

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

Remembering the Covenant

I Samuel 12

Intro: Israel has demanded a king! Samuel anointed Saul as their king, 1st privately, then publicly. When Nahash appears on the scene, Saul calls Israel to battle & 330K Israelites answer the call & a great victory was won the day they delivered Jabesh-Gilead. Afterwards, Samuel called Israel to Gilgal to renew the kingdom b/c the Lord – not Saul's rule over Israel but **YHWH's** rightful rule. They sacrificed peace offerings & rejoiced in the Lord but that was not all they did in Gilgal that day. In order to rightly renew **YHWH's** rule, Samuel knows they must also renew the Covenant. He wants to remind them that **YHWH** is still their king & that their future success rests in trusting Him alone.

1-2 - Now- After Saul's victory over Nahash, Samuel knows Israel will now begin to look to their new king & leadership & rightly so. But, Samuel has led Israel as a Judge nearly all his life but now its time to make the transition from Samuel's leadership to Saul's. Samuel's day as ruler over Israel is over & Saul's is just beginning. But, while Samuel is relinquishing his civil leadership to Saul, he's not giving up his prophetic ministry (**spiritual leadership**) of Israel. Saul w/b Israel's king but Samuel will still be Israel's prophet.

3-5- Witness- What's happening here? Samuel, the last of the Judges, is asking Israel to judge him! Why? Is he looking for a compliment? No, he asks for this for 2 reasons: **1st** to show Israel that he's passing on a good legacy of leadership to Saul. He's leaving Saul a great example of what good leadership of God's people should look like. The era of the Judges is ending & the monarchy is beginning but not b/c Samuel has failed Israel or sinned against **YHWH**. He's walked b/c Israel all his life & now he asks them to testify whether he has been faithful or not. Of course, they respond w/ complete & total vindication of his credibility. There's been no defect in his character or leadership. This was the response Samuel expected & needed b/c in the address he's about to give, the defendant (Samuel) turns prosecutor against Israel as the accused b/c not only had Samuel been faithful all those yrs but so has **YHWH!**

6-11- stand- Samuel put himself on trial & was declared innocent; now he puts Israel on trial: **stand still & reason** are both judicial terms. Samuel's going to prove to them that the Lord has always been righteous & faithful in all His dealings w/ Israel but it was in fact they themselves who had been faithless & disobedient. He reminds them of **YHWH's** righteous acts on their behalf & points out an obvious pattern thru-out Israel's history: **crisis, cry 4 help & deliverance** thru a leader raised up by **YHWH**. We saw this pattern all thru Judges but it didn't start there. It began way back in Egypt! God raised up Moses & Aaron & empowered them to lead His people out of bondage & into a covenant relationship w/ Him in the Promised Land. They were "saved" from slavery & given new life in Canaan. This was 1 of His **righteous acts**. **YHWH** also allowed a disobedient Israel to be put under the cruel domination of foreign enemies as a chastisement intended to bring them to repentance. This is also 1 of His **righteous acts**. Really? Yes, we must recognize that God's **discipline** of His people is just as righteous as His **deliverance** of His people b/c both of these things are the means that He uses to preserve His people, thus both are to be counted as blessings from God.

12-15- Nahash- After all **YHWH** had done for Israel, why did Nahash cause them to knuckle under & cry, "Uncle"? B/c today's crisis always seems to be the worst. The current emergency made the memory of **YHWH's** faithfulness disappear. When Nahash showed up w/ a sharp stick there was **no cry 4 help**, just a **demand for a king**. They didn't look to **YHWH** for deliverance, they specified the method in which deliverance must come. They faithlessly assumed their help was to be found in some new form of gov't., not in **YHWH's** proven strong arms. "**King or Bust**" not "**IGWT**"

So now Israel has a king & the choices are clear for both the people & the king: they could choose to live faithfully under **YHWH's** word or they could choose to suffer justly under **YHWH's** hand. Whatever they choose to do, **YHWH** will still be the true King of Israel but they are more likely to receive chastening from His hand, not blessing. Israel's treasonous unbelief was legendary, it was almost part of their national character: "**Yeah, we're YHWH's people but why should we do what He tells us?**" It would be more funny if it didn't hit so close to home.

16-19- see- Samuel moves from making a logical case for obeying the word of God by offering visual evidence of the power of God. He knows that a solid case built on wisdom & reason wouldn't necessarily convince Israel, did it ever? No, He realizes that his verbal truth needed to be accompanied w/ a visual aid so he announces that **YHWH's** thunder & rain could be expected immediately! You gotta love a guy who can call on the Lord to make it rain, just as proof!

It certainly got their attention but why? B/c they knew this was no normal thunder & rain. The wheat harvest occurred in May-June, the beginning of the dry season. Everyone knew rain was extremely rare this time of year, like Houma getting 6 inches of snow around Labor Day – not impossible but so rare, it would make people stop & think. That's what Samuel wanted Israel to do: stop & think about their idolatrous attitudes that caused them to reject **YHWH's** rule. At last, the reality of their actions hit home. Israel fears they will die by God's hand b/c in addition to all her other sins she has added the evil of asking for a king. This insight is critical b/c its only when God's people see their sin from His perspective is there any real hope that they will finally turn from it [rearranging freezer]. Nobody likes the smell of rotting shrimp but w/o the obnoxious odor, we would not have discovered or eliminated the real problem!

There's something rotten in Israel in 16-19. How can the living God get us 2 **fear** our own subtle idolatry, be **alarmed** & **repulsed** by it or even become **aware** of it unless He shows us how it smells – 2 Him? In order 2 show Israel the extent of their rebellion, He had 2 scare the living daylights out of them w/ a sign of His holy anger. Fear of **YHWH's** righteous wrath seemed 2 open the door 2 real repentance on Israel's part. Some may object 2 fear as a motivation 4 repentance but Paul didn't seem 2 have a problem w/ it or else he wouldn't have put **Col 3:6** after **3:5**. If there's a reason 2 tremble – we ought 2 tremble. If God grants us insight into our own sin & His displeasure of it, we can be confident that He doesn't do it just 2 see us tremble but 2 see us tremble & then **be restored**. In this we see both the kindness & severity of God: He's kind enough 2/b severe & not leave us wallowing in our own idolatry. Sometimes it takes a storm 2 wake us up, it takes something **out of season** 2 get our full attention. Fear should lead 2 faithfulness.

20-21- yet- Samuel moves from **fear** 2 **do not fear** b/c fear's not the end but simply a **means** 2 an end. The desired end is repentance & recognition of God's rightful claim on our lives. **Yet** = **YHWH** still has plans 4 them. There is a future & a hope 4 Israel despite their great wickedness. What are they 2 do? They can't go back & change the past so no need 2 wallow in it. No, all they can do now is go forward in trusting obedience 2 the Lord from this point on!

Turn aside- 2 depart from (more than just distraction, its chasing distraction). Israel is 2 move forward in faithful service 2 **YHWH** b/c, frankly, anything else would just be pointless idolatry. Any alternative 2 serving the Lord cannot profit His people & certainly cannot deliver them in their time of crisis. Things pop up every day 2 distract us from following Jesus but the distraction isn't sin, it how we respond 2 it. Do we allow it 2 draw us away from following **J**? It doesn't have 2 be gross immorality, just something other than fidelity 2 the call of Christ on our lives. Everything that humanity pursues that is not God is empty & vain. That goes just as much 4 believers as non-believers. A pragmatic reason 2 serve the Lord: what better thing can you spend your life doing? And yet I show you a more excellent way.

22- pleased- this is the greatest, most profound truth in **ch12** & probably the entire book. Thos Israel may forsake **YHWH**, He will not forsake Israel. Why? B/c of Who He is – He's the Covenant God; b/c He loves them 4 only reasons He knows; b/c He has chosen them as His people – **4 His pleasure!** This is the greatest reason & motivation 4 service we can ever find. Don't make the mistake of believing God only saved us so we can serve Him. No, He had higher aspirations than that. Just look at the way He relates 2 us. He calls us friends – do you make friends w/ people 2 get them 2 serve you? Not if you want 2 keep them as friends. He calls us His children – do you have kids so they can serve you? If so, you're in 4 a rude awakening. You'll do way more service 4 them than you'll ever get in return. He calls us His bride – do I even need 2 ask? In each of these relationships, what is the primary goal, the greatest pleasure? Service? Never – it's **fellowship!** Its enjoying that particular relationship you have w/ each person. Similarly, it pleased **YHWH** 2 make Israel His people – not 4 the **service** He could get out of them but 4 the **intimacy of fellowship** He might enjoy w/ them. God's more concerned w/ the servant than He is w/ the service!

Here is grace that is greater than all our sin! God was pleased 2 make Israel His people & He will not forsake them. He doesn't abandon the commitments that He makes. **"Well, if God won't abandon me, why can't I live as I choose?"** B/c grace is never a license 2 sin. In fact, sin is what breaks our fellowship w/ God & we've just established that fellowship w/ us is His utmost desire. If sin is constantly preventing that from happening, you can see why He brings the storm. We can't change the sins of our past nor should we wallow in them in the present. The 2-fold emphasis of Samuel's sermon was 2 cause Israel 2 1st **see** their **great evil** & then 2nd, **see YHWH's great steadfastness**. **It's not only by grace alone that we become God's people but it's also by grace alone that we remain God's people.**

23- Here we see the surrendered heart of Samuel. Israel didn't just reject YHWH's leadership, they rejected Samuel's as well. He could have refused 2 do anything 4 them but he didn't. If the rejected God refuses 2 forsake His people, how can His rejected servant do so? Samuel commits to a 2-fold ministry of intercessory prayer & spiritual instruction 2 the nation, seeing anything less as a sin against the God who called him 2 minister 2 Israel those many years ago.

24-25- only- Sam's final admonition: fear (revere, honor) the Lord & serve Him, if 4 no other reason than 4 all the great things He has done 4 you. We need 2 stop & consider the idea that everything the Lord **wants 2 do** in our lives today is some how firmly established in the setting of what He has **already done** in our lives.

Samuel's exhortation 2 Israel has definite applications 4 believers today & they become more apparent when we define certain key terms: **following** – (stay close behind) implies: Lord will go b/4 you; **continue** – (abide, remain, 2/b situated w/); **fear** – (revere, honor, respect); **serve** (labor, work, 2 make oneself a servant). We, as God's people, need 2 learn what **following** Him really means & when we do, we need 2 **continue** in it. To fail 2 follow is nothing more than **turning aside** (departing from) the plan / purpose of God 4 our lives & anything that causes us 2 **turn aside** will never really benefit us or be able 2 deliver us in times of distress & trouble, more often than not, they'll cause it.

Our responsibility as God's people is 2 fear (honor, respect) Him & make ourselves His servants. He'll never force us 2 serve Him but we should readily do it 4 all the great things He has done 4 us up 2 this point. He hasn't brought us this far 4 no reason but 4 great reasons – His reasons! What are they? We'll never know until we commit 2 follow Him closely & continually. We show that commitment by continuing 2 obey, trust & serve Him. That's the only way 2 discover God's purposes: they're played out day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute as we walk in faith & trust in Him. Why serve God? What else are you going 2 do? Name 1 thing that is more satisfying &/or more fulfilling? You

can't – I can't, b/c it doesn't exist. & yet, God didn't create us & save us just so we could serve Him. He did so 4 His pleasure – that He might have pleasure in us & we in Him. Are you?

