

13. Samuel Out - Saul In

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Integrity: Steadfast adherence to a strict moral or ethical code or the state of being unimpaired; soundness

It is hard to find nowadays, especially, in the political realm. We even have many jokes about integrity and politicians. Here is a good one: "Do you know where the liars go?" Answer "Washington, D.C.!" So many unfulfilled promises by politicians made us to be weary with their another promises during their election campaigns. So politians integrity seems oxymoron.

However, it is refreshing to find Samuel's integrity is not been the case. As we are going to learn that he was a man of integrity, faith and prayer. We are going to learn valuable lessons from this old leader.

A. SAMUEL'S CHALLENGE TO ISRAEL TO TESTIFY AGAINST HIM

1 Sam 12:1 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.

In this chapter, he is helping Israel to make the transition from Samuel's leadership to Saul's leadership. Samuel would not try to hold onto the position when God was changing it. Although Samuel never officially "stepped down" from leading Israel as a judge, but he would not allow his shadow to eclipse Saul. In this, Samuel shows himself as a truly godly man. He is willing to pass from the scene when God raises up another leader. His heart is the same as John the Baptist's heart towards Jesus.

John 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease.

This reminds me many bloody incidents from my home town, South Korea.

Whenever the executive branch administration get changed by force or election, the former presidents ended up dead or in jail because of their extortion.

Nevertheless, Samuel wanted it clearly known that it was not his idea to appoint a king over Israel. This idea began in the hearts of Israel, not in the heart of God. But God allowed it.

1 Sam 12:2 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.

In 1 Samuel 8:1-5, Samuel was challenged to take his sons out of leadership in Israel, because they were not godly men. Though it must have been difficult, he did it.

Samuel remembers his humble beginnings as a child, dedicated to the Lord and serving Israel and the Lord at the tabernacle.

1 Sam 12:3 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."

As Samuel speaks to the nation about the transition of leadership, he wants it clear that he has not defrauded or oppressed or been corrupt in anyway. He was simply challenging Jewish National Inquires to dig up his life. There is nothing for him to

hide. This is impressive as an example of the godly character of Samuel. What integrity Samuel has!

I think of Dr. Billy Graham. He is such a man of God in this generation, even all that cheezy filthy tabloid magazines treat him with utter respect. Why? Because he didn't take a chance to give anything to anyone to blaspheme his God's name. He wouldn't walk into a hotel lobby with any woman other than his wife. He even would not walk into a hotel elevator alone, in case a strange woman gets into the elevator and might give someone to gossip about him. He still takes a modest salary and living in the same house that he has been living all this time, even though he has power and influence to achieve a lot more than any other Christian leaders in the world. He is the man of integrity.

Why does Samuel do what seems to be a purely self-justifying and self-glorifying thing? From what we know of the character of Samuel in other passages, we have to believe this is more than him saying, "Look at how good I am." Instead, it seems that Samuel wants the nation to know that he has passed a good legacy of leadership to the new king Saul. He wants Israel to recognize that he hasn't handed Saul a mess that he has to clean up. If Saul should prove to be a poor leader, no one could say it was because of the bad example set by Samuel.

1 Sam 12:4-5 And they said, "You have not cheated us or oppressed us, nor have you taken anything from any man's hand." 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."

This is a priceless testimony for any leader. How precious to stand before your own people, and to hear them affirm the integrity of your leadership! Samuel could only make the challenge of 1 Samuel 12:3 because he knew the answer ahead of time.

This kind of fulfilling the promises doesn't only stop at the political leadership, but it also applies in our marriages. During wedding ceremonies, all the brides and grooms happily answer with that famous two words, "I do." But more than a half of the marriages in America goes down the drain. because they don't take this "I do" seriously. When we say, "I do" in the presence of the people who are at the wedding ceremony, they and God become the witnesses against any lousy excuses we might come up to break our marriages.

B. SAMUEL'S CHALLENGE TO ISRAEL TO SERVE GOD UNDER THEIR NEW KING

1 Sam 12:6-8 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. 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: 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."

Samuel, in this remembrance of God's work from the time of the Exodus until his present day, focuses not on the history of Israel, but on the history of the righteous acts of the Lord.

1) The Righteous Act of the Lord in Deliverance

Israel should remember their salvation from slavery and the new life God gave them in the Promised Land.

This is the one we always like to see that happens

1 Sam 12:9-11 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. 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.' 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.

2) The Righteous Act of the Lord in Chastisement

Israel should remember how God allowed a disobedient Israel to be under the domination of their enemies, as a chastisement intending to bring them to repentance. This is not the one we are anxious to see that happens in our lives.

However, we realize that we need both of them - deliverance from evil and chastisement from the Lord to reproof us and correct our wrong doings.

But why the history lesson? Because as Israel makes the transition from theocracy that is governed by God into monarchy, they need to remember the righteous acts of the Lord. Because the history of Israel had nothing but the miserable cycle of **"Rebellion - Retribution - Repentance - Restoration."**

But let's not look down on these Israelites. Because in a way our lives had the same marks of "Rebellion -Retribution - Repentance - Restoration." When the things go well in our lives, we turn away from God and thinking that we can handle everything by ourselves, "Thank You, God. But I will take it from here." Then by the results of our fleshly mistakes, we get whipped by satan. We start to cry out to God, "O God, help me. I need You." In His abounding grace and limitless mercy, He restores us into His arms. I wish that we've learned that, but somehow we tend to repeat it again and again. As we grow older and more mature in the Lord, we learn not to repeat that mistake.

By the way, just for your Bible trivia, who is this Jerubbaal? It is another name of Gideon (Judges 6:32).

1 Sam 12:12 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 Lord had been a good king for Israel, but they wanted a king for carnal, fleshly reasons.

C. SERVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH YOUR NEW KING

1 Sam 12:13-15 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. 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. 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.

Samuel presents Israel with an important choice. They had been disobedient in their desire for a king, yet God had given them a king. Even so, if they would fear the Lord and serve Him, God could still bless them.

One wrong turn had not put any of us out of God's plan forever. If we fear the Lord and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, and God will bring good even out of yesterday's wrong turn. That is why Jesus died for our sins, so that we may be cleansed by His precious blood.

Every individual every generation is tempted to think of itself as a special exception. They know of the righteous acts of the Lord in previous generations, yet somehow feel they are excepted from God's correction or judgment. Samuel is reminding Israel they are not any different from their fathers, and God will not deal with them any differently than He did with their fathers. And we are no exception either.

According to 1 Cor 10:11, the OT is there to show the examples and teach us what not to do and what to do.

1 Cor 10:11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

However, the following verse gives us a strict warning.

1 Cor 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

1 Sam 12:16-18 "Now therefore, stand and see this great thing which the Lord will do before your eyes: 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." 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.

Why would Samuel and the Lord wait until now for such a dramatic sign? Why not do it when Israel first asked for a king, so they would have known their sin right then, and taken back their request for a king? Because God had a purpose in allowing the "people's king," Saul, to come first.

Thunder and rain were unusual during the wheat harvest. This was a truly remarkable sign from God. The thunder and rain displayed not only God's power, but His judgment also. Heavy rain during the harvest could destroy all their crops. The sign was a warning.

D. THE HEART OF A TRUE LEADER

1 Sam 12:19 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."

It is sad that it took thunder and rain for Israel to be impressed with God's power and majesty. What will it take for us to fear the Lord and treat Him as a God of power and majesty? Did you notice that they said, "your God" not "our God"? They don't get it.

1 Sam 12:20-22 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. And do not turn aside; for then you would go after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they are nothing. For the Lord will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you His people.

60 We can't do anything about yesterday. Satan would love for us to live in the past or in the future and to do anything but serve the Lord with all we have right now!

1 Sam 12:23 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.

Samuel said, "far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." What is the middle letter of sin? "I" If we don't pray for our brothers and sisters, that means that we are self centered and not caring for others. It goes directly against our Lord Jesus' commandment, "Love your neighbors as yourself."

Intercessory prayer is required from all of us as a part of our love for one another. Abraham did, Elijah did, Esther did and the most of all our Lord Jesus did. Billy Graham's crusades were interceded by an old lady who've been lifting up Billy Graham to the throne of God everyday.

1 Sam 12:24-25 Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth 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."

Samuel gives them one final warning.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) Serving God with integrity will bring pleasure to His sight.

Any dead fish can float down the stream, but it takes a live one to go against the current. When everyone around us compromise the truth for their own benefit, let's stand up for the truth for our God's name's sake.

2) His grace and mercy are beyond our comprehension.

Even though we don't deserve His grace and mercy, He lavishes His love through grace and mercy on us. Let's not cheapen His grace and mercy by repeating the miserable cycle of "Rebellion - Retribution - Repentance - Restoration."

3) Let's intercede for one another.

Without intercessory prayers for the communities of Sahuarita and Green Valley, there will be many people dying without Jesus in their hearts and they will be eternally damned. Does it mean their eternal damnation is our responsibility? No, it would be our privileges to pray and intercede for their eternal well being and one another in the body of Christ.