

Title: Covenant
Scripture: 1 Samuel 12
Series: God, the True King!

1. Introduction:

- a. Before we begin, we must define the word covenant. A covenant is a legal contract that binds two or more parties to perform specific duties.
- b. In any covenant, there must be rewards (blessings) and penalties (cursings) for keeping or breaking of the said covenant.
- c. Our passage begins with Israel being called to consider their covenant with God and how they have repeatedly broken it.
 - i. Israel had been under covenant with God ever since their exodus from Egypt. They had willingly accepted the terms of the covenant by Mount Sinai. However, Israel had been consistently unfaithful to fulfill its duties. Today's passage looks at Israel's compounded failure to keep covenant with God in revisiting their past idolatry and their current rejection of God as king.
- d. We learn that although Israel had been unfaithful to their side of the covenant, God had always been faithful to His. God had never broken the covenant with Israel and would never do so. Today we also explore the mercy of God in covenant-keeping even amid His people's covenant breaking.

- e. As we consider Israel as God’s covenant people, we cannot escape the fact that we, too, are under the covenant. We have taken the name of God through Jesus Christ. We have sworn our allegiance to Him who died for us and washed us of our sins.
 - i. Because of that, we have specific responsibilities that are demanded of us as Christians. We are called to be a holy people, sanctified for good works. We are called to walk in obedience to the word of God.
 - 1. How God deals with us will be determined by our faithfulness. God will either chastise us or bless us for faithful obedience.
 - f. Our passage opens with Samuel standing as God’s advocate. It will be his duty to build a legal case against the people of God for their failure, call them to repentance, assure them that God (unlike us) will always keep His covenant, and promise future blessing to the obedient.

2. Verses 1-5: Holiness is possible: 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. (2) 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. (3) 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.” (4) They said, “You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man’s hand.” (5) 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.”

- a. Before Samuel acts as God’s advocate, his leadership must first be vindicated. If Israel had failed under his leadership, it had not been because of Samuel. He had taught them the correct way and had been a godly example of godly living.
- b. Samuel cannot hide the fact that he has aged to the point that new leadership is required. He cannot hide the fact that his sons have not walked with the Lord as they should. But as a leader, Samuel had been exactly what the people needed. He had modeled his life on the word of God and therefore had provided a godly pattern of living for the people. A pattern that they had not followed.
- c. Our passage then begins with Samuel opening a legal proceeding against himself. Could the people find wrongdoing in his leadership? Could the people accuse him of ungodly living? Samuel asked the people to testify against him if they found any wrongdoing in God’s man.
 - i. Israel could not testify against Samuel. They could find nothing wrong with his godly leadership throughout his entire life. They could not accuse him

of stealing, perverting justice, or ever taking a bribe. Israel, as judge, vindicates the defendant Samuel completely. There had been no fundamental defect in the character or leadership of Samuel the judge.

- ii. Here we are left with overwhelming truth; a man can live a life that is above reproach in the eyes of other men. Notice that I did not say that a man can be sinless. But it is possible to live in such a way that the world would testify as to the authenticity of our faith. It is possible to live a life that loves God and seeks him.
- iii. Beloved, live in such a way that all who come in contact with you would have to testify of your faithfulness to God.

1. **1 Peter 2:12** Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

- d. The inability of Israel to find one thing to disqualify Samuel opens the door now for Samuel to be God's prosecuting attorney against Israel. He stands in the gap between God and man. Unfaithful Israel had incurred wrath.

3. Verses 6-15: Ungratefulness is Common: 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. (7) 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. (8) 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. (9) 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. (10) 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.’ (11) 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. (12) 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. (13) And now behold the king whom you have chosen, for whom you have asked; behold, the LORD has set a king over you. (14) 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. (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 your king.

- a. This portion of scripture begins with the thought that not only had Samuel been faithful, but more importantly, God had been faithful.
 - i. Samuel begins his legal proceedings against Israel by rehearsing God's faithfulness.
- b. Samuel points out a pattern throughout Israel's history. Israel tended to break the covenant, suffer the cursings of covenant-breaking, cry out for deliverance to the God of mercy, and then God would deliver his undeserved people.
 - i. God had sent deliverers throughout Israel's history. The first of these is Moses and Aaron. God had then raised the judges Gideon, Barack, Jephthah, Samson, and Samuel.
 - ii. God's pattern under the covenant was to rescue his people from oppression when they sought him and submitted to his rule.
 - iii. However, Israel, in their conflict with the ammonites, forgot this truth. Nahash's threat seemed so dire and so great that Israel forgot the righteous acts of God throughout their history. Beloved, this is the evil tendency of all of our hearts. We are prone to ungratefulness.
 1. So Israel, in this instance, does not cry out for help but instead demands a king. Israel stops seeking deliverance from God. Israel does not appeal to the true king. Their help, they assumed, is not in God but in a new form of government.

- a. How quickly we forget the truth of **John 15:5B** ... for apart from me you can do nothing.
2. Do not think of yourself as better than primitive Israel. What was true of them is true of us today. We quickly and ungratefully forget all that God has done for us.
 - a. **Commentary**: Whenever the latest crisis comes (the last straw that breaks the camel's back), we quickly think, "God cannot provide in this situation."
 - b. We are prone to quietly and privately be unfaithful to God. We are inclined to seek deliverance outside of God, therefore, rejecting his excellent and sovereign rule over us as His people.
 - c. Beloved, God has to be enough for us! We are not to slip into the sin of idolatry!
 - i. **2 Corinthians 12:9** But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

4. Verses 16-18: Ungratefulness Deserves God's Judgement:
 Now therefore stand still and see this great thing that the LORD will do before your eyes. (17) 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.” (18) 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.

a. The following is a summary of Samuel’s words.

Commentary: You are gathering or about to gather that important crop, the wheat harvest, and it is of vital importance that the weather be still and calm, but I will pray to the Lord, and He shall send thunder and rain, and you will see how easy it is for God, in one hour, to ruin the crop with which you have been nursing so carefully for months back.

b. God, through this storm, immediately demonstrates to Israel how easily he could bring the covenant cursings to bear upon their disobedience. He is merciful and will not abandon them. But God is also just and holy, so, therefore, He must deal with the sin of His people.

i. After this display of God’s awesome power, Israel fears that she will perish.

1. Israel finally understood that she had gone further in her idolatry than ever before.

2. We must understand this point. Samuel’s sermon and God’s power displayed had finally opened Israel’s eyes to their sin.

a. Only when God’s people see their sin from God’s perspective is there hope that they will turn from it. This is the whole point of God’s

discipline. It is to open our eyes to how vile our actions are. It teaches us to see through God's eyes and hate sin.

- b. This is how God gets his people to fear the subtle idolatry that can so quietly creep into their hearts?
- ii. Beloved, like Israel, we will not know the gravity of our sin until we are made aware of it. This awareness of sin is often made manifest through discipline. Only then is it possible to be alarmed and repulsed by sin?
- iii. Discipline causes the fear of God. The fear of God leads to the wisdom of repentance.
 - 1. God's discipline is not to be viewed negatively but gratefully. His discipline is meant to restore us to covenant faithfulness.
 - a. **Hebrews 12:6** For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."
- c. But here we find the good news. If God grants us a sight of our sin and of his displeasure, we can be sure he does not do so merely to make us tremble but to make us tremble and be restored. In 1 Samuel 12, we see both the severity and the kindness of God.

5. Verses 19-25: Discipline Leads to Restoration: (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 this evil, to ask for ourselves a king." (20)

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. (21) And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty. (22) 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. (23) 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. (24) Only fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you. (25) But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king.”

- a. This portion of scripture opens with a plea. The people have realized how far they have sunk into the pit of idolatry. They need someone like Samuel to intercede for them. Someone who has been upright before God. Someone who is better than them and who is a servant of God. By their testimony, Samuel was such a man.
 - i. The people have sinned so grievously that they have no hope of ever coming to God. They are unworthy to enter into his presence. However, the merciful and gracious God provides an intercessor for them to bridge the gap that their sin has caused. Beloved, in Samuel, we see and marvel at the work of Christ!
 - ii. The people cry out 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. The people ask for an intercessor, an mediator.
- iii. Samuel’s response is recorded in verse 23. Samuel says, 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. Look and tremble at the God of grace. God gives the people a heart to repent. The people cry out because of their sins.
 2. Samuel thus promises to fulfill a ministry of intercession and teaching on behalf of Israel. Samuel’s intercession and instruction point us to a prophetic picture of Jesus Christ, our priest (intercessor) and prophet (teacher).
 3. Jesus is the far better intercessor and teacher than Samuel. And we need Jesus so desperately.
 - a. The modern church must abandon its arrogance in thinking that only ancient Israel is an unfaithful people. We must confess that we can stand only because the perfect man stands in the breach for us before God. One that, like Samuel, refuses ever to stop interceding for the people of God. Beloved, we need Christ.
 - i. **Hebrews 7:25** Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near

to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

- b. What does God do with his people when they have committed spiritual disaster? What does he say through the mouth of his divinely ordained teacher? God lovingly and graciously says to the people, “**Do not be afraid!**” God says, “**you have done all this evil yet...**” God promises his people that they can go forward. They can get up by his grace and continue. God’s people are never forsaken! God will remain in covenant with them!
- i. Do you see it? Beloved, you are not supposed to go back and wallow in your guilt, relive the tragic mistake, or refuse to forgive yourself. Yes, you have committed error. God has disciplined you. You have, by His grace, repented of the evil committed and accepted the consequences of your actions. Now is the time to go forward with God. Now is the time to renew the covenant with Him.
- ii. We are called to fidelity from this point on—what a great word for us today. Don’t think that the great sin you have committed is the first disaster God has ever seen. Look at the beauty of verse 22.
1. **1 Samuel 12:22** 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.
 2. **Romans 5:20B** ...but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,

iii. Yes, we must see our great evil, but we must also see God's great love. Only God's great love can keep us from despairing about our great evil.

1. It is not only by grace alone that we become God's people but by grace alone we remain his people.

6. Benediction –

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

Public Reading of Scripture
Psalms 145:8-14