

“The Value of a Good Reputation”  
1 Samuel 12:1-5  
(Preached at Trinity, January 1, 2017)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we come to **Chapter 12** we find the record of Samuel's farewell address. It is always significant as leaders stand before the people to give their final words. We're aware of Joshua's famous farewell address:  
**Joshua 24:1 NAU** - "Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel and for their heads and their judges and their officers; and they presented themselves before God."  
**Joshua 24:14-15 NAU** - "Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. <sup>15</sup> "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."
2. Often leaders will call upon the people to judge their faithfulness. This was Paul's words to the Ephesian elders:  
**Acts 20:17-21 NAU** - "From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. <sup>18</sup> And when they had come to him, he said to them, "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, <sup>19</sup> serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; <sup>20</sup> how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, <sup>21</sup> solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."
3. As Samuel stood before Israel he too set his life and ministry before them and called upon them to testify of his faithfulness.  
First, he calls attention to meeting their demands for a king.  
**1 Samuel 12:1-2 NAU** - "Behold, I have listened to your voice in all that you said to me and I have appointed a king over you. <sup>2</sup> "Now, here is the king walking before you"
  - A. The leaders of God's people often walk on a razor's edge. There are some points which are non-negotiable. There are some demands that they cannot and must not agree to. He is held accountable for his leadership.

1. Every pastor must be prepared to walk away from their place of service. Many pastors can bear witness to such times. When Luther was called upon to recant his position his famous words ring loudly. Choosing to obey God rather than men Martin Luther gave his bold response – “Unless I can be instructed with evidence from the Holy Scriptures or with open, clear, and distinct grounds and reasoning—and my conscience is captive to the Word of God—then I cannot and will not recant, because it is neither safe nor wise to act against conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me! Amen.”
  2. But there will also be many times that the demands of the congregation will be met. After teaching God’s Word and testifying to them clearly the pastor is then free from guilt. The individuals making the demands will be held accountable.
- B. Samuel was against their request for a king. It was highly displeasing to him because he knew their request was a rejection of his leadership—it was insulting. More important, their demand was a rejection of God as their King. Samuel cried out to God and God heard his prayer.
- 1 Samuel 8:4-9 NAU** - "Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; <sup>5</sup> and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations." <sup>6</sup> But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD. <sup>7</sup> The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them. <sup>8</sup> "Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day-- in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods-- so they are doing to you also. <sup>9</sup> "Now then, listen to their voice"
1. Samuel listened to them and granted their request. Samuel was free from guilt, yet Israel was held accountable for this sin.
  2. In his farewell address Samuel calls upon them to acknowledge the wickedness of their request for a king.
- 1 Samuel 12:17 NAU** - "Is it not the wheat harvest today? I will call to the LORD, that He may send thunder and rain. Then you will know and see that your wickedness is great which you have done in the sight of the LORD by asking for yourselves a king."
3. Samuel then calls upon them to judge his actions, to bear witness to his leadership.
- 1 Samuel 12:3 NAU** - "Here I am; bear witness against me before the LORD and His anointed."
- A. Samuel followed Eli and his sons Hophni and Phineas who exploited their position over Israel. Samuel had to recapture the respect of the priesthood.
  - B. There is always a tension between leaders and the people they are called upon to lead. On one hand, people are usually inclined to distrust their leaders; we have a natural aversion to authority.  
And leaders are sometimes guilty of abusing their authority.

- C. Samuel calls upon them to testify to his faithfulness as their leader. He is demanding of them, if there is anyone who has been harmed by his leadership let them come forward.  
**1 Samuel 12:3 NAU** - "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? I will restore *it* to you."
- D. They testified to the excellent leadership and character of Samuel:  
**1 Samuel 12:4-5 NAU** - "They said, "You have not defrauded us or oppressed us or taken anything from any man's hand." <sup>5</sup> He said to them, "The LORD is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day that you have found nothing in my hand." And they said, "*He is witness.*"
4. Their vindication of Samuel was ultimately their own condemnation.  
**1 Samuel 12:5 NAU** - "The LORD is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day that you have found nothing in my hand." And they said, "*He is witness.*"  
 Their denial of Samuel's faithful leadership exposed their sinful lust for a king. <sup>1</sup>
5. We have before us the treasure of an excellent reputation. Compare the reputation of Samuel with the reputation of Hophni and Phineas.  
**1 Samuel 2:12 NAU** - "Now the sons of Eli were worthless men; they did not know the LORD"  
**1 Samuel 2:17 NAU** - "Thus the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for the men despised the offering of the LORD."
6. Compare the reputation of Samuel with the reputation of his own sons:  
**1 Samuel 8:1-3 NAU** - "And it came about when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons judges over Israel. <sup>2</sup> Now the name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; *they were judging in Beersheba.* <sup>3</sup> His sons, however, did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice."
7. A good reputation is one of the standards for leadership in the church
- A. We can see this among the qualifications for pastor – he must have a good reputation both inside the church and out.  
**1 Timothy 3:2 NAU** - "An overseer, then, must be above reproach"  
**1 Timothy 3:7 NAU** - "And he must have a good reputation with those outside *the church*"  
 The office of pastor is reserved for those who have been found faithful.  
**2 Timothy 2:2 NAU** - "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."
- B. It is also true for deacons:  
**Acts 6:3 NAU** - "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task."

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<sup>1</sup> Woodhouse, John. *1 Samuel, Preaching the Word Series*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2008, Page 115.

- C. It is also a qualification for how we distribute benevolence in the church  
**1 Timothy 5:9-10 NAU** - "A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, *having been* the wife of one man, <sup>10</sup> having a reputation for good works; *and* if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, *and* if she has devoted herself to every good work."
8. All of us should strive to maintain an excellent reputation
- I. A good reputation before men should be something we place a high value upon
- A. An excellent character is a crown to be worn with distinction
1. We can see this with the excellent wife in **Proverbs 31**  
**Proverbs 31:29-31 NAU** - "Many daughters have done nobly, But you excel them all." <sup>30</sup> Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, *But* a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised. <sup>31</sup> Give her the product of her hands, And let her works praise her in the gates."
  2. An excellent reputation takes years to build, but only a moment to lose. I often remind people of this with regard to trust. Husbands and wives trust one another because of years of faithfulness. Parents have confidence in trustworthy children.
  3. Parents need to recognize the importance of their reputations before their children. "Thomas Carlyle said of his poor, uneducated father that he was prouder to bear his pedigree than he would be that of a duke or a king; 'for what is the glory of mere rank or accidental station compared with the glory of Godlike qualities, and of a character that reflects the image of God Himself.'" <sup>2</sup>
  4. Since our reputation can be tarnished so easily it should cause all of us to live with caution.  
 The Bible uses strong words on this. We are to flee from all sin.  
**1 Corinthians 6:18 NAU** - "Flee immorality. "  
**1 Corinthians 10:14 NAU** - "flee from idolatry."  
**2 Timothy 2:22 NAU** - "Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love *and* peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."
- B. It is also important for our church to have an excellent reputation
1. This is most difficult because often those who are corrected or leave disgruntled slander the church.
  2. A reputation for good works and graciousness overcomes all slander. People learn our excellent character through personal experience.

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<sup>2</sup> Philips, Richard. *1 Samuel, Reformed Expository Commentary*. Phillipsburg: P&R, 2012, Page 184.

3. The NT holds several churches before us as examples
  - a. Rome was a church with many members whose reputation was well known  
**Romans 1:8 NAU** - "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world."
  - b. Paul spoke of the excellent reputation of the Church of Thessalonica  
**1 Thessalonians 1:6-8 NAU** - "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, <sup>7</sup> so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. <sup>8</sup> For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything."
  - c. Paul wrote of the churches in Macedonia and their reputation for generosity  
**2 Corinthians 8:3-4 NAU** - "For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, *they gave* of their own accord, <sup>4</sup> begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,"
4. We should always be mindful of our reputation as a church.  
 What kind of reputation does our church have?  
 When others look at our church what do they see?
5. The church is made up of individuals. What effect does your membership have on our church's reputation? Do you enhance the church's reputation? Does your life paint a positive reputation for our church?

II. As important as our reputation is before men, how much more important is a good reputation before God.

- A. Faithfulness is simply faith in practice
  1. Jesus asked an important question:  
**Luke 18:8 NAU** - "when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"  
 He's asking, "Will He find His people living faithfully?"
  2. Paul described the necessity of faithfulness  
**1 Corinthians 4:1-2 NAU** - "Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. <sup>2</sup> In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy."
  3. Jesus told of the excellent servant  
**Luke 19:17 NAU** - "Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities."

- B. It is important to have a good reputation before men. But they are not our final judge.
1. Paul expressed this  
**1 Corinthians 4:3-5 NAU** - "But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by *any* human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. <sup>4</sup> For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. <sup>5</sup> Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God."
  2. Perhaps, before men we can conceal our evil character. Sometimes men are able to fool others with a counterfeit reputation. This is how swindlers are often able to rob people of their life's savings.
  3. Jesus cannot be fooled. He knows the true measure of our reputation. How does He see you?

#### Conclusion:

1. May we always seek to maintain an excellent reputation  
 There are character traits that are sorely lacking in our generation.  
 Faithfulness, loyalty, trustworthiness and reliability, honesty and integrity
2. May God give all of us a reputation of holiness and good works. May we demonstrate with our lives the faith we profess.  
 A.W. Pink said, "A Christian's punctuality, his truthfulness, his conscientiousness, the quality of his work, his devotion to his employer's interests, ought to be so apparent that there is no need for him to let others know by his lips that he is a disciple of Christ."