

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

OCTOBER 7TH-8TH, 2023 // 1 SAMUEL

INTEGRITY (1 SAMUEL 12:1-5)

After King Saul's mighty victory over the Ammonites, the prophet Samuel stood before the people of Israel assembled at Gilgal.

- Samuel was old (vs. 2), and he knew that the nation would now begin to look to the new king for leadership.
- Samuel showed his wisdom and integrity by being willing to step back and let another lead when God appointed a king.

THE ART OF GRACEFULLY TAKING A BACK SEAT

Samuel never officially "stepped down" as a spiritual leader in Israel, but his role now had to change and diminish.

- If it didn't, Saul would never truly be allowed to lead, and Samuel could possibly subvert the new king's authority.
- Samuel knew when it was time to step back—and he didn't hold on too tightly.
- Many leaders stay in their positions far longer than is appropriate or helpful because they don't have enough wisdom or humility to recognize it's time for them to take a step back and let someone else lead.
- Often, this is because a person's entire sense of self-worth and identity gets wrapped up in what they do—which is always toxic.

Samuel then placed himself on trial: if, during his time as a judge of Israel, he was guilty of ever stealing, cheating, oppressing, or taking a bribe, he would make it right (vs. 3).

- This is humble, honest, and principled leadership.
- Samuel doesn't defend his legacy as a leader through clever and slick rhetoric; he lets his actions in how he led and treated others around him speak for themselves.
- The people affirmed that Samuel's tenure as a judge had been one of integrity and honesty (vs. 4).
- Samuel called the Lord and the new king ("his anointed") to bear witness to what they'd just said (vs. 5).
- Samuel is an example of integrity in leadership—his hands were clean, and nothing in Samuel's life was hidden from God or the people.

INTEGRITY—“Authenticity, genuineness, sincerity, and consistency of moral character and godly behavior.”

- Being someone of integrity doesn't mean we're perfect—it means we're the same in private as we are in public, and we genuinely listen to God's inner conviction in our hearts that leads us to do the right thing, even if no one else sees or finds out.

WORSHIP THE LORD (1 SAMUEL 12:6-25)

Samuel will give Israel a brief history lesson to remind them what God had done for them and how they, in turn, had responded (vs. 6-12).

- He will warn them to fear the Lord by obeying and worshipping only Him (vs. 13-15).
- God will confirm the truth of Samuel's message to Israel by sending a miraculous sign of God's power and judgment (vs. 16-25).

A HISTORY LESSON (VS. 6-12)

There's an interesting pattern we see in Israel—during a period of crisis, Israel would repent of their idolatry and cry out for help.

- God would raise up a deliverer and save the people, who would then grow comfortable in their blessing and prosperity and forget God.
- Then Israel would fall back into crisis, and the cycle would start all over again!
- The most recent time around this vicious cycle, Israel didn't call for God to deliver them from their enemies—they wanted God to give them a king instead (vs. 12).
- We also can fall into this vicious cycle—forgetting God when life gets comfortable and only seeking Him when we fall into a crisis.
- God's desire is for a faithful relationship.

A WARNING (VS. 13-15)

If Israel and their new king feared, served, and obeyed the Lord without rebellion, they could be assured of God's presence and blessing upon their nation (vs. 14).

- But if they didn't obey the Lord and rebelled against Him, the Lord's hand would be against them just as it was against their ancestors (vs. 15).
- There are consequences in our lives for disobedience and rebellion against God—continual rebellion and disobedience is proof we don't even belong to God (1 Jn. 3:9).
- We don't obey and honor God so He will bless us, but if we seek Him and put Him first in our lives, we will experience His presence and blessing upon our lives (Ps. 1:1-4).

A SIGN (VS. 16-25)

Samuel prayed and asked God to send a sign to confirm His word (vs. 16).

- That sign was rain and thunder, which was unusual during the wheat harvest and a remarkable sign from God (vs. 17-18).
- This was a sign of God's displeasure and judgment upon the people for their sin of trusting in a king rather than in the Lord (vs. 17,19).
- As a result, the people were afraid and recognized their sin of idolatry in trusting in a king rather than in the Lord (vs. 19).
- Samuel's exhortation to them was simply to walk right with the Lord today and in the future (vs. 20-22).
- You can't change the sins of your past—repent, receive God's forgiveness, and walk uprightly.

Even though Samuel would no longer act as a judge, he would continue to pray for Israel without ceasing and teach them as a spiritual leader (vs. 23).

- Samuel's first lesson was for Israel to fear the Lord and worship Him faithfully with all their heart, considering the great things God had done (vs. 24). If they failed to do that, they would be swept away!

IMPATIENCE AND PRIDE (1 SAMUEL 13:1-14)

The narrative changes to describing the reign of King Saul—he was thirty when he became king, and he reigned for forty-two years (vs. 1).

- Saul's first order of business was to establish Israel's first standing army of 3,000 men.
- Saul divides the army between himself and his son Jonathan (vs. 2).
- The fact that Israel was building an army put the neighboring Philistines on alert.

PRIDE (VS. 3-4)

The first military objective of Israel was the Philistine garrison in Gibeah, which Jonathan successfully conquered with his troops.

- This was a declaration of war, and the Philistines were quick to respond (vs. 4).
- Even though Jonathan commanded the attack, notice that Saul blew the ramshorn and proclaimed a very different announcement.

“SAUL HAS ATTACKED THE PHILISTINE GARRISON...”

This reveals the heart and character of Saul and his insecurity in wanting to take credit for his son's success.

- Insecure, weak-minded people long for praise and applause, and they absolutely can't tolerate others receiving credit or compliments for success.

UNBELIEF AND IMPATIENCE (VS. 5-9)

The Philistine forces gathered at Michmash, some 20 miles west of Saul's army.

- It was obvious that Saul and his army were greatly outnumbered (and outgunned, “chariots,” vs. 5).
- The men in Saul's army started hiding away and even deserting as crippling fear ran through the ranks (vs. 6-7).
- Saul was told to wait for Samuel to sacrifice.
- Samuel was to preside over the sacrifices to seek the Lord's help and prepare Israel spiritually for battle.
- But Samuel was delayed, and Saul grew impatient.
- Saul chose to disobey Samuel and do what only a priest was authorized to do—offer the sacrifice (vs. 9).

WHY DID SAMUEL DELAY?

Samuel knew that God was in control; perhaps his delay was intentional and in response to God's prompting.

- Maybe Samuel's delay was God's way of testing Saul's faith and patience.
- Waiting builds our faith and patience, and if we choose to sin and compromise in a moment of panic, that reveals unbelief and a lack of trust.

EXCUSES (VS. 10-12)

Immediately, Samuel confronted Saul. Saul responded by playing the victim & offering up excuses (it was the deserting troops, Samuel's delay, and the imminent threat of the Philistines).

- Saul essentially says, “I was forced to! I had no choice!” There are never excuses for our disobedience. Yet, Saul seems to minimize and downplay his sin.

CONSEQUENCES (VS. 13-14)

It was absolute foolishness for Saul to assume he could disobey God and get away with it and that his disobedience would bring God's blessing on his army.

- This was a superstitious, surface-level, inauthentic, hypocritical, and disobedient “faith.”
- God's discipline was that Saul's sin would cost him a royal dynasty—another king with a heart after God's would be appointed in his place.

A WEAKENED ARMY (1 SAMUEL 13:15-22)

Earlier, Saul had 3,000 in his standing army (vs. 2), and now he's down to 600 because so many soldiers scattered while he was waiting for Samuel (vs. 15).

- With so few troops, the Philistines could raid at will in three separate divisions (vs. 16-18).
- Not only did the Philistines outnumber Israel, but they were technologically superior to them in every way (vs. 19-23).

Because there were no blacksmiths in Israel, the army wasn't able to have swords or spears.

- In fact, the only people in the entire army with swords or spears were Saul and Jonathan—everyone else had to fight with farm tools or makeshift weapons (vs. 21-22).
- Even though Israel had thought a king would save them, their king had done a crummy job building and equipping an army.

In many ways, Israel was back at square one—they were just as helpless against the Philistines as they were before they got a king.

- The only way Israel could ever win against the Philistines was to trust in God for everything.
- Sometimes, the most merciful thing God can ever do is to strip everything out of our lives that we've been trusting in to show us that all we need is God.

INTEGRITY IS BETTER THAN ACCLAIM

- Samuel ends his tenure as a judge for Israel well—he led with integrity, honesty, and character.
- We're called to be the same in private as we are in public, and we are genuinely to listen to God's inner conviction in our hearts that leads us to do the right thing, even if no one else sees.
- What parts of yourself do you need to bring into the light to be consistent and sincere?

THERE ARE REWARDS FOR OBEDIENCE AND CONSEQUENCES FOR DISOBEDIENCE

- We also can fall into the same vicious cycle as Israel—forgetting God when life gets comfortable and only seeking Him when we fall into a crisis.
- God wants faithfulness in our relationship with Him.
- You can't change the sins of your past—repent, receive God's forgiveness, and walk uprightly (God blesses obedience).

WAITING ON AND TRUSTING IN THE LORD

- Waiting on God builds our faith and our patience—it reveals what we're truly trusting in.
- The temptation is to compromise, make things happen on our own, and take the easy way out, but it's foolishness to assume that we can disobey God and he's going to bless it.
- What is God doing in you while you're waiting?

THE BEAUTY OF NOTHINGNESS

- Sometimes, the most merciful thing God can ever do is to strip everything out of our lives that we've been trusting in to show us that all we truly need is God.
- Sometimes, God allows our schemes and our “kings” to fail us epically.
- The beauty of having nothing is that we get to see God show Himself strong in mighty ways!