Samuel’s Farewell Sermon
1 Samuel 12:1-25

Introduction

The nation had rejected the kingship of Jehovah and the leadership of Samuel. Samuel is now transferring power to the new regime. I suspect Samuel may have been disappointed; I suspect he had hoped that one of his son’s would follow in his father’s footsteps. The twelve tribes had been under the authority of judges for some 500 years.

The chapter deals with a leader’s integrity and a nation’s iniquity (see Wiersbe TBEC Old Testament History; pp.233-234). We are also reminded there are two things; two essentials; two necessities as we walk through life; (1) repentance before God and (2) faithful service to God. One of the great privileges we have as Christians is the knowledge that we are chosen, adopted, accepted in Christ. The unbeliever rejects God and lives selfishly and sinfully.

The Character Of The Minister

1 Samuel 12:1 (NKJV) Now Samuel said to all Israel: Indeed I have heeded your voice in all that you said to me, and have made a king over you.

A leader listens--even when he hears things that are difficult to accept.

1 Samuel 12:2 (NKJV) And now here is the king, walking before you; and I am old and grayheaded, and look, my sons are with you. I have walked before you from my childhood to this day.

Samuel has listened and selected Saul over his own sons. Samuel is old--but his ministry is not quite done. When you are young it makes perfect sense to want the old guy to move on. Then one morning you wake up--and your hair is grey--and you are the old guy.

One of the great challenges of the older minister is to be able to finish well. I hope and pray--in the closing years of my ministry I will not be ashamed or afraid.

Wouldn’t it be great to be able to say with Jesus; “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do” (John 17:4 NKJV).

1 Samuel 12:3 (NKJV) Here I am. Witness against me before the Lord and before His anointed: Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I received any bribe with which to blind my eyes? I will restore it to you.

Samuel reminds the people of his own personal integrity. How many government business and church leaders have the guts to make the same speech?
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Many years later another prophet would stand before the people and say; “Which of you convicts me of sin?” (John 8:46 NKJV).

Samuel was a man of integrity; Saul would eventually turn out to be a man of hypocrisy, duplicity, and animosity.

1 Samuel 12:4 (NKJV) And they said, You have not cheated us or oppressed us, nor have you taken anything from any mans hand.

The people declared Samuel was innocent of all wrong doing. He had lived a life of personal and public faithfulness.

1 Samuel 12:5 (NKJV) Then 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 answered, He is witness.

Samuel as leader and servant has exercised integrity and built a reputation of credibility. Without integrity and credibility it is very difficult for people to listen to your analysis of their situation. Think for a moment what Saul must have thought; what an exciting testimony a life well lived for the Lord.

But Samuel will do just that--he will begin with a little historical review.

The Content Of The Speech

1 Samuel 12:6 (NKJV) Then Samuel said to the people, It is the Lord who raised up Moses and Aaron, and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt.

Moses and Aaron were men--selected--appointed by God and not by human beings. There was not a popular election by the people to select Moses as Savior and Deliverer of the people.

1 Samuel 12:7 (NKJV) Now therefore, stand still, that I may reason with you before the Lord concerning all the righteous acts of the Lord which He did to you and your fathers:

Samuel cries “stand still, that I may reason with you before the Lord”. We may be hearing the remnant of the ancient court; “stand still” carries with it the idea “Court is now in session” and “reason” means “to decide a case of litigation” (Wiersbe; p.234).

Like a lawyer pleading his case--Samuel is going to present evidence for the people to consider. The goal of Samuel was to present compelling reasons to prove to the people that God had dealt with them justly and righteously and fairly; God was righteous and faithful in all His dealings with His people.
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The Jews however were faithless, rebellious, disobedient. The Lord had made covenants with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and Moses. The Lord had not established a covenant with all of the nations or some of the nations but one nation. Israel’s obedience to that covenant made possible the blessings of God for their people and for their nation. The blessings included living in the promised land, protection from enemies; fruitful fields, flocks, herds, families. If the people failed to obey the Lord would take away their blessings (see Deut. 28-30 and Lev. 26) and every Jew knew this--but for some inexplicable reason the roller coaster ride of disobedience was attended in almost every generation.

1 Samuel 12:8 (NKJV) When Jacob had gone into Egypt, and your fathers cried out to the Lord, then the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place.

1 Samuel 12:9 (NKJV) And when they forgot the Lord their God, He sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of Hazor, into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab; and they fought against them.

1 Samuel 12:10 (NKJV) Then they cried out to the Lord, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the Lord and served the Baals and Ashtoreths; but now deliver us from the hand of our enemies, and we will serve You.

Have you ever cried out to the Lord because of your sin? In Psalm 107 there is a series of stanzas for those who cry out to the Lord; people who have lost their way; people who feel like an envelope of darkness surrounds them; people trapped in rebellion; even lost at sea. Each stanza ends with the phrase; “Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble” (vv.6, 13, 19,28).

The message is clear--no person--no matter how hurt, how oppressed, how troubled, can and should cry out to the Lord. For those who perpetuate injustice, for those who oppress the poor, know that God hears the cries of the wounded and the needy.

1 Samuel 12:11 (NKJV) And the Lord sent Jerubbaal, Bedan, Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side; and you dwelt in safety.

Jerubbaal (let Baal contend for Himself) is Gideon and Bedan is probably Barak. Samuel includes himself because he is the last of the Judges.

The Lord was faithful and just and righteous. God worked and moved and saved and delivered those who turned to Him for salvation. Millions have experienced the freedom and forgiveness found in the Lord Jesus Christ; the bondage of sin removed; the freedom from drug addiction, alcohol addiction, pornography, immorality, gluttony, greed, covetousness, filthy language, sexual perversion, false worship, lazy behavior, hatred, hostility, depression.
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The things that enslave us--are too numerous to list--but we have hope; we can experience deliverance from the things that bind and enslave us. We have deliverance in the gospel, in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the Word of God.

1 Samuel 12:12 (NKJV) And when you saw that Nahash 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.

The book of Judges speaks of seven cycles of disobedience during those tumultuous years; the cycle of disobedience, discipline and deliverance (Judges 2:10-23).

The object of Samuel’s sermon--God always provided a leader when one was needed and the nation would not have needed a judge if they would judge themselves and if they had been faithful to the covenant and commandments of the living Lord.

Based on the history of Israel, based on God’s love and faithfulness and deliverance what was their right and reasonable response? The people should have expressed gratitude and faith and trust and obedience. The people should have trusted the Lord for His continued care. They should have confessed their sin, their unbelief and trusted Him alone.

BUT when Nahash the Ammonite King threatened the people they asked for a king! They were willing to exchange the rule of God for the rule of a mere mortal! They were willing to exchange their covenant with God to be ruled by a man. The Lord God gave them what they asked for--but they certainly lost something in the deal.

Samuel is accusing the people of a very serious sin; Samuel has charged the people with rejecting the Lord.

1 Samuel 12:13 (NKJV) Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen and whom you have desired. And take note, the Lord has set a king over you.

What will happen if the people change their mind again? They will have to deal with God and God’s king.

The people asked for a king and have received a king. But there is still reason to hope--yes leadership has shifted but they still have a prophet. All is not lost--there is still hope. The Lord is never taken by surprise or caught off guard. The Lord God knows everything. The Lord will not abandon His children for His Name’s sake.

The Lord will continue to love them and care for them and use their king to discipline them, to direct them and protect them.

The Conditions: Trust And Obey
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1 Samuel 12:14 (NKJV) If you fear the Lord and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the Lord your God.

Samuel lays out the choice before them. Samuel is unflinching in his exposure of their sin and wickedness; he is not afraid of their response or challenge them to repent and obey the Lord their God. Someone has rightly said--the one thing we learn from history--is that we don’t learn from history.

The Consequences: Rebellion Brings Opposition

1 Samuel 12:15 (NKJV) However, if you do 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, as it was against your fathers.

Obedience brings favor. Disobedience brings judgment. Think carefully for a moment--rejecting God invites judgment. Ignoring and neglecting the Lord--means we risk judgment. We disobey the Lord, disobey the commandments of the Lord, live wicked lives, we face the judgment of God. For some reason every generation believes they are the generation that can sin with impunity and God will somehow make an exception in their case.

Confirmation: Climate Control

1 Samuel 12:16 (NKJV) Now therefore, stand and see this great thing which the Lord will do before your eyes:

1 Samuel 12:17 (NKJV) Is today not the wheat harvest? I will call to the Lord, and He will send thunder and rain, that you may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking a king for yourselves.

The wheat harvest is the dry season in Israel (Mid-May to Mid-June). I am giving this message in June 10th! “Is today not the wheat harvest?” Why yes it is!

1 Samuel 12:18 (NKJV) So Samuel called to the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel.

This is what we call in the ministry business--praying up a storm!

Moses called out to the Lord and miracles took place in Egypt. Samuel will now prove to the people that God is still in the business of proving His word; and that God will do what is necessary for them to trust Him and obey Him; but a mere king a mere government is helpless before the Lord.
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1 Samuel 12:19 (NKJV) 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 the evil of asking a king for ourselves.

Over and over Pharaoh begged Moses to pray for him—God sent plagues and Pharaoh asked Moses to make the plagues go away. The people beg Samuel to “pray for your servants to the Lord your God, that we may not die”.

I have a question for you—is there request sincere or insincere?

If the people continued to reject the Lord they would face terrifying judgment.

1 Samuel 12:20 (NKJV) Then Samuel said to the people, Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart.

The people have confessed their sin; including their sin of rejecting God and accepting an earthly king. Samuel has called for the people’s repentance. Now it was time to point the people to the Lord. His message is simple and straight: “Do not fear”. Listen to the council of the Seer. Move from “fear” to “fear not”. Samuel encourages the people to accept the situation their unbelief has brought them and make the most of it. “You have done all this wickedness;” “yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart.”

What has your wickedness and unbelief brought you? A failed marriage? A mountain of debt? An uncontrollable addiction?

Have you gotten what you asked for and now you don’t want it?

1 Samuel 12:21 (NKJV) And do not turn aside; for then you would go after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they are nothing.

Samuel lays down conditions for their repentance: You must not turn away from the Lord; never forsake Him ever again. You must serve the Lord with your whole heart. You must not turn away to idols and false worship. They are empty useless things that cannot help you or rescue you.

1 Samuel 12:22 (NKJV) For the Lord will not forsake His people, for His great names sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you His people.

Samuel repeats the terms of God’s covenant. The Lord will not forsake His people, for His great name’s sake.
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1 Samuel 12:23 (NKJV) Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way.

No matter what the people choose--Samuel will remain faithful to the Lord. Samuel will remain faithful to God’s Word. Part of Samuel’s faithfulness and obedience would be to continue to faithfully pray for the people of God and teach them God’s Word.

You may not be able to see it--or read between the lines of Samuel’s sermon; but I believe Samuel’s heart is broken. Samuel prays for the people and seeks to lead them in the right way.

1 Samuel 12:24 (NKJV) Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you.

Have you paused lately and considered what God has done for you? Why would you not fear Him and thank Him and serve Him in truth all the days of your life?

1 Samuel 12:25 (NKJV) But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king.

I suspect Samuel was even at that point thinking about God’s Word and God’s warning.

Deuteronomy 28:36 (NKJV) The Lord will bring you and the king whom you set over you to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods wood and stone.

Once again the people of Israel will disobey the terms of the covenant and the Northern Kingdom will be swept away by the Assyrian army and the Southern Kingdom will be taken captive to Babylon.

Have you ever heard a message of repentance and wondered; what does that mean for me? Samuel has done a great job of laying out the terms; turn from sin, turn to God; if we have turned from the Lord; we have forsaken Him in some way, ignored Him in some way; neglected Him in some way; denied Him in some way; questioned Him in some way; insulted Him in some way; turned to false religion, false worship, idolatry, we must repent. If we are trusting anyone, or anything other than the Lord to save us; we must repent.

Condition

Individuals and ministries face new challenges and new circumstances where sometimes we must embrace change. We have welcome change and unwelcome change. There are some things that must never change; the character of God, the word of God, the necessity of faith, and the importance of obedience.
Methods are many, principles are few;
Methods always change, principles never do.

In the olden days the leaders of Youth for Christ had a saying; ‘Geared to the times but anchored to the Rock’. An old slogan for a new generation.