their king. They realized they were no different from their ancestors. In truth, they were worse than their ancestors! Their ancestors wandered away from God and at least repented and came back. They completely rejected God as their king and wanted a human king. Now they were stuck with the consequences of their choice. They finally saw their sin and were repenting.

The Renewal

And Samuel said to the people, "Do not be afraid; you have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart." 1 Samuel 12:20 (ESV)

What did God do with the people when they finally saw the ugliness of their sin? I love this. God didn't smash their faces in the mud. He didn't chain them to their sin. He told them "Don't be afraid. You have done evil but there is still hope. There is still a future. Don't go back and wallow in your guilt. Don't keep reliving your tragic mistake. Don't make yourself miserable by bathing your mind in reliving the memory of your past. Don't keep hitting the replay button. Go forward with repentance, simple faith, and trust in God."

That is not something just the Israelites needed to hear. It is also something we need to hear. When we finally see the ugliness of our sin and are calling out to God to repent of our sin, God doesn't want us to live in shame and self-hatred. He wants us to move on. He wants us to move forward trusting in God's grace and forgiveness in our lives.

And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty. 1 Samuel 12:21 (ESV)

God told them to not waste their time on worthless things. Stop reliving their past. Stop holding onto their shame. None of those things could deliver them. None of those things could save them. Now that you see the ugliness of your sin and you are repenting of your sin, run hard after God because he is the only one who can deliver you of your sin. He is the only one who can profit you and help you. Move forward loving God. Move forward and pursue Jesus!

For the LORD will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the LORD to make you a people for himself. 1 Samuel 12:22 (ESV)

I love this verse. Samuel told them that they should know for sure that while they turned their back on God, God did not turn his back on them. They may have been unfaithful to God but God was not and would not be unfaithful to them. No matter how they have failed God, God would not fail them. His hands are open wide.

Isn't this also what we need to hear? After we are filled with guilt and shame for our sin, we begin to wonder if God can still love us after all we have done to disappoint him with our sin. Hear these words again: Even when we turn our backs on God, he will not turn his back on us. Even when we are unfaithful to God, he is not unfaithful to us. His arms are open wide and inviting us to come home.

Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you, and I will instruct you in the good and the right way. 1 Samuel 12:23 (ESV)

Just as God did not turn his back on the people in spite of their sin and how deeply God was hurt, in the same way, Samuel also did not turn his back on the people in spite of their rejection of him. Even though Saul instead of Samuel

was the new leader of the nation, Samuel still prayed for the people. He still instructed the people. Even though they rejected him, he did not reject them.

Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you. 1 Samuel 12:24 (ESV)

Samuel said the best way for the Israelites to stay on the right path with God was to keep remembering their past, to consider these things, to think about these things, to remember God's faithfulness to their ancestors when they faced a time of crisis. Every time they encountered trouble, God came to their rescue. Remember God's amazing grace in the face of sin. Even when God's people turned their backs on him for a human king instead of God as their king, God was so kind. If they would but follow him, he offered to forgive them and move forward. Remembering God's amazing love and faithfulness in the past was the only way the Israelites were and we will be able to walk faithfully with God in the future.

Applications

The applications in this chapter are a little different than the applications I have given you in the past. The applications of this chapter are like an umbrella over this chapter. They are all about God's amazing grace and how it works.

- 1. When we rebel against God, even in a big way, God offers forgiveness and a fresh start when we repent of our sin, ask him to forgive our sin through Jesus and make choices in obedience to God's Word.** When we realize we have sinned in a big way, it is easy to wallow in our guilt. It is easy to go down the path of self-hatred. It is easy to get caught in shame and self-loathing. It is easy to tell ourselves forever that we will be abysmal failures

forever. That is not true! God loves us. He is incredibly gracious to us. No matter what we have done, even if it is as horrid as rejecting God as king and demanding a human being as king instead of him, if we repent and call out to God, God will forgive us. There is still a future for us! God is that good!

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 (ESV)

- 2. God's grace shows us our sin. It doesn't leave us ignorant of our sin. It is only when God's grace shows us our sin that we can finally repent and seek God's grace for our sin.** Up to this point, the people of Israel were oblivious to the seriousness of the sin of rejecting God and asking for a human king. After the victory over Nahash, they were ready to party with Saul. God is so gracious. Even though it was a hard thing to hear, God spoke to them the truth about what they had done. God gave the visual aide of crazy weather to help them understand his displeasure with their decision. All of that was hard, but it was God's grace. It is only when you know you are sick that you can seek a cure. It is only when you see your sin that you can repent and seek a right relationship with God. So often we talk about God's grace to us in our lives just being forgiveness of sin. God's grace is also knowledge of sin so we can repent. One of the ways God showed me his grace was by giving me Cindy as my wife. When we married, I didn't see a lot of sin in my life. She began to gently point out areas of selfishness, anger, and areas where I was not handling myself well. Those were not comfortable conversations but they were good conversations. They were God's grace showing me sin in my life.

3. The last way we see God's grace in action is he takes our sinful choices and reconfigures them, finding a way to bring good out of them when we repent and obey him. God's people demanding a king was a sinful choice. They rejected God. Yet God took their sinful choice that they could not change and used it for good. God eventually brought David as king and then David's greater son Jesus into the world. Jesus is the king we need. Jesus is the king who came to save us. The sinful choice of the people for a human king became the very tool God used to send his son Jesus to be the king we needed to save us from our sin. God is so good. He has a way of taking the sinful choices we cannot change and, when we repent of our sin and trust in him, taking those broken pieces of our lives and repurposing them for his glory and our good. For that reason, no matter what we have done, we do not need to lose hope, because of God's amazing grace. When you came in this morning, I don't know what sinful choice that you cannot change is plaguing your life and haunting your mind. Know for sure that if God could repurpose the sinful choice of his people rejecting him for a human king and use that sin to be the very means by which he would save us from our sin, know for sure that whatever sinful choice you have made in your past it can be repurposed and used by God for your good and his glory, if you would just repent of it and cast all of your hope on our savior. For that reason, we never lose hope. We have a great and amazingly gracious God.



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