

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic.,
3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 8

FIRST SAMUEL

CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION

It is often difficult to make farewell speeches. This is more so for someone who has faithfully served his role and is soon to be replaced by a younger person. Many questions will run through his mind. Some of these questions may include: Am I being replaced because I have not performed honestly and effectively? Is this the reason why I am being retired?

Samuel's experience helps us to deal with such a situation – what to say and how to say farewell to those whom we serve. Moreover, it is expected of the one who is leaving to say some wise words to God's people to encourage or warn them. Is there something that one can do to continue to help and support God's people after one has left? We do encounter and experience such situations in our interaction with others.

Samuel's farewell address to his fellow Jews offers some valuable guidance.

COMMENTARY

Samuel's Farewell Speech

—vv. 1-5

Samuel gathered together all the elders of Israel and announced that he had listened to their demand for a king. Acting in accordance to the Lord's instructions, he had administered the process of choosing a king for them. Now they had a king. Samuel reminded them that he had served them since his childhood and that he was now advanced in age. Although the leadership of the nation had passed from Samuel to king Saul, Samuel had continued to serve the people as their priest, prophet and judge. Samuel's usage of the phrase "walked before you" intimated that he had lived in the public eye and constantly under the scrutiny of the people. The king's conduct and rule too would be in the public eye.

Samuel went on to vindicate himself. He declared that God was his witness and even before Saul, His anointed, he had lived a blameless and honest life. He asked five rhetorical questions clearing him of any charge of trying to enrich himself or having cheated them. He declared that he had not been tyrannical in his dealings with them nor had he taken any bribe that might have caused him to be unjust and unfair when delivering his judgments. Samuel stated that he was blameless in all his dealings with the people. The people having heard him affirmed that it was indeed the case.

Samuel told the people that the LORD and "His anointed" were witnesses to what he had declared to them. In his opening words, Samuel made four references to

Saul as king (12:1, 2) and as the LORD'S "anointed" (12:3, 4). He had freed himself from any accusation against him by the people.

Samuel Rehearsed God's Goodness towards Israel

—vv. 6-15

Samuel then went on to declare the God whom Israel had come to know and experienced in their history. Samuel recalled how the LORD had acted graciously toward them and their forefathers. His particular mention of their forefathers was intended to show that God had dealt justly and faithfully with every generation of the people.

He began from the time of their bondage in Egypt. Jacob, their forefather, brought them into Egypt and their forefathers cried to the LORD for deliverance because of the oppression that they had suffered under their Egyptian masters. The LORD heard their cry and raised Moses and Aaron from among them to lead them out of the land of Egypt to their current dwelling place.

But they soon forgot the LORD their God. This was their primary sin against God. When they forgot the LORD, they turned away from Him and worshipped the Canaanite gods of Baals and Ashtoreths (7:3, 4). And because of their sin, God "sold them" or gave them over to Sisera, the commander-in-chief of the armies of Jabin, king of Canaan (Judges 4:2); and God gave them into the hands of the Philistines, and the Moabites who fought against Israel and subdued them. When the children of Israel cried to the LORD

and confessed their sins and repented, the LORD delivered them out of their oppression. The Lord raised men like Jerubbaal (another name given to Gideon, Judges 8:27, 32); Bedan (a reference to Barak, Judges 4: 6, 16); and Jephthah (Judges 11:1, 21). God had raised all these mighty men of valour from among Israel to deliver Israel out of "the hand of their enemies".

Samuel also included himself. The most recent battle was against Nahash, the king of the Ammonites, who came out against Israel. It was the LORD who delivered Israel. In spite of the evidence of God's mercies toward them in their history, they still wanted an earthly king to reign over them when the LORD God was their true King (8:7). Israel was made to realize that they had replaced God (theocracy) with a human king (a monarchy). Their desire for a king like all the other nations was so strong that even Samuel could not convince them of all the negative consequences that would follow. Thus the LORD gave them a king.

Despite wanting to have an earthly king like all the other nations instead of the LORD God, Israel could still enjoy prosperity if they "fear the LORD, and serve Him, and obey His voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD" (12:14). This was the condition that they and their king must obey. They must continue to follow the LORD their God. If they would not obey the LORD and His commandments, God would punish them just as He had done to their forefathers who had sinned against God.

Need to Heed Samuel's Words – vv. 16-19

Samuel expected Israel to take his words seriously. They had committed a great sin against the LORD. In order to make them take his words surely and solemnly, Samuel asked God for a sign to be done before their eyes. Samuel asked God to send “thunder and rain” at a time of wheat harvesting. The time of wheat harvesting in the land of Palestine is in May and June when it was relatively drier. The rainy season was usually in winter in the months of December to February. By March, the rainfall would gradually taper off with the “latter rain”. This was necessary for a good harvest which was in April and early May. The wheat harvest occurred in late May and early June when it would be unusual to have thunder and rain. Samuel called upon the LORD and the LORD sent “thunder and rain” on that very day! This demonstrated that despite the fact that the people had a king now to reign over them, the LORD their God still continued to speak through His prophet Samuel. Samuel was vindicated (compare 8:4, 5). Having seen the supernatural phenomenon, the people reacted with fear towards the LORD. They immediately pleaded with Samuel to pray for them, *that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.* They publicly confessed their wicked sin against the LORD in asking for a king like all the nations and in their request they had actually rejected God Himself and not man.

Sins Forgiven, Blessings Returned—vv. 20-25

The people were awe-struck with fear. However, Samuel encouraged them to “fear not”. They had done this evil in rejecting God and asking for a king to rule over them. Even though they had now realized their sin and repented, the situation could not be reversed. Samuel counselled them that what they must do now was to “turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart” (12:20). There was no turning back. Once the king had been appointed the period of monarchy had begun. But that did not mean that God’s curse would be upon Israel forever. If they repent and obey God, they would be blessed by God again.

The second person pronoun “ye” in verse 21 is emphatic – “And turn ye not aside” – it called on them to take heed. They had been told of their sin against God. The LORD authenticated Samuel’s counsel to them with a sign. They repented of their sin. They were awe struck with fear. Samuel stressed that “**you**” must remember that day, hear and turn not again their backs to the LORD. If they did so, they would surely go after other gods which would not benefit them nor save them for these gods were all useless (12:21). Samuel reassured them that the LORD “will not forsake His people for His great name’s sake”, because it had pleased the LORD to make them His people. They were His possession.

The LORD is faithful and He will honour His Word. He will never forsake His people because of His great Name and honour. That does

not mean that if His people sin against Him, He will not judge or punish them. Indeed, He will chastise and punish them so that they will repent and return to Him. Man must not take God's love and mercy for granted. Man must realize and understand that God is holy and righteous and "a consuming fire" and if man continues to sin against God, man will face the dire consequences of God's righteous indignation and wrath.

Samuel assured them that he would intercede on their behalf. He would not stop praying for them. Samuel also promised to continue to teach them the "good and the right way" to live before God. Once again, Samuel reminded them to fear the LORD and serve Him in truth. One wonders whether Samuel doubted their sincerity, because he reminded them three times (12:14, 20, 24) that they must serve the LORD in truth and be sincere and honest. Were they being hypocritical, deceiving Samuel and the LORD? Were they like Pharaoh, who repented before Moses but after Moses left, he changed his mind? Time would prove whether they were truly and genuinely repentant.

Samuel promised to pray for them but if they did not "fear the LORD and serve Him in truth with all your heart", even his prayer would be useless. Samuel counselled them to consider what great things the LORD had done for them. He went through their history with them pointing out how God had been merciful and how He had saved them each time when they cried to Him and repented. Samuel stressed that if they still

continued to be wicked, they would be consumed, they and their king. His incessant prayers for them would be useless for God would destroy them.

Samuel's address ended with a double note of reassurance and warning. The people were called to consider seriously the honesty of their confession and repentance, to fear the LORD their God and serve only Him with all their heart.

PRACTICAL VALUE

Samuel's moral integrity and blameless lifestyle serves as an outstanding example for every Christian, especially pastors and leaders of the church. Members of the church should choose their leaders on biblical grounds. In most cases, members choose their leaders on the basis of their popularity instead of their sound spirituality and their faithfulness to God and His Word. The lowering of the spiritual standard of leaders in churches today have been the death nail in sealing the coffin of churches that once upon a time defended the faith zealously. Today they are a mere shell of their past glory.

The fundamental sin of the children of Israel is ingratitude towards the LORD their God. They frequently forgot Him and all the blessings and benefits that they had enjoyed and received from Him. The result as Samuel envisaged would be that they look to other things and people for their well-being. As Christians, we must be grateful to God for saving us from the fires of hell and for reserving a place for us in His coming kingdom. Samuel exhorted

them to consider all the great things which God had done for them, and fear and serve Him with all their heart. The same message is applicable to us today.

The Israelites sinned against God when they asked for a king to rule over them like all the other nations. They had lost sight that God was their King. They had taken Him for granted, the one who had been so kind and merciful to them. They should have realized that God was holy and righteous and would not tolerate sin. He would punish the sinner.

We must understand that the continual blessing of God and His acceptance is always conditional. We must not turn aside from following Him. We must fear Him, serve Him with all our hearts and obey His commandments. Forgiveness from God must be preceded by genuine confession and repentance of sins. The idea of just sweeping away and forgetting past sins without confession and repentance is unbiblical. For the believer to “press towards the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”, he must first deal with his sins. Double mindedness is unacceptable to God. AMEN.

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
DAILY READINGS &
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

Daily Readings

Monday: 1 Samuel 12: 1-5; Acts 20:17-35.

Tuesday: 1 Samuel 12: 6-11; Psalm 34:1-10.

Wednesday: 1 Samuel 12:12-15; Ephesians 1:4-12.

Thursday: 1 Samuel 12: 16-19; Hebrews 12:28-29.

Friday: 1 Samuel 12: 10-25; Colossians 1:23-29.

Analysis

Text	Practical value
1 Samuel 12: 1-5	
1 Samuel 12: 6-11	
1 Samuel 12: 12-15	

1 Samuel 12:16-19	
1 Samuel 12: 20-25	

3. What was the purpose of the thunderstorm?

4. What counsel and warnings did Samuel give to the people in 12: 20-25?

Discussion Questions

1. When should the servant of God begin to ensure that his life is beyond reproach: when he starts serving or the moment he is saved?

2. What was the point of going all the way back to the time of Exodus and mentioning Moses and Aaron when Samuel rehearsed to Israel the deeds of God?

5. They sinned, they repented, they were forgiven, and they were blessed. Do you find this a blessing or a road to easy believism?
