

2/26/23 - 1 Sam. 12:1-25 - "Return to the Lord"

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[0 : 00] 1 Samuel chapter 12. 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.

[1 : 02] 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 Ashtaroth.

But now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies that we may serve you. And the Lord sent Jeroboam and Barak and Jephthah and Samuel and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and you lived in safety.

[2 : 15] 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 the 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 the king.

[3 : 39] 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 namesake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself. Moreover, as for me, far be it for 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. Amen. That is God's word for us today.

If you're familiar with the childhood tale, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, back in the 1950s it came out. It's a quite engaging scene in an episode that plays out in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

[4 : 52] And this scene actually is pretty engaging for adults. You might think of that as a children's tale, but I mean, my kids watch it over and over, constantly, and I'm constantly engaged in it.

It is so fascinating, the message that is ingrained within that movie now, but even better, the book, because the book is better than the movie, right?

Okay, we can argue that and say, you know, at least establish that. My kids love the movie. But there's a memorable time and a scene in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* where we see, even as adults, we're engaged in a memorable reminder of God's faithfulness towards sinners. God's faithfulness towards sinners. If you can, if you're familiar with that tale, *Disgruntled Edmund*, you know Edmund, right? One of the four children who find themselves in Narnia, he finds himself constantly lured and vulnerable to the enticing evil of the White Witch who had taken charge of Narnia.

And this Edmund fellow falls prey to her deceit, her lies, her gimmicks. And through self-discovery, as he is allowed to discover the evil of the White Witch, he finds that this evil seduction is empty and dangerous, not only for himself, but for his siblings.

[6 : 29] And it wasn't until he discovered his selfishness that his heart softens. And by the Christ figure, known as a lion, Aslan, he is led back from his wandering based on that self-discovery.

He returns completely transformed. And though as the chronicles of the movies do play out, the temptation for sin is still a problem in Edmund's life.

But this moment, in the lion, the witch, and the wardrobe, he returns transformed. Realized in self-discovery of the emptiness of sin.

And what this single episode describes is a vivid picture of that which plays out in the lives of God's people every single day. You and me, every single day, even today.

We seek what is forbidden. We engage in what will destruct. We desire what is evil. And cycle after cycle, we find ourselves in a pattern of repentance and renewal.

[7 : 48] The passage today, as which was read, is one of those moments. This nation, known as Israel, is on the brink of falling into the abyss of Genesis 1 language.

Empty, void, abyss. They're on the brink of falling into that abyss of emptiness. And by the end of our time, we will be humbled before the Lord.

We will be humbled before the Lord, ready to renew our relationship with Him today. And so, with that, I invite you to join me in this renewal.

And I want to pray as we embark upon this journey through chapter 12. Let's pray. Father, thank You for Your Word today.

Thank You for something that we can cling to, as Psalm 119 says, to teach us, bring us understanding, though, at this time. Don't help us just memorize the verses.

[8 : 58] Help us to understand the message of the verses put together. Help us to see Your glory through that today. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. The sermon title today is, *Return to the Lord*. Those are words of revival, of renewal.

Return to the Lord. And what I'm going to do is basically thematically break this up into two separate sections. And one thing, if it's not a sin in your eyes to mark in your Bible, I encourage you to mark the conjunctions that we go through in this, because we'll actually see there's a shift that takes place about halfway through.

And so, I'm going to break it up into a couple thematic sections that describe the verses pretty well. And the first section is self-discovery of God's righteous deeds.

self-discovery of God's righteous deeds. This chapter is known as Samuel's farewell address. And he's wanting to set the trajectory of the future.

[10 : 22] The future of this nation while fitting the future in with the past. If you kind of understand, he's trying to say you're along this course, but if you look back a little bit upon your history books, you'll see something similar.

And you're in a similar moment right now with your desire to have a king. In verse 1 all the way to verse 5, Samuel begins with a courtroom-style farewell address.

It's sort of like setting the record straight of who's the victim and who's the perpetrator based on the historic alibi of this nation.

Who's who in this courtroom? And he does this by way of self-discovery. He leads them through this courtroom case through self-discovery.

And he basically makes it clear in verse 1 all the way to 5, Samuel was a good leader for Israel. Samuel was a great leader for Israel.

[11 : 34] He makes a point that they can actually throw their charges against him. He said, did I do this to you? Did I do that to you? Did I steal? Did I lord my power over you and suppress you?

And they said, no. They declared him above reproach. And while he did lead sinful people, very sinful people, Samuel did never once abandon them.

He never used his power to abuse them, to lord it over them. What's the point? They wanted a new order of things.

Do you see that within the context of the book? This nation wanted something new. They wanted a new order. But Samuel is a testimony that the old order of God's theocracy was actually good.

It was good. In fact, when a godly leader was reigning over God's people, it reflected God's character.

[12 : 55] Just as God will never leave His people, forsake His people. You see, good leadership is a reflection of God's goodness. Good leadership is a reflection of God's goodness.

It's true then, it's true today with pastors, elders, deacons who lead God's people today. And so, by way of self-discovery, Samuel has them affirm his good deeds for the people of Israel.

Not to boast, but to almost set them up for the upcoming part of the trial. A little bit of a trap. In verse 7, he says, now therefore, a great conjunction.

Now therefore, this conjunction brings a conclusion upon all the previous verses that he just stated that makes Samuel faultless.

And he opens up the door for the true accuser to take the stand of this trial. It is God's people. God's people are at fault.

[14 : 06] Verse 8-9, Samuel leads them through self-discovery of the past according to the old order. The cycles of the old order. God's people cried out to the Lord and God gave them Moses.

They gave them Aaron to deliver them. How did man thank God for giving them Moses and Aaron? Aaron? They forgot.

This is said in verse 8-9. They forgot the Lord who delivered them through Moses and Aaron. They forgot their leaders. And you see, humanity seems to have amnesia to the goodness of God.

Isn't that so true, church? church? It makes me think of the Red Sea as they come through that Red Sea.

I mean, how miraculous would it have been to walk through the Red Sea only to get to the other side accusing Moses of leading them to starvation?

[15 : 20] it's really easy for us to look at these stories, these accounts and laugh and scoff at those people, but you better believe if we were walking through the Red Sea, we would also be tempted with the same temptation and forgetting the Lord.

How do I know that? Because I am forgetful and you are forgetful. This is a humanity problem. We have amnesia to the goodness of God.

We forget very easily. In verse 9 and on to 10, God even sold them a form of His judgment. He sold them into the hand of the enemy and Sisera's mentions, which takes us back to Judges, a little bit of context to the previous books, Judges 4 and 5.

And this form of judgment caused God's people to cry out again to the Lord. And they sought out deliverance. And what did God do?

God delivered them by the hand of the judges. He mentions Jeroboel, also known as Gideon, Barak, Jephthah, leading all the way to the last judge of the nation of Israel, Samuel.

[16 : 39] It was all by way of the nation crying out for deliverance that God provided them, the judges. And just looking back in the context of the book, it was in 1 Samuel chapter 7 verse 4 that

the people of Israel actually did this very thing.

They put away the Baals, they put away the Ashtaroath, the idols of this time, and they served the Lord only. We just studied that in chapter 7.

You see, according to the old order, the sin of God's people was ever present, however, they knew where to turn when judgment did come. So, we see the goodness of God delivered his people.

The goodness of God delivered his people. Samuel intended to have them self-discover their privilege standing with God. It's as if Samuel is saying, can't you see how utterly righteous God's deeds are towards you?

In this cyclical rotation of repentance and renewal, rejection, repentance, renewal, and just round and round you go. In other words, although you forgot, although you sinned against God, and you have hopelessly lost your father, you don't know where daddy is, right?

[18:07] the father has never lost you. The goodness of God towards God's people.

R.C. Sproul says, we are secure, not because we hold tightly to Jesus, but because he holds tightly to us. Church, have you truly made this self-discovery?

The theological relationship between God and his church is so profound.

God is so profoundly committed to his church, and if to his church being an assembly of believers, meaning you and me.

It is profoundly undeserving, it's profoundly charitable, it's profoundly secure. The good shepherd that Jesus Christ says he is leads us forward, and it also chases us back to him.

[19:19] How many times do we forget such grace and find ourselves wandering, looking for our Father? Might you be wandering today?

Today, in your walk, in your sanctification, this would be a call to return, because you know where your Father is found, and you know that your Father is good.

But for some of us, maybe we might tend to blame God's apparent inactivity in our lives. Well, the next section would definitely be for you, as we see the righteous judgments of God, self-discovery of God's righteous judgments.

This is a shift in verse 12 that I alluded to earlier. A shift occurs in this courtroom and things get pretty tense, and I'm hoping to draw upon that intensity.

If I'm unable to do that, I am not feeling well at all right now with sinuses and cold, so forgive me, but the Holy Spirit will help us all to understand the intensity of the situation.

[20:42] This nation received a threat, and what did this nation do? They did not cry out to God.

They cried out to man to save them. They said, no, but a king shall reign over us. When Samuel indicates that the Lord your God is your king, and another conjunction, and now.

A conjunction which draws upon a conclusion for all that is to follow from this point, and now, behold, the king you have chosen, tall, handsome man.

Church, how stupid we become to exchange the Lord for idols. How do we do this in our lives?

God. How blind we trust in our possessions in this life rather than God. The force of Samuel's argument as he's developing for this nation here is literally to point to the utter madness of their hearts, of their attitudes towards the Lord.

[22:20] And Samuel takes this self-discovery to point to two different paths. Two paths are seen in this passage. Chance to follow or chance to just fall into that abyss.

The first path we see in this verse, in this chapter, 14 and on, there's a glimmer of hope. Samuel then turns to the historic grace of God.

This recalls the theological cycle of man's following and rejection of God. It's basically saying, yes, you sinned, you made a bad choice, so now it's time to go in the regular cycle to repent of your sin. But he's also calling upon a blanket of darkness here. And I want you to see something that is truly sad.

Samuel turns to something, and it's hard to see in our translation in the ESV, but if we go to the NASB, a more literal translation of the Bible, the last word of verse 15 in our translation reads king, and I believe they probably did that for just maintaining continuity within the language, but what is being said here in chapter, in verse 15, is translated as to fathers.

[23:56] And look with me and read it that way in verse 15. 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 against your fathers.

fathers. What does that mean? If they persist in their rejection of God and do not turn back to the Lord, it would cause the entire nation, the entire nation's history to come to nothing. The Red Sea, nothing. Nothing. Meaningless. And a similar warning would come through the minor prophets as the women are studying, as they'll continue tonight in their Bible study. But church, do you sense the intensity? They are literally teeter-tottering between salvation and falling into the abyss. This is why chapter 12 is so important in the nation of Israel. It's a jarring crossroads. The past and the future hang in the balance. Reading this, I almost get this image of Saul.

[25 : 18] Remember Saul, the guy hiding in the baggage and everything? I mean, he's probably there like, guys, I was just looking for my father's donkey.

I'm not supposed to be here, but you're telling me to do this, so I guess I'll do it. I mean, what a bonehead, just standing there like, okay, the nation of Israel is hanging in the abyss, the tribe of Benjamin, I'm already hanging in the abyss as a nation, but this isn't looking good. Just let me return home with my father's donkey. All of that hanging in the balance here at verse 15. As this nation stands looking over this abyss, Samuel calls them to take notice of God's great power, the great display of God's power.

You know, the signs that are performed, they validate the authority of the message, but Samuel didn't have a Red Sea to validate that authority.

He didn't have a body of water to walk upon, but he did have a season of droughts in this nation. At this time period, it was pretty dry.

[26 : 35] A storm at this time and season was very uncommon. And we see in this passage in verse 17, Samuel says, I will call upon the Lord that He may send thunder and rain, and you shall know, not think that you know, not kind of understand, but you will know beyond a shadow of a doubt.

You shall know and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord in asking yourselves a king.

Verse 18, Samuel called upon the Lord and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day. That would be freaky for God to affirm His anger towards their wickedness.

And all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. You see, this demonstration of God's power teaches us the depth of our wickedness when we try to accuse God of evil.

The same accusations against God were seen vividly at Calvary upon the cross of Jesus Christ. Jesus absorbed the wrath of God where our wickedness was on full display as our wickedness humiliated the Son of God which only gave way to display God's great power at the resurrection.

[28 : 23] You see, church, the resurrection of Jesus Christ gives us a reason to fear the Lord, to revere His holy name. He is our King whom we surrender our lives to and follow all the days of our lives.

Maybe you're not necessarily so confident that you're a Christian today. You want to know how you maybe got in your mess thoughts of following the sins of the world, living for yourself, clinging to idols.

You are to blame for that. God is not. If you are not in Christ and you are living your lives in rebellion, it is not God who you are to blame for your rebellion, it is yourself.

And until you come to grips with your responsibility to acknowledge your sin, your rebellion will continue and God's wrath will only grow all the more hotter against you.

And the gospel says though, regardless of the abyss that you have found yourselves teetering upon, life and death situation, the righteous judgment of God was paid by Jesus Christ's blood.

[29 : 55] That is the gospel. It obligates us to have faith in Jesus Christ, the one who atoned for our sin. So come to salvation today.

Place your faith and trust in Jesus. Put to death your worldliness and be set free from the bondage of sin. And Samuel begins to wrap up in this last section and we see self-discovery.

of God's righteous grace and sort of taking that gracious approach. The nation responds.

You see what's happening here? Samuel is allowing them just like Edmund and the lion, the witch and the wardrobe, to discover their sin.

To discover that they are to blame. Just as I'm having you discover if you're not a believer here today, of your own sin. They understand this discovery and this theological problem.

[31 : 03] In verse 19, 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.

Up to this point, Samuel has caused this rebellious nation to self-discover their rebellion within the context of their ancestors and present actions with Nahash.

So the point is clear. It's not whether or not God would be able to work through leaders, whether it's the old order of judges, kings, or the prophets.

It's actually whether their motivation for such a request was actually out of worship for God or worship for self. To make themselves feel better or to die to self completely.

[32 : 12] You see, it's not necessarily a bad thing for us to ask things from God. We're actually commanded to. Imagine that. But however, when we don't get our way is when our asking becomes tested.

In a great moment of Samuel's farewell speech of self-discovery, this nation acknowledged Samuel's role as an intercessor.

Pray for loss. They acknowledged their need for Samuel in their lives. The need for guidance.

They're saying, we don't want to fall into the abyss. We are guilty. We are guilty. We are guilty. church, guilt is the prerequisite for true repentance. It doesn't get more clear than that.

[33 : 26] Repentance is the very reason God's people do not have to be afraid, just as Samuel says, verse 22, yeah, you're teetering upon life and death here, but because you are responding in this way to the Lord, you have no reason to fear.

And this afraid context is that time that we often are anxious, that we're apprehensive about a situation or event.

We don't need to be apprehensive about falling into the abyss. Why? Verse 22, God is committed to His people.

In fact, for His namesake alone, God would not allow His good purposes for Israel to fall into the abyss. Or God will achieve repentance of His people, and this trial is about to come to a close as they realize that Samuel is needed in their lives.

And if Samuel is needed, the Word of God is needed in their lives to guide them. Verse 23 and 24, this is the turning point for this nation.

[34 : 49] The kingdom of God, the monarchy, is established. the way forward for this nation will have an earthly king from this point in history forward.

They would have a king, though, without replacing the Lord nor His prophet. But will this nation follow in submission continually and be obedient to the Lord and His prophet?

will you, church, today, follow the Lord in this humble manner? Today, what an immaculate image that we have of the kingdom of God, that we see that has come into the world more powerfully than it was in the days of Samuel.

We see this picture that God has painted all the more clear. Jesus Christ assumed both role of prophets, and king. And yet, still today, we see the immaculate problem of man, don't we?

We see ourselves drawn, attracted, to cling to human power. And the passage today reminds us where we must find ourselves when we do suffer from the recurring cycle in our lives and problem in our lives.

[36 : 19] Where do we find ourselves? face down in repentance. You see, it is at the feet of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ where the kingdom of God is renewed with us.

At the feet of Jesus Christ, we surrender. How things will go for this nation?

Well, I mean, I guess I can give a spoiler alert if you're any Bible scholar. It gets a little rocky. It does. But there will come a king who's after God's own heart.

There will come a king after God's own heart. A good king. A shadow of a person that resembles the goodness of God through Jesus Christ to His people.

But that narrative is going to take us to chapter 15 to tell fully. And we'll have to leave that for another day and another hour. But at this time, maybe a little something new if the praise team can come up.

[37 : 30] And you can just get assembled. And I'd like them to just begin helping us reflect upon the ending of this passage as we conclude our time in this self-discovery today.

Through our faith in Jesus Christ, we find security in our recurring rebellion against God. There is security to be found in our recurring rebellion against God.

Church, each day in our lives presents a chance of restoration. Why? How? Because God is committed to His people.

And I want us to discover that today. I want you to discover the goodness of God. I want you to discover the righteous judgment of God.

I want you to discover the righteous grace of God. 1 John 1:9 says, If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[38:49] Church, may we never forget that our having received mercy from God is only the single side of a two-sided coin. We have received mercy.

Yes, praise the Lord. Judicially, the record is gone. However, those who receive mercy are to demonstrate their loyalty through obedience to Jesus Christ's commands.

Being forgetful people who really stink at this, how do we do that? Well, we'll turn to Jesus' words in John 14:23.

If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. And my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me.

[39:54] How do we do that? That's how you do it. How do you say that you're actually not saved? To continue your life without repenting of your sin when you fall short.

Just taking God's grace for granted, living your own life, falling for the passions and the fleshly ways of this world, time and time again, and just saying, oh, I'm a sinner saved by grace, fallen as I am. I'll see you at the strip club. Really? The judicial record of grace has actually been a race in your life for you to continue in your sin, unaddressed?

I don't think so. That's not saying that we will not fall, but it's saying when we do fall, what are we going to do? Additionally, we must never forget that the testimony of followership is what we're getting at here.

It's actually found within a testing ground of the church family, through our church unity, by your love for one another you'll prove to be my disciples.

[41:07] John 15. Might we all renew our relationship with the Lord this morning? God will never reject His church, and those who place their faith in Jesus Christ will be found in a never-ending covenant relationship with the Creator of the heavens and the earth, by the grace of Jesus Christ.

Church, hear the voice of the Lord this morning, and follow Him. Be renewed. It's a call to those who doubt, who blame God, who wander from God, who sin against God.

Repent of your sin. Turn and follow. May we all, myself included, journey with you back as a church to the cross today.

Let's pray as we close in the song and reflect upon that.